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Resistance in the 'Oppressor's' Tongue: English-language Welsh Writers and Spanish-language Catalan Writers

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Resistance in the 'Oppressor's' Tongue:
English-language Welsh Writers and
Spanish-language Catalan Writers

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Abstract

This thesis will demonstrate that the literature of Wales and Catalonia, two small stateless nations that are dominated by larger states with a different majority culture (the United Kingdom and Spain), can be read as resistance literature. However, crucially, it will focus on authors that write in English or Spanish, rather than in Welsh or Catalan. Traditionally Welsh and Catalan literature has been defined as that written in Welsh/Catalan. English and Spanish are often seen as foreign languages, or even as the ‘oppressor’s tongue,’ and texts written in those languages have, until recently, been excluded from the national literature. This thesis will argue, however, that these texts can espouse some type of national resistance, in spite of the language in which they are written.

This thesis will draw on the work of the theorists Barbara Harlow, Benita Parry and E. San Juan Jr., particularly the latter two’s critique of postcolonial studies, and works by anticolonial writer activists like Frantz Fanon and Ngugi wa Thiong’o, in order to establish a resistance literature paradigm. It will also draw on the work of Albert Sánchez Piñol and Daniel G. Williams to differentiate between two types of resistance and consider whether each type is helpful or harmful to the nation. It will then apply this paradigm to the English-language Welsh authors Harri Webb, R. S. Thomas and Rhys Davies, to the Spanish-language Catalan novelist Eduardo Mendoza, and to a Spanish-language text by Albert Sánchez Piñol who has published in both Spanish and Catalan. The thesis will highlight many attributes of resistance literature in their work; the most important and prevalent being: political content, a focus on the message of the text as opposed to its form, an understanding that all struggles against oppression, be it oppression of class, nationality, ethnicity or gender, are part of the same struggle, and an attempt to produce a history of their nation that challenges the account promulgated by the state (the United Kingdom/Spain).

Yr wyf drwy hyn yn datgan mai canlyniad fy ymchwil fy hun yw'r thesis hwn, ac eithrio lle nodir yn wahanol. Caiff ffynonellau eraill eu cydnabod gan droednodiadau yn rhoi cyfeiriadau eglur. Nid yw sylwedd y gwaith hwn wedi cael ei dderbyn o'r blaen ar gyfer unrhyw radd, ac nid yw'n cael ei gyflwyno ar yr un pryd mewn ymgeisiaeth am unrhyw radd oni bai ei fod, fel y cytunwyd gan y Brifysgol, am gymwysterau deuol cymeradwy.

I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.

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Note on Terminology

Producing any work that deals with different languages and cultures will inevitably require some choices on terminology to be made. Though I would have liked to use the Welsh and Catalan names for Wales and Catalonia, in the end I decided to use the English versions for comprehensibility and consistency with the language of the thesis. Consequently the nations in question will be referred to throughout as Wales and Catalonia and their people and language as Welsh/Catalan, except in the case of quotation or paraphrasing. All quotations however have been left in the original language with English translation provided in footnotes. Where English versions of the texts are available I have used these, otherwise all translations are mine.

As this thesis deals with multiple languages and the relationships between them, I have made a conscious decision not to italicise non-English words, names or phrases that appear in the text as I do not wish them to be considered “foreign.”

This thesis uses the words Spain and Spanish to describe the whole territory of Spain and its major language and culture. In Hispanic studies it is more correct to refer to Spanish as Castilian but I was concerned that this word was similar enough to Catalan to cause confusion for the reader when the two frequently appeared side by side. Therefore, I have used Spain and Spanish except in the case of quotations or where they are explicitly referred to otherwise in the texts. The novel *Victus* frequently refers to Castile, as at the time of its setting Castile and Catalonia were considered to be separate kingdoms even though they were officially both part of Spain. Therefore I have followed the author’s lead in that chapter and used ‘Castile.’ The language, however, I have still referred to as Spanish, as does the author.

The last point that needs to be made concerns book titles. In certain Spanish critical publications it appears to be the norm to capitalise the first letter of only the first word in chapter titles. In most British scholarship, on the other hand, the norm is to capitalise all major words in the title. For the sake of consistency, I have employed this latter approach across the entire thesis, excepting quotations.

Introduction

In her 2002 essay ‘The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies’,¹ Benita Parry claimed that one result of the integration of postcolonial studies into university departments of Literature and Cultural Studies in the 1980s was the influence that poststructuralism came to have upon the discipline and its principal theorists. Gayatri Spivak was heavily influenced by Derrida’s ideas of the Other, while Homi Bhabha drew on poststructuralist ideas about language, particularly deconstruction, to formulate his approach which includes ideas of mimicry, hybridity and ambivalence. For Parry this has meant that “the intrinsically *antagonistic* colonial encounter has been reconfigured as one of *ambivalence* and *negotiation*.”² She writes:

In this late-breaking, revisionary narrative of empire, a historical project of invasion, expropriation, and exploitation has been reconstituted as a symbiotic encounter; the contradictory, volatile, but all the same *structural* positions occupied in analysis by the oppositional conceptual categories of colonizer and colonized have been displaced by categories of complicity, mutuality and reciprocity; and the conflicting interests and aspirations immanent to colonial situations have been dissolved into a consensus.³

To further support her argument she quotes Simon During, who claimed that postcolonialism’s fusion with postmodernism led to a “rejection of resistance along with any form of binarism, hierarchy or telos”⁴ and that: “By deploying categories such as hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence... all of which laced colonised into colonising cultures, postcolonialism effectively became a reconciliatory rather than a critical, anticolonialist category.”⁵ Parry concludes:

It is an irony that the story of mutuality now being composed by some postcolonial critics makes an inadvertent return to the narrative of benign colonialism once disseminated by British imperial historiography, and which in the metropolis continues to have a purchase on the official and popular memory of empire, especially of the Indian Raj.⁶

¹ Benita Parry, ‘The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Neil Lazarus (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002), pp. 66-80.

² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 76.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

In place of this “narrative of benign colonialism,” Parry calls for a renewed focus on political resistance of all kinds, the re-placing of texts in their socio-political context, and, drawing on the anthropological work of Nicholas Thomas “the need to devise terms other than “dialogue” to describe transactions where the native was necessarily a participant, but rarely – and only in very special circumstances – an interlocutor recognized as an agent of knowledge.”⁷ Consequently she demands recognition of the fact that colonialism was based on exploitation not mutuality and asks us to read postcolonial literature in light of that.

This thesis will attempt to answer Parry’s calls by treating selected English-language Welsh texts and Spanish-language Catalan texts as being in some ways part of ‘a literature of resistance’ (this term will be defined shortly). Some interpretation of the article is needed as Parry also stresses how “discursive or “epistemic” violence has tended to take precedence in analysis over the *institutional* practices of the violent social system of colonialism. Similarly, cultural resistance has been privileged in analysis over diverse oppositional political expressions...”⁸ Cultural resistance, of which literature is clearly a part, seems to be condemned here. However in the light of the main thrust of the essay I interpret this as meaning cultural resistance disengaged from its political context, a focus on ‘the pure text’ as opposed to the text in context. I do not believe that she is saying that cultural resistance does not have a place as part of a wider political movement. In her seminal study *Resistance Literature* (to which Parry refers in the above-mentioned essay), Barbara Harlow repeatedly stresses that cultural resistance is an integral part of independence and resistance movements worldwide; indeed, in many cases, cultural resistance cannot be separated from the wider political movement.⁹

I will now proceed to trace the development of the ideas of resistance literature beginning with Harlow, touching on Edward Said, and then analysing the ideas of Parry and the Philippines critic E. San Juan Jr at greater length. I will then construct a paradigm for resistance literatures and discuss this in the context of the Welsh and Catalan cases.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 76-7.

⁸ Ibid., p. 75.

⁹ Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987).

A Brief History of the Ideas of Resistance in Postcolonial Studies

In 1987 Barbara Harlow published her foundational study of what she entitled Resistance Literature. Others had used the term resistance previously in relation to literature; Harlow herself attributes the first use of it to the Palestinian writer and critic Ghassan Kanafani in his study *Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-1966*.¹⁰ His focus, however, was the literature of Palestine, whereas Harlow examined literature from all over the world that was written as part of independence and protest movements, and identified various common traits in literatures from places as diverse as Egypt, South Africa and Nicaragua. These traits included an insistence on anchoring the text in its particular historical and material circumstances of production, validation of alternative worldviews to that of the Imperial West, attempts to reclaim the narratives of history for peoples and nations who had been denied them, and a conviction that resistance texts had to be more than just works of literature – that they were, rather, vehicles for protest and change. They did not subscribe to ideas of art transcending political and cultural boundaries; every text written in resistance was written with the purpose of asserting the culture from which they came and the movement of which they were part. Textual aesthetics had to take second place to, or at least be part of, the message of the text.

Although Harlow does not make any link between her work and postcolonial studies, or colonial discourse analysis - the discipline generally accepted as its forerunner, she makes reference to Edward Said,¹¹ often considered one of the founding fathers of postcolonial studies. Moreover, many of the features she identifies in texts of resistance literature, and many of the issues she raises, are also ones recognised by postcolonial studies. For example, Harlow claims that reading resistance literature calls for a reassessment of the literary canon which has traditionally ignored these texts; this is something postcolonial studies, particularly in its early stages of development, also sought to do. Harlow also emphasises the need to reread certain canonical texts that deal with colonial or Third World societies where criticism has previously ignored these issues, something Said in particular sought to do with his re-reading of texts like *Mansfield Park* in *Culture and Imperialism*.¹²

Many of the common features Harlow assigns to resistance literature have also been discussed in postcolonial studies. For example she discusses the politics of the choice of language: “The very choice of the language in which to compose is itself a political statement on the part of the writer... The

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 28.

¹² Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993).

debate on language is crucial to a discussion of resistance literature, involving as it does questions of writer and background as well as issues of readership and audience.”¹³ Elsewhere, discussing those North African writers who write in French, she quotes Abdelkebir Khatibi who writes:

Irony might not only have been a kind of displaced revenge on the part of the oppressed colonized seduced by the west, but would have also allowed the francophone North African writer to take his own distance on the language by inverting it, destroying it and presenting new structures to the point where the French reader would feel a stranger in his own language.¹⁴

These concepts and debates will be familiar to scholars of postcolonial theories, as will the urge that Harlow identifies in many texts to rewrite history and assert the voices of people who have previously been ignored. So it seems that Harlow’s conception of resistance literature is not very different to early ideas of postcolonial texts. This is unsurprising given the time that it was written (1987), nine years after Said’s *Orientalism* was first published,¹⁵ but a few years before major work by Bhabha and Spivak which developed postcolonial studies as a discipline and took it in a distinct and highly theoretical direction.¹⁶ Prior to their work it seems that it would not be contradictory to regard resistance literature as coming under or at least being closely related to postcolonial studies.

This link with postcolonial studies is in some ways reinforced by Said’s participation in the discussion of resistance in literature. While *Orientalism* focused exclusively on Western literary representations and did not consider any texts by the colonised peoples, in *Culture and Imperialism* Said acknowledged this lack:

What I left out of *Orientalism* was that response to Western dominance which culminated in the great movement of decolonization all across the Third World. Along with armed resistance in places as diverse as nineteenth-century Algeria, Ireland, and Indonesia, there also went considerable efforts in cultural resistance almost everywhere, the assertions of nationalist identities, and in the political realm, the creation of associations and parties whose common goal was self-determination and national independence. Never was it the case that the imperial encounter pitted an active Western intruder against a supine or inert non-Western native; there

¹³ Harlow, p. xviii.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1995). Originally published 1978.

¹⁶ For example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988) and *The Post-colonial Critic Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. by Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), first published in 1994.

was *always* some form of active resistance and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out.¹⁷

Said recognised and acknowledged the ability of colonised peoples to resist imperialism both physically and in the realm of culture. However, the major focus of *Culture and Imperialism* is how Western texts register, albeit usually subtly, this resistance, rather than on the resistance itself or texts by the people undertaking that resisting. Thus it could be argued that *Culture and Imperialism* is still a Eurocentric study. Nevertheless, Said did discuss ideas of resistance and, as Benita Parry notes, he is frequently considered a founding father of postcolonial studies (though she also argues that he would deny this claim).¹⁸ Therefore his influence ought to have ensured that ideas of resistance literature continued to exist in close conjunction with postcolonial studies, if not actually within the field.

However, as Parry noted, the timing of the institutionalisation of postcolonial studies meant that its theory came to be heavily influenced by poststructuralism and postmodernism as the major thinkers of the field (Bhabha, Spivak and others) drew on ideas by Lacan and Derrida.¹⁹ This led to the development of a body of highly elaborate theory that radically questioned ideas of identity, the self, the nation and the possibility of representation. Parry writes that Spivak drew on Derrida's deconstructionist approach and idea of the constitution of the Other.²⁰ Bhabha, meanwhile, has worked extensively on ideas of hybridity and mimicry which have become part of the vocabulary of the majority of postcolonial approaches.²¹ However, as already seen, Parry argues that: "By deploying categories such as hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence... all of which laced colonised into colonising cultures, postcolonialism effectively became a reconciliatory rather than a critical, anticolonialist category."²² Parry argues that Bhabha's notions of hybridity and cultural exchange ignore the unequal power relationship between the two cultures making the relationship one of "complicity, mutuality, and reciprocity..."²³ Moreover this tendency has become overwhelming "the subject-position of the 'hybrid' is routinely expanded as the only political-conceptual space for revisionist enunciation."²⁴ Similarly, E. San Juan Junior criticises the authors of the classic postcolonial work *The Empire Writes Back*, for claiming "that only syncretism, hybridity, and counterdiscourse can be the authentic categories of

¹⁷ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xii.

¹⁸ Parry, 'Edward Said and Third-World Marxism', *College Literature* 40.4 (2013), 105-26 (p. 107).

¹⁹ Parry, 'The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies', pp. 68, 74.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 68

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²⁴ Loomba and Kaul quoted in Parry, 'The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies,' p. 73.

postcolonial literatures.”²⁵ The possibility of a more direct or straightforward renunciation by the colonial subject is not allowed or even considered. According to Parry this also potentially effects the formation of the postcolonial canon, with magical realist texts from Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean being preferred to those that use a more realist mode, and certainly to those that embody the features of testamentary and resistance literature.²⁶ It is this overwhelming trend that has fuelled Parry’s call for a renewed focus on resistance. Before going on to discuss the features of resistance texts I will consider briefly some of the major criticisms of the ‘Orthodox’ postcolonialism of Bhabha and Spivak and their disciples.

Critics like Parry and San Juan, and more recently Sankaran Krishna and Rumina Sethi, have criticised this poststructuralist-influenced ‘Orthodox’ postcolonial theory on several grounds. Perhaps the most recurrent complaint is that this theory is divorced from reality – it ignores the struggles and acts of resistance of peoples in the Third World and has parted company with the work of anticolonial intellectuals like Frantz Fanon (very much involved in active resistance) that preceded it. Some of Parry’s views on this have already been cited. San Juan meanwhile, argues that activists like the Guatemalan Rigoberta Menchu and the Filipino Maria Loreno Barros who wrote passionately of their struggles, refute Spivak’s claim that the subaltern cannot speak.²⁷ To make this claim is to ignore their efforts and sufferings. He is equally critical of Bhabha, claiming that his theoretical approach obscured real life issues in supposedly postcolonial countries. Discussing Bhabha’s ideas of hybridity and ‘in-between’ spaces that draw heavily on poststructuralist theory he argues that: “In the discursive realm of floating signifiers and exorbitant metaphors, the objective asymmetry of power and resources between hegemonic blocs and subaltern groups (racialized minorities in the metropolises and in the “third world”), as well as the attendant consequences disappears.”²⁸ There is no acknowledgement of the imbalances of power between coloniser and colonised (using these terms in the broadest sense) and thus the depiction of the relationship between the parties involved is completely unrealistic and depoliticised. Consequently: “Postcolonialism is thus culpable for what it claims to repudiate: mystification and moralism.”²⁹ Meaning is deferred so much in Bhabha’s linguistic model that San Juan is led to remark wryly: “It is somewhat of a surprise, indeed, that Bhabha or I can speak of postcolonial themes and rhetoric in this manner.”³⁰ ‘Orthodox’ postcolonialism, intentionally or

²⁵ E. San Juan Jr., *From the Masses, to the Masses* (Minneapolis: MEP publications, 1994), p. 178.

²⁶ Parry, ‘The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies’, p. 73.

²⁷ E. San Juan Jr., *Beyond Postcolonial Theory* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1998), pp. 21-52.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

otherwise, depoliticises literature, instead focusing on the theoretical ideas described above. It shows no interest in the actual activities of the people in the countries it purports to discuss and defend – in their struggles for freedom or their efforts to establish new societies - and it can give them no guidance on how to achieve these aims. Resistance literature, on the other hand, both narrates these struggles and offers visions for a brighter future. Parry and San Juan call for a return to a study of these resistance movements and their literature, if not necessarily to Harlow’s exact definition of it. Foregrounding the struggle and the literature that arises from it will help lessen the divide between theory and practice and make postcolonial studies more relevant to the peoples it once sought to represent.

These critics generally take a Marxist approach and decry postcolonialism’s break with Marxism. San Juan’s approach is heavily Marxist, drawing on the discipline for vocabulary, imagery and concepts. Two of these important concepts are Antonio Gramsci’s ideas of hegemony as a form of ideological and cultural control based on consent as well as force and that of a national-popular culture.³¹ He and Parry both use the Marxist denominations of ‘(metropolitan) centre’ and ‘periphery’ and the theory of ‘combined and uneven development’ – the latter is alien to postcolonial studies, though it has been used in the new development in World Literature theory proposed by the WREC group from Warwick.³² Alongside this, San Juan and others argue that Marxism is crucial in illustrating and explaining the economics underpinning colonialism and neo-colonialism and seeing them as aspects of the global capitalist system, with the imperialist powers deliberately underdeveloping the countries that now comprise the Third World in order to gain profit. These thinkers also imply that Marxism could help reground postcolonialism in the reality of the circumstances of many in the Third World and also recognise the reality of class struggle in their lives where, as Fanon warned, the native bourgeoisie was likely simply to replicate the colonial state and hold power only for themselves.³³ San Juan admits that Marxists sometimes focus on the class struggle to the exclusion of all else,³⁴ but cites the writings of various Marxist theoreticians including those of Marx himself along with Lenin, Luxembourge and others, that deal with issues of nationalism and imperialism.³⁵ Seeing colonialism and neo-colonialism as part of the global capitalist system also leads to an understanding that anti-imperialist struggles

³¹ See for example, San Juan, *Allegories of Resistance: The Philippines at the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), pp. 86-9.

³² WReC Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).

³³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans by Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), pp. 119-25.

³⁴ San Juan, *After Postcolonialism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), p. 174.

³⁵ See for example, San Juan, *From the Masses, to the Masses*, p. 126, though the subject is treated in many of his works.

ultimately oppose the same enemy as do those of minorities, women and the working-class in the developed First World countries and builds solidarity between struggles – an idea that is important in the concept of resistance literature. The Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o saw all struggles against oppression as one: “This external domination and the resistance to it can be paralleled, in the colonised communities and in the dominating nations with the internal disempowerment and resistance to this.”³⁶ Fanon noted the part African unity played in resisting colonialism,³⁷ while Harlow cites numerous examples of writers from resistance movements referring to those of other movements in their work.³⁸ Elleke Boehmer has demonstrated how many resistance movements influenced each other, from Irish support for the Boers against the British to the mutual influences of Irish and Indian independence movements.³⁹

However, resistance theory also stresses the need to pay attention to the historical specificity of each resistance movement, something it claims that traditional postcolonialism does not do. This is something that Sethi believes Marxism can bring to postcolonial studies:

A more nuanced approach that reaches far beyond the categories delineated by Bhabha and Spivak should become the framework of postcolonial studies. In order to steer it more towards practice, a grafting of postcolonialism onto Marxist principles can help us arrive at an understanding of both structures of power and the means of resistance.⁴⁰

San Juan cites a 1995 essay by Aijaz Ahmad in which the author interrogated the “politics of literary postcoloniality,” as exemplified by Bhabha and Spivak. “What Ahmad bewails is the postcolonial denial of history, specifically the histories of people with their distinctive trajectories of survival and achievement.”⁴¹ This is something that Marxism with its historical-materialist approach could bring to Orthodox postcolonial studies.

This break with Marxism went along with a disavowal of the anticolonial movements and their theorists. Many of the early anticolonial thinkers like Fanon were heavily influenced by Marxism –

³⁶ Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (London: J. Currey, 1993), pp.27-8.

³⁷ Fanon, p. 128.

³⁸ Harlow, pp. 46-7.

³⁹ Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁴⁰ Rumina Sethi, *The Politics of Postcolonialism: Empire, Nation and Resistance* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), p. 21.

⁴¹ San Juan, *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*, p. 6.

they saw the similarities and indeed relationships between class struggle and anticolonial resistance, and understood the need to mobilise the working classes in order for the resistance to be successful. Parry in particular castigates those postcolonial intellectuals who ignore the work of anticolonial theorists: “What is all too clear is that the dismissal of “merely anticolonial historians” [by Dipesh Chakrabarty] is unbecoming in a scholar who proclaims his radicalism, but who is cavalier about a body of work that had played an indispensable part in making a history he seeks to deny.”⁴² Parry praises Said for criticising Western scholars in poststructuralist, Western Marxist and Anglo-American cultural criticism approaches for this disavowal of anticolonial theorists,⁴³ although she also claims that he failed to engage with the anticolonialists as Marxists.⁴⁴

One final area of criticism of ‘Orthodox’ postcolonialism is in its attitude towards the nation. The critics discussed above deplore the poststructuralist-influenced approach to the nation and criticise academics like Bhabha who denigrate national liberation movements and all forms of nationalism. Parry writes:

One critic has disavowed struggles against colonialism as constituting “an anti-imperialist or black nationalist tradition in itself” (Bhabha 1994: 241); another has attributed “the failure of decolonization” to “the ignoring of the subaltern” (Spivak 1995b: 146); while yet another has charged that when an anticolonial movement did incorporate “modern science and polity,” these were represented “as the return of the indigenous and archaic” (Prakash 1996: 194-5). There undoubtedly were movements against colonialism guilty of some or all of these defects. All the same the ringing assertions cited above signally fail to address the far-reaching political dimensions of many of the struggles against imperial domination. They also fail to attend to the differences between moderate nationalist movements for independence that aspired only to inherit the colonial state, and revolutionary programs animated by socialist goals.⁴⁵

San Juan also differentiates between different types of nationalism. While he acknowledges that some are narrow and even dangerous, he argues that anti-imperialist nationalism tends to be broader in view and is necessary in order to resist neo-colonial forces,

for “national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness” (to quote the Communist Manifesto) to be eradicated, what is required is the perpetuation of nationalism not just as collective primordial

⁴² Parry, ‘What is left in Postcolonial Studies?’, *New Literary History* 43 (2012), 341-58 (pp. 345-6).

⁴³ Parry, ‘The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies’, p. 69.

⁴⁴ Parry, ‘Edward Said and Third-World Marxism’, p. 105.

⁴⁵ Parry, ‘The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies’, p. 78.

sentiment but as a mode of organizing a collectivity. It is not the concept of the nation-people that is problematic but the comprador or client state that manipulates the “nation” as its instrument for accumulation.⁴⁶

Discussing *The Empire Writes Back*, he agrees with the authors’ assertion that it is impossible to return to a pure pre-colonial culture but not that the idea of a nation is ineffective and thus that subversion of the colonising power rather than assertion of one’s own nation is the only way to assert a postcolonial identity. This prescriptivism could be seen as yet another example of the First World attempting to order the lives of those in the Third World.⁴⁷

So, to summarise, having begun with Harlow as a theory that could easily fit within postcolonial studies, today the idea of resistance is outside mainstream postcolonialism. The critics who call for a focus on resistance react fiercely against the poststructuralist influenced theory of Bhabha, Spivak and others, and advocate taking a Marxist approach in order to understand the colonialism as part of capitalism. It is a radical movement and its emphasis is on practice and on relations with actual struggles that exist in the world today against all forms of oppression: colonial, neo-colonial, and often class, race and gender too. Exponents of this approach privilege the idea of resistance and struggle and stress the need to see the political, economic, cultural and armed aspects of the struggle as inextricably linked.

Clearly this approach needs to be applied carefully when it comes to the study of literature. To do otherwise is to make it purely academic – as these critics complained of mainstream postcolonial theory. However by examining certain texts as part of a literature of resistance and struggle, it should be possible to read these texts in a new and exciting way while remaining faithful to the demands of the resistance critics. I will now consider the characteristics of texts that form a literature of resistance.

⁴⁶ San Juan, *Allegories of Resistance*, p. 67.

⁴⁷ San Juan, *From the Masses, to the Masses*, pp. 178-9.

A Paradigm for Resistance Literature

As already seen, for Harlow the idea of resistance literature was that of a literature that was written as part of an independence movement or protest, and thus had specific characteristics: political language, a privileging of message over form. The defining characteristic though is that of belonging to a resistance movement; any criteria she applies beyond that are extremely broad. The area of resistance literature as advocated by Parry, San Juan and others however is more complex. For them what is needed is both a resistance literature broadly as defined by Harlow though extending beyond movements of armed struggle, and a new method of reading texts written by oppressed or marginalised peoples. Thus, although it is possible to draw up a rough list of criteria to define what could be called 'resistance literature', equally important is the method of reading – one that combines Marxist and postcolonial theory and draws on the work of anti-colonial intellectuals like Frantz Fanon, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Amilcar Cabral. This method seeks to see in texts evidence of the struggle for economic and cultural freedom from colonialist and neo-colonialist states by placing the text firmly in its material and historical circumstances of production and reading it in the light of theories of economic and cultural dependency. In this way many texts that might not previously have been considered resistance literature can be reconsidered. San Juan stresses,

...the value of the strategic intervention of the reader's will (itself a collective agenda embedded in a specific existential situation) which can map the possibilities of articulating Rizal's texts, in particular the novels, to achieve nationalist, democratic goals. Other strategies can be pursued, depending on the constraints and susceptibilities of a given position.⁴⁸

Thus reading and interpretation play an important role in this developing idea of resistance literature and may lead to controversial reclaiming of certain authors and texts that have previously been considered as against the movements they are now being claimed to represent. San Juan stresses in many of his works that there is no such thing as an "innocent" reader; the reader's act of interpretation is a crucial part of a text.⁴⁹ Equally, discerning readers may see traces of resistance in works of authors that are politically or ideologically reactionary. San Juan discusses the work of another Philippines writer Nick Joaquin in this way:

⁴⁸ San Juan, *Allegories of Resistance*, p. 36. José Rizal was a Filipino writer and nationalist in the second half of the nineteenth century who called for reforms by the Spanish rulers of the Philippines and was consequently executed.

⁴⁹ See for example San Juan, *Writing and National Liberation* (Quezon City: University of Philippines Press, 1991), pp. 26-7.

Engaging in cultural revolution entails wrestling with canonical texts and standards. Because Nick Joaquin has been generally considered a paragon of English-speaking writers, I have had to conduct hermeneutic and semiotic maneuvers at the risk of appearing to be a formalist New Critic within the terrain of critical discourse on Joaquin in order to ascertain reusable utopian/subversive elements embedded in Joaquin's signifying practice. Opting out of this terrain and damning Joaquin's retrograde politics (see Lenin on Tolstoy, Marx and Engels on Balzac, Cardenal and MacDiarmid on Pound) automatically surrenders the "sign" called "Joaquin" to the enemy.⁵⁰

It is therefore vital to consider national authors who may appear more reactionary. To do otherwise is to leave them in the hands of the 'enemy' culture, as weapons to be used against the nation. A minority culture of any kind must utilise all the resources that it possesses. The best example of this in this thesis will be Rhys Davies who has been seen as hostile to his nation's nationalism. However, I will attempt to reread his work as an example of Welsh resistance writing.

Despite the emphasis on interpretation, it is possible to discern in the work of these critics certain essential criteria that the texts which they discuss as models of resistance literature have in common. Perhaps the most important of these is the text's commitment to its message and vision. Resistance writing is political: "Writing is "always already,"... complicit with and immersed in the world."⁵¹ Harlow writes that: "Resistance literature calls attention to itself, and to literature in general, as a political and politicized activity. The literature of resistance sees itself furthermore as immediately and directly involved in a struggle against ascendant or dominant forms of ideological and cultural production."⁵² San Juan meanwhile, quotes the Latin American writer Alejo Carpenter:

While it is true that in some European countries – let's say in England or Scandinavia – literature can exist outside the political context, in Latin America this is absolutely impossible. For better or for worse, in tragedy or in great moments of triumph and victory, our lives are so closely linked to politics that we cannot pluck someone out of his environment with tweezers, put him on a table and say: "I am going to study this person." Individuals must be studied in relation to their group, as a function of the praxis and attitudes of the social context. We have to

⁵⁰ San Juan, *After Postcolonialism*, p. 186.

⁵¹ San Juan, *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression* (Albany: State University Press, 1995), p.3.

⁵² Harlow, p. 28.

look at where a person is going and what he wants, and only by placing him in this context do we get an epic novel.⁵³

The text is an active part of the struggle, either an armed struggle as in Harlow's original premise or a cultural struggle against hegemony. The Vietnamese writer Nguyen Dinh Thi wrote "For us a book is a weapon," explaining: "Insofar as we make clear what is happening within people, show how they are holding firm, what they are accomplishing, we contribute to a strengthening of the power to resist."⁵⁴ Culture is a vital part of this struggle; it has been a weapon of the colonisers in the past so now it can be used against them: "Literature can be a weapon for enslavement or liberation, for continuing subservience to former colonial masters and the internalized colonizer or for emancipation."⁵⁵ San Juan asserts that: "For the majority of Third World peoples brutalized by the nightmare reality of a colonial past and a neo-colonial present, art is literally a matter of life and death."⁵⁶ The situation may not be as extreme everywhere and, as will be discussed later, certainly is not in the case of the two nations considered in this thesis, but the writing produced is still of necessity political, as will be seen most obviously in the first chapter on Harri Webb.

Literary form has only secondary importance to the content unless it contributes to the message. Harlow and San Juan have both commented that resistance literature is likely to be criticised or ignored by the traditional establishment because of this focus on politics and message rather than artistic form. In particular they blame the New Criticism Movement that focused on only the language of the text, excluding all external factors like the author's background and the circumstances of production. Harlow writes that resistance literature,

...imposes historical demands and responsibilities on a reader from which he or she, especially in the United States which could always afford such self-dispensations, had been excused by various versions of formalist criticism. The value of the New Criticism, for example, has been and continues to be seen by some as a "god-send for classroom purposes: there was no need for background knowledge; one could concentrate on short and therefore manageable texts with the tacit acceptance of the reader's own background as sufficient context." Such a "god-send" however, for the classrooms of the dominant western pedagogical institutions is part of

⁵³ San Juan, *From the Masses to the Masses*, pp. 110-1.

⁵⁴ Nguyen Dinh Thi quoted in San Juan, *From the Masses to the Masses*, p. 89.

⁵⁵ San Juan, *Only by Struggle*, (Quezon City, Kalisakan Press, 1988), p. 22.

⁵⁶ San Juan, *From the Masses to the Masses*, p. 77.

hegemonic cultural practices which deny consequential access to historical development to those parts of the world which the west continues to exploit to its own ends.⁵⁷

San Juan sees New Criticism as a powerful depoliticising ideology that affected generations of those educated both in the U.S. and the Philippines. Critics have been taught to consider that truly great literature should not contain politics.⁵⁸ As a result they dismiss those texts that do.

As well as subsuming the form to the message, resistance literature in general moves away from Western art's preoccupation with the individual and their psychology and focuses instead on the collective, the people/nation, as can be seen in the Carpenter quotation above. Individuals are generally at least partly representatives of the people and their issues are those of the nation. Resistance literature is frequently nationalist, seeking to establish an identity for a people and their nation. However, in calling for what he names a 'national popular culture' in the Philippines, one that takes up the task of resisting neo-colonialism and oppression and helps define the Philippine people as a nation, San Juan stresses the importance of an inclusive nationality, one that "inheres in affirming the dignity and worth of workers and peasants who constitute the nation-people for-itself in the ultimate analysis," rather than one based on "seeking to reserve ethnic purity or instigate a cult of linguistic uniqueness."⁵⁹ He is aware of the dangers of narrow nationalism, citing Tom Nairn's warning of the "Janus-faced nature of historical nationalisms."⁶⁰ This will be discussed later in the chapter with specific regards to Catalonia and Wales.

As part of its nationalist project, resistance literature may well draw on traditional customs of the nation and attempt to assert their value. Parry discusses the situation in Mozambique where "with the onset of the armed struggle the new styles of defiance initiated by peasants and workers in song, dance, and carving expressed a deep-seated hostility to the alien culture..."⁶¹ San Juan adds:

By the logic of opposing an exploitative and alienating force, the resistance assumes the modality of revitalizing indigenous cultural practices so as to constitute an allegorical narrative of their return with new effectivities... it can be discerned in the project of contriving a

⁵⁷ Harlow, p. 95-6

⁵⁸ See for example, San Juan, *From the Masses, to the Masses*, p.23, though this claim is made in much of his work.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁶¹ Parry, 'Edward Said and Third-World Marxism', p. 115.

national-popular idiom addressed not to the Volk (Herder, Fichte) but to a resurgent *sambayanan* (populous) [sic].⁶²

The concepts ‘national-popular’ and ‘national-democratic’ are deeply important to San Juan. A national-popular culture is a culture that represents the masses of a nation and reflects their will and views, rather than merely that of an elite. He acknowledges that this is difficult, that there are divides within a nation: differences of language, ethnicity, religion and others, but believes it is both possible and necessary to overcome these in order to forge and express a national identity free from the coloniser’s control. Resistance literature attempts to create and express this national-popular culture.

Another important attribute of resistance literature is its historical specificity – each text is firmly grounded in a specific situation of struggle against oppression. This is an idea brought partially from Marxism. In *From the Masses, to the Masses*, San Juan urges use of the historical-materialist approach to shed light on resistance and revolutionary movements by placing them in the wider context of the capitalist world system.⁶³

Linked in many ways to this is the idea of recovering the history of a people or peoples who have been ignored by the main historical records, chronicling the history of their oppression and their struggle against it. Thiong’o explains that the absence of these people from the records of history is often more deliberate than simply ignoring them; rather it is another form of oppression:

But it is precisely because history is the result of struggle and tells of change that it is perceived as a threat by all the ruling strata in all the oppressive exploitative systems. Tyrants and their tyrannical systems are terrified at the sound of the wheels of history. History is subversive. And it is because it is actually subversive of the existing tyrannical system that there have been attempts to arrest it. But how can one arrest the wheels of history? So they try to *rewrite* history, make up *official* history; if they can put cottonwool in their ears and in those of the population, maybe *they* and *the people* will not hear the *real* call of history, will not hear the *real* lessons of history.⁶⁴

If oppressive imperialist powers or governments of nation-states attempt to promote a dominant version of history that is to their advantage and justifies their oppression in addition to glossing over resistance to their rule, then those texts that attempt to tell a different story are, consequently, resisting this

⁶² San Juan, *Allegories of Resistance*, p. 69.

⁶³ San Juan, *From the Masses, to the Masses*, p. 185.

⁶⁴ Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Moving the Centre* pp. 96-7.

narrative and the power that seeks to perpetuate it. Those that show understanding of history as struggle and represent that struggle can be called resistance literature. Harlow stresses that a resistance narrative “is capable of exposing these structures [of unequal power], even, eventually, of realigning them, of redressing the imbalance.”⁶⁵ Thus resistance literature recognises the inequality of the world in which it is produced and seeks to represent and, in many cases challenge, these inequalities.

However, despite grounding itself in its own circumstances, resistance literature frequently shows its understanding of the worldwide forces of capitalism and colonialism by making either overt or subtle links with other resistance movements. Harlow cites several examples, including the Angolan poet Viriato da Cruz who linked the struggle for black freedom on three continents, and the poets from Chile and Cuba who wrote poems in honour of the Nicaraguan leader Augusto Sandino.⁶⁶

Another aspect of resistance literature that will be important to the discussion of many of the writers in this thesis and which takes a slightly different approach to those discussed so far is what San Juan calls ‘speaking truth to power.’ In this type of resistance, the author addresses a wider (sometimes global) audience that includes those responsible for oppressing the writer’s culture, and attempts to convey the suffering their culture has undergone in the hope of moving people to change. San Juan’s example of this is the Guatemalan activist Rigoberta Menchu whose testamentary autobiography tells the story of the torture and murder of her entire family and the attempted genocide of her people. Despite this, San Juan emphasises that she is trying to open up a dialogue with the wider world, including the people responsible for her suffering, to ensure that those in power are aware of the effects of their policies. It is important to emphasise that none of the authors in this thesis have experienced anything nearly as horrific (though those who lived through the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath experienced and witnessed severe suffering). However, as I will demonstrate, they too attempt to speak truth to power by portraying the conditions of their nations and opening up a dialogue with those whom they see as responsible.

Finally it is important to note that there is very little restriction as to the form and style of resistance literature. Harlow discusses poetry, novels, short stories, memoirs and others. While some form of realism is common in those novels trying to depict the fate of an oppressed people, it is by no means obligatory. San Juan cites writers like Lenin who condemned any attempt to impose a paradigm of what exactly constituted a socialist or proletarian literature, and clearly agrees that this would be

⁶⁵ Harlow, p. 85.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 46.

equally detrimental in the case of a national-popular literature or literature of resistance.⁶⁷ These literatures must be dynamic and change their modes according to changing circumstances.⁶⁸ Therefore this thesis will discuss both prose and poetry and works of varying forms within those two major genres. No dramatic works will be considered but this is through choice of texts rather than any decision that dramas cannot form part of a literature of resistance.

Naturally, not every work classified as resistance literature will contain all the features mentioned above. Certainly none of the texts discussed in this thesis do. Some attributes are found in almost every text, while others are rarer. But I will make use of this paradigm to argue that every one of the works discussed can be understood as resistance literature.

Firstly though, I will consider whether resistance theory can be correctly and usefully applied in the Welsh and Catalan cases. In order to do this it is necessary to provide a brief history of the two nations in question.

A Brief History of Wales and Catalonia

Before providing this brief history, it may be useful to consider the status of Catalonia and Wales today and, indeed, their claim to be called nations, given that many people tend to associate nations with sovereign states, which, at the time of writing, Wales and Catalonia are not. However, the opinion both among scholars and the citizens of Wales and Catalonia is that they are nations. Julius Friend writes that: “Wales, while only fleetingly a single state, created from its separate petty kingdoms in the Middle Ages and dominated by the English after 1300, was always considered a nation.”⁶⁹ Later he adds: “Yet whatever its political status, Wales is and always has been considered a region distinctively different from England, a nation in the modern sense of the word. Language is the most important defining characteristic...”⁷⁰ Meanwhile, Kenneth McRoberts writes that: “Indeed, it [Catalonia] does have most of the earmarks of a nation: a language and culture, a long history of distinct institutions, a strong sense of common history, and such symbols of nationhood as a flag and a national anthem.”⁷¹

⁶⁷ San Juan, *Only By Struggle*, p. 115.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁶⁹ Julius W. Friend, *Stateless Nations: Western European Regional Nationalism and the Old Nations* (Houndsmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p. 5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁷¹ Kenneth McRoberts, *Catalonia: Nation-building without a State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 1.

Most, though not all, of these apply also to Wales. Even opponents of Catalan/Welsh autonomy often dignify them with the status of nation, if unintentionally, by referring to those who act for the region as ‘nationalists.’

The above quotations from Friend and McRoberts have mentioned some of the characteristics associated with a nation but what exactly is a nation? It is not an easy term to define, and as there is a huge body of literature on nations and nationalism (including seminal works by Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith, Benedict Anderson and Michael Billig to name but a few) there are consequently several different definitions. This thesis will not discuss all these works and definitions. While such a discussion would benefit the thesis, as the resistance the authors espouse could be better understood and explored in the context of nationalism, there is simply not the space to address it in the necessary detail. Therefore, I will just select the definition(s) that will be used in the following study.

Perhaps the most straightforward and inclusive definition is that by Walker Connor: “the simplest statement that can be made about a nation is that it is a body of people who feel that they are a nation.”⁷² This would certainly apply to Catalonia whose people declared themselves to be a nation in their draft of a new Statute of Autonomy and reacted angrily when the Spanish changed it to a nationality.⁷³ McRoberts writes: “For a century now, Catalonia’s cultural and political leaders, and much of its population, have shared the belief that Catalonia constitutes a nation.”⁷⁴ Wales’ sense of nationhood has been shakier in the past with divisions between North and South and especially between Welsh-speaker and non-Welsh-speaker. Now, however, there is growing sense of unity leading Friend to declare: “Wales today has a national consciousness.”⁷⁵

Monserrat Guibernau is a little more specific than Connor writing that: “By nation I refer to a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself.”⁷⁶ However again the emphasis is on the bonds people feel; indeed Guibernau remarks:

Some scholars of nationalism insist on the subjective nature of national identity’s components.

In my view, the most relevant quality of those components is not whether they are subjective or

⁷² Walker Connor, quoted in Friend, p. 2.

⁷³ Geoff Cowling, ‘Preface’, in Kathryn Crameri, *Goodbye, Spain?: The Question of Independence for Catalonia* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2014), pp. xi-xiv (p. xi).

⁷⁴ McRoberts, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Friend, p. 72.

⁷⁶ Monserrat Guibernau, *The Identity of Nations* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 60.

not, but rather whether they are felt as real by those sharing a common identity. Across the globe we find countless examples of people prepared to make sacrifices and ultimately to die for their nations, and this proves that, at least for them, national identity is real and worth fighting for.⁷⁷

Thus, as Connor says, people are a nation if they feel themselves to be one. Technical definitions take second place to the thoughts and feelings of the people concerned. This is a particularly useful approach when considering modes of expression such as literature; if an author feels that the group they are writing about is a nation and consider it accordingly, then I would argue that this is more relevant to the discussion of their work than whether their people and/or land tick the boxes of a technical definition of a nation. Therefore, this thesis will use Guibernau's expanded version of Connor's definition, although I disagree with some of her points. She claims that a nation must share a common culture, whereas, as we will see, I would argue that there are two long-standing cultures in the nations under discussion (as well as various others brought in by other groups of people). However, I will argue that this need not compromise a sense of nationhood, as is shown by the growing national feeling in Wales today and the Catalan organisation *Súmate* that supports Catalan independence through the medium of Spanish.

Guibernau also differentiates usefully between a nation and an ethnic group:

The absence of a claim to self-determination is what distinguishes an ethnic group from a nation. Moreover, ethnic groups, in particular those formed by communities of immigrant origin, are not always attached to specific territories, while members of a nation always share a strong affection for what they regard as the nation's homeland.⁷⁸

By this distinction Catalonia and Wales are both nations, not ethnic groups. Wales' claim to self-determination may have been weak in the past but is strengthening now and the territory and landscape of Wales have always been highly important to the people who live there, instilling them with a sense of belonging. In Catalonia too, territory is important, though complicated by the fact that some Catalan nationalists desire a union of what is called the *Països Catalans* (Catalan countries) - all the places where Catalan is spoken - which would include Valencia, the Balearic Isles, part of Aragon and the Catalan-speaking regions of France as well as Catalonia, whereas others simply focus on the territory of modern day Catalonia. But many Catalans feel great attachment to their land and it is of symbolic

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

value. In addition, Catalonia certainly fits the first of Guibernau's criteria for a nation as since the late nineteenth century it has sought at least some measure of political determination, although only recently has the idea of total independence from Spain been seriously considered by a large number of people. Previously most Catalan nationalists had simply sought greater autonomy within Spain.

Friend and Guibernau are also clear in distinguishing nations, states and nation-states. Guibernau uses Max Weber's definition of the state "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory,"⁷⁹ although she adds that not all states have achieved this and that some have not even tried.⁸⁰ In practice, this tends to mean a sovereign country with a government of its own that is not answerable to a higher level government (discounting organisations like the European Union and the United Nations) and that is recognised by other states, or at least the majority of them, as being one of their number. For Friend a nation-state is "a nation that has its own state, a homogenous one, such as Japan."⁸¹ As most Western European states contain national minorities eg Welsh, Scots and Northern Irish in the United Kingdom, Catalans, Basques and Galicians in Spain, Bretons, Occitans and several others in France, they are not truly nation states. Guibernau however, applies the term nation-state more generally to sovereign states including the United Kingdom, Spain and France while acknowledging that they are not homogenous and include national minorities within their borders. Certainly though they both agree that a nation does not require a state; indeed Friend's work examines the phenomenon of stateless nations including Wales and Catalonia, as well as Scotland, the Basque Country, Galicia and others.

So, Catalonia and Wales are both stateless nations, groups of people with a distinctive culture who feel themselves to be a nation and who identify themselves as such but do not have sovereignty or a state of their own; rather they are part of a larger state that has a different dominant culture (the United Kingdom in the case of Wales, Spain in that of Catalonia). Their current status within these larger states is not identical; Catalonia is defined as an Autonomous Community of Spain while Wales is now generally recognised as a country in its own right, a member of the United Kingdom along with England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, rather than as a province or region of England. In political terms Spain and the United Kingdom are not exactly the same – Spain is a single country made up of Autonomous Communities while the United Kingdom is made up of four individual countries. However, on the political stage the United Kingdom functions as a single country as shown by the

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 60.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

⁸¹ Friend, p. 2.

issues raised by Brexit. Therefore, while the official political status of Wales and Catalonia may be different, their actual political status is in many ways very similar – relatively powerless politically in a large democracy, the majority of whose citizens belong to a different culture. Their language and culture are officially recognised by their state, though this has not always been the case, but they are not a priority of the state government. Both Wales and Catalonia have some measure of devolved government. In Wales’ case, the Welsh Assembly came into being in 1998. Initially it had no primary legislative powers and focused on enacting UK-wide legislation as it applied to Wales.⁸² Since the Government of Wales Act in 2006 however, the Welsh Assembly has gained the power to implement laws in areas such as health, education and training, local government, social welfare, housing, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development, highways and transport and, unsurprisingly, the Welsh language.⁸³ The Wales Act of 2017 added to these powers. In recent years, two specific examples of the Assembly exercising these powers and passing different legislation to England are the scrapping of the SATs external exams (2004-5)⁸⁴ and the provision of free prescriptions.⁸⁵ As Kenneth McRoberts explains, it is more complicated to define Catalonia’s devolved areas of jurisdictions as defined by the 1978 Statute of Autonomy:

As one might expect, given the terms of the constitution, the exclusive jurisdictions claimed for the Generalitat are relatively few, consisting mainly of organization of the Generalitat itself, Catalan civil law, culture, research, local government, tourism, public works, roads and highways, fishing, co-operatives, youth foundations and associations, and guardianship of minors. Many of these functions are in fact qualified by references to superior powers of the Spanish state.⁸⁶

In addition to those listed above, the Generalitat was also given the power to set up a separate Catalan police force – the Mossos d’Esquadra. These devolved powers have not changed greatly in the past forty years. Much of the Generalitat’s focus has been on enacting cultural-linguistic policies such as the

⁸² Russell Deacon and Alan Sandry, *Devolution in the United Kingdom* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 107.

⁸³ Paul Owen, ‘What Powers Does the Welsh Assembly Have?’, *The Guardian*, 16 July, 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/jul/16/wales.devolution>> [Accessed 18 August, 2020].

⁸⁴ Abbie Wightwick, ‘What are SATs, why don’t we have them in Wales and what’s different about our National Tests?’, *Wales Online*, 20 May 2018 <<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/what-sats-dont-wales-14662002>> [Accessed 18 August, 2020].

⁸⁵ ‘Free prescriptions ‘saving Welsh NHS money for 10 years’, *BBC News*, 1 April, 2017 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-39457033>> [Accessed 18 August, 2020].

⁸⁶ McRoberts, p. 57.

1981 Lei de Normalizaci3n Lingüística, designed to protect and strengthen the Catalan language and promote its use in all areas of life. However, F. Xavier Hernández does note that Catalonia's general education initiatives were copied by the various Socialist Madrid governments in the late eighties and nineties.⁸⁷

So both Wales and Catalonia have a certain amount of legislative power. However, both nations are powerless in many important things; the Welsh Assembly has no tax-raising powers while, in addition to refusing to negotiate recently a new Pacte Fiscal that would give the Generalitat the ability to raise taxes,⁸⁸ the central Spanish government has attempted to interfere with the Catalan education system in order to reduce the amount of teaching devoted to the Catalan language.⁸⁹ Economic issues frequently affect both nations; parts of Wales are among the poorest in the United Kingdom,⁹⁰ while Catalonia is a wealthy region but feels that it pays far more in taxes than it receives back in state funding.⁹¹ However, economic grievances could be and are shared by other regions; many areas in the North of England are also poor, and poor regions of Spain like Andalucía may well feel that they too should receive more government funding. What sets Wales and Catalonia apart from these regions is their distinctive culture and sense of being a nation. As we will see, the two are closely linked.

The culture of both Catalonia and Wales is heavily based on their language. Both languages have a rich literary tradition stretching back to the early Middle Ages in Catalonia's case and earlier in the case of Welsh.⁹² This extends to the present day albeit with periods of decline. Sharing a language and culture binds people together and frequently gives them the sense of being a nation, particularly if the said culture develops in opposition to larger hostile cultures. As will be shown in more detail shortly, both Catalan and Welsh have suffered discrimination and oppression, and both have at times been in danger of dying out. Their survival is consequently a source of fierce pride for their speakers. Language and culture can be said to have played a large part in Wales and Catalonia's sense of nationhood, particularly as a means of distinguishing themselves from their larger, more powerful neighbours. Stewart King claims that in the view of many nationalists, if Catalonia's difference from other cultures

⁸⁷ F. Xavier Hernández Cardona, *The History of Catalonia* (Barcelona: Rafael Dalmau, 2007), p. 148.

⁸⁸ Crameri, *Goodbye, Spain? : The Question of Independence for Catalonia* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2014), pp. 46-50.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 71.

⁹⁰ John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 691.

⁹¹ Crameri, *Goodbye, Spain?*, p. 42.

⁹² Aneurin's epic poem *The Gododdin* is generally accepted to be the earliest work written in Welsh and is believed to have been composed in the 6th century AD although it was not written down until the 11th century. Hernández meanwhile estimates 1054-76 as the dates for the composition of *Cançó de Santa Fe*, a poem written in ancient Catalan. Hernández, p. 165.

could not be asserted, the nation would cease to exist.⁹³ Similarly, the Welsh philosopher J. R. Jones saw the importance of the Welsh language as a means to assert their difference as a people.⁹⁴ However, as will be seen, this equating of language with nationality has caused many difficulties and has the potential for causing others.

Both nations are now officially bilingual but this manifests in different ways. In Catalonia, Catalan is dominant in most public areas. The percentage of Welsh speakers, however, is far smaller than that of Catalan speakers and so in Wales both Welsh and English are used at all levels of government and administration. In Catalonia, all children are taught exclusively through the medium of Catalan apart from when they study Spanish, and all legislation by the Generalitat (Catalonia's Parliament) is in Catalan only. In Wales, on the other hand, all legislation must be bilingual, and although all state schools must teach Welsh as a compulsory subject up to the age of sixteen, the teaching of other subjects through the medium of Welsh varies hugely both from school to school and within schools. Welsh is not as strong as Catalan in the education system. Equally though, nationalism is not wholly bound up with language; for the 1997 referendum on devolution in Wales to pass, even by the slight margin it did, a number of English-speaking Welsh must have voted in the affirmative, while in Catalonia the organisation *Súmate* campaigns for Catalan independence through the medium of Spanish. The situation is complex. It is impossible to discuss in detail here but I hope that this introductory section will give at least an outline of these issues.

I will now insert a brief history of the two nations side by side. This history does not claim to be comprehensive. In addition to the restraints of space, the contents are affected by its primary function – to provide the necessary background for the study that follows. Therefore certain events that have no relevance to the context will be omitted or mentioned only briefly, whereas other events of seemingly lesser importance will be discussed at greater length.

It is hard to define the origins of any country; there are usually various dates given as to when the country was 'born.' John Davies offers these for Wales: AD 48 – the first time Wales appears in historical record, AD 580 – the time around which it is likely the term 'Cymry' was adopted,⁹⁵ and AD

⁹³ Stewart King, *Escribir la Catalanidad: Lengua e Identidades Culturales en la Narrativa Contemporánea de Cataluña* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2005), p. 1.

⁹⁴ J. R. Jones, cited in Dylan Phillips, 'A New Beginning of the Beginning or the Beginning of the End? The Welsh Language in Postcolonial Wales' in *Postcolonial Wales*, ed. by Jane Aaron and Chris Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 100-13 (p. 105).

⁹⁵ 'Cymry' means the Welsh people as opposed to 'Cymru' which means the land of Wales.

790 when, with the construction of Offa's Dyke, the territory of Wales became more or less defined.⁹⁶ Davies in the end settles for beginning with the very first evidence of human habitation in Wales,⁹⁷ but that is beyond the scope of this summary which will begin during the early Middle Ages. For the beginning of Catalonia as a nation, F. Xavier Hernández describes how it gradually developed from the Frankish kingdom's challenge to the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula in the ninth century AD but claims that it was not until the eleventh century that the name Catalonia and the term Catalan were used, around the same time as Catalan began to be used as a written language.⁹⁸ In reality, of course, for most countries there is not a single defining moment of coming into being, rather there is a process of becoming and developing into the nation they are today. This is what seems to have happened in the case of Wales and Catalonia. Gradually the territories speaking Welsh and Catalan began to form more cohesive wholes. This process was rather more erratic in Wales than in Catalonia. What is now called Wales was made up of several kingdoms for much of the early Middle Ages: Gwynedd, Powys, Deheubarth and others. At times two or more were united through conquest or marriage, and occasionally strong military leaders like Owain Gwynedd, Llywelyn the Great and Llywelyn the Last managed to unite most of the country under one rule, but after their deaths Wales usually broke back down into smaller kingdoms. Catalonia, on the other hand, generally kept the territory it gained, first as the County of Barcelona, then as the Principality of Catalonia under the Crown of Aragon with which it united through marriage in 1137.⁹⁹ It would later lose some – it is important to remember that the counties of Rousillon and Cerdagne in France were once part of Catalonia, as were the Balearic Isles, Valencia and part of Aragon – but generally in the Middle Ages it expanded. Its union with the Crown of Aragon did not hamper it unduly; the Catalan language had official status and when trade links in the Mediterranean were at their height it was a prosperous centre for trade and even possessed something of an overseas empire.

Wales, in contrast, suffered heavily in the later Middle Ages. During Norman times there were several attempts by England to invade though they were never wholly successful and various waves of Anglo-Norman settlers and nobles gained land there. In 1282 Llywelyn the Last, the last Welsh Prince of Wales who had succeeded in uniting much of the country against the English was defeated and killed, and Edward I took vigorous steps to crush any remaining opposition. He embarked on a castle building

⁹⁶ John Davies, p. 1.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁹⁸ Hernández, p. 41.

⁹⁹ John Payne, *Catalonia: History and Culture* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2004), p. 5.

project on a large scale, particularly in Gwynedd.¹⁰⁰ A series of edicts were passed against the Welsh, making them effectively second class citizens in their own country.¹⁰¹ In 1301, Edward installed his son as Prince of Wales – a position still held by the heir to the British throne today.¹⁰² For some 150 years this state of affairs remained, then in 1400 there was an uprising led by Owain Glyndŵr, a member of the Welsh gentry who would go on to achieve almost mythical status. The rising began largely because of a personal dispute but Glyndŵr was soon claiming the title Prince of Wales, and Davies argues that it was, first and foremost, a national revolt.¹⁰³

Glyndŵr achieved notable success at first and even when the tide turned he battled on bravely; it was not until 1413 that he was finally defeated. He was never captured or killed in battle and thus began rumours of his living on or sleeping to return one day to lead the Welsh to freedom. However glorious the rising was though, it was ultimately a failure and in the aftermath new edicts were passed against the Welsh.¹⁰⁴

The first real blow to Catalan autonomy was to come some fifty years later with the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon to Isabella of Castile which formed the basis for the modern-day Spanish state. After the successful expulsion of the Moors in 1492 they turned their attention to governing Spain and began to centralise.¹⁰⁵ As a result of their centralising policies and that of subsequent monarchs, Catalonia lost some of its autonomy but the Catalan language remained widely spoken despite the increasing dominance of Castilian culture in the new state and its courts (Corts) and Parliament (Generalitat) remained in use. Castilian (hereafter referred to as Spanish) however was the language of the royal court and came to be seen by many as the language of progress and advancement.¹⁰⁶ This was to become a recurring theme over the years. English was frequently seen in a similar way in Wales.¹⁰⁷

In the next century Wales was officially incorporated into what would become the United Kingdom. At that time England ruled Ireland albeit somewhat tenuously and Scotland was still an independent country. So at the time Wales was merely joined with England through the Acts of Union passed by

¹⁰⁰ Davies, p. 165-6.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 167-9.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 175.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 191.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 198-9.

¹⁰⁵ Hernández, pp. 61-2.

¹⁰⁶ King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, pp. 41-2.

¹⁰⁷ See for example, Janet Davies, *The Welsh Language: A History* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), pp. 35-6, 42; Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), pp. 20-1.

Henry VIII between 1536 and 1542. The first Act of Union proclaimed “the Dominion Principality and Country of Wales justly and righteously is and ever hath been incorporated annexed united and subject to and under the Imperial Crown [of England].”¹⁰⁸ In addition to altering the political status of Wales, the Acts of Union affected the Welsh language. The text of the Act of Union forbade advancement to any who spoke Welsh, forcing people to choose between keeping their language and social advancement. English became the language of business, trade, the law and the court. However, Welsh generally remained the language of the hearth, and, crucially, of religion. Many historians of the Welsh language emphasise the significance of the translation of the Bible into Welsh c.1580.¹⁰⁹ Later the fervent adoption of Nonconformity in Wales was crucial. Not only was the language of the chapel Welsh, but the image of themselves as a Nonconformist nation came to be hugely important to the Welsh in the nineteenth century, as M. Wynn Thomas has shown.¹¹⁰ The chapel came to be seen as opposite and superior to the Anglican Church where the services were largely conducted in English and which was widely regarded as the imposed church of the foreign invaders.

In Catalonia too, despite a centralising state, the Catalan language continued. However, certain of Catalonia’s traditional freedoms were encroached upon and violated, and in 1640 the presence of and abuses committed by Spanish troops garrisoned in Catalonia during a war with France sparked the Reapers’ War. It was begun by farm workers and taken up later by the Generalitat who contacted France for support and signed the Pact of Céret with them which agreed that Catalonia would become a free republic under French protection.¹¹¹ With French help the forces of Barcelona’s city guilds managed to hold off the Castilian army in the Battle of Montjuïc and the war dragged on. In 1652 though, after a year-long siege and plague which decimated the population, Barcelona surrendered. In the subsequent Treaty of the Pyrenees, the Catalan counties of Rousillon and upper Cerdagne were gifted to France; however the Catalans were allowed to keep their institutions. John Payne opines that they “had been treated rather better than they deserved,” by the Hapsburg rulers and believes this may have influenced their decision to back the Hapsburg candidate in the War of Spanish Succession – a decision which was to have disastrous consequences for them.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Gwyneth Tyson Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books: The Perfect Instrument of Empire* (Llandybie: Gwasg Dindefwr, 1998), p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ See for example Janet Davies, pp. 39-41; Gwyn A. Williams, *When was Wales?* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1986), p. 127.

¹¹⁰ M. Wynn Thomas, *In the Shadow of the Pulpit: Literature and Nonconformist Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010).

¹¹¹ Hernández, p. 72.

¹¹² Payne, p. 73.

The War of Spanish Succession was the real disaster for Catalonia, in particular its language and culture. The Catalans backed the unsuccessful Hapsburg candidate, initially in alliance with England, Austria and Holland who did not want to see the French Bourbon king Philip take the throne of Spain. However, the balance of power changed when the Hapsburg Charles inherited the Austrian throne and the English and others decided to make their peace with the Bourbons. This was unacceptable to the Catalans, and they continued fighting long after their allies had withdrawn from the war. The citizens and guild soldiers of Barcelona, completely unused to warfare, held out heroically against a professional army of French and Spanish soldiers but were finally defeated on September 11th 1714, a date that is burned deep in the psyche of the Catalan nation – September 11th is now the national day of Catalonia. When Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia finally fell to the victorious Philip V's troops, the reprisals were brutal. Catalonia was treated like a conquered country; many of its citizens massacred, executed, or imprisoned. Subsequently, a fortress was built in Barcelona to control the population and the Nova Planta decree was passed which enforced harsh measures against the Catalan language. The Generalitat and Corts were abolished and a new heavy tax was levied.

The remainder of the eighteenth century was a relatively low period for both Wales and Catalonia. However, both nations experienced a cultural revival in the nineteenth century, at a time when many small and stateless nations of Europe were gaining a growing self-awareness and desire for autonomy/statehood which often started with a cultural revival. The Renaixença in Catalonia and the Dadeni in Wales can be compared with the Galician Rexurdimento and the Celtic Revival which took place in Scotland and Ireland during a similar period. Many of these minority nationalisms were inspired by the ideas of the German philosopher Herder regarding the folk and their culture, and scholars have argued that this was the case with both Wales and Catalonia.¹¹³ Writers were encouraged to be proud of their language and prove it was possible to use it to write 'high' literature. Efforts were also made to standardise the language extending into the twentieth century; John Morris Jones' *Welsh Grammar, Historical and Comparative* was published in 1913, while Pompeu Fabra's *Diccionari General de la Llengua Catalana* appeared in 1932. Institutions were also formed to support the culture; the National Library of Wales and National Museum of Wales were founded in 1907, as was the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. There was a growing political awareness as well, particularly in Catalonia. In 1901 the right wing Catalan party Lliga Regionalista (Regionalist League) was formed. In 1914 a

¹¹³ See Kathryn Crameri, *Language, the Novelist and National Identity in Post-Franco Catalonia* (Oxford: European Humanities Research Centre of the University of Oxford, 2000), pp. 19-20; King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 13; Simon Brooks, *Why Wales Never Was* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018), pp. 39-44.

provincial government called the Mancomunitat was created, uniting the four provinces of Catalonia. This was dissolved however in 1925 by the dictator Primo de Rivera. In 1931 the inaugural year of the Second Spanish Republic, a new left-wing Catalan party Esquerra Republica Catalana (Catalan Republican Left) was formed and won the local elections. Their leader Francesc Macià became President of the Generalitat. Macià initially declared a Catalan Republic within a Federal Spanish Republic but was forced to retract and settle for a Statute of Autonomy that granted Catalonia certain regional powers. When Macià died in 1934, he was succeeded by Lluís Companys who would subsequently be imprisoned for declaring a Catalan Republic within a Spanish Republic.

Welsh politicians were on the whole less forthright, but in 1886 Tom Edward Elis, the first MP to have self-government for Wales in his manifesto,¹¹⁴ was elected to Parliament, and the movement Cymru Fydd (the Wales to Be) was formed. This never had much impact however and, as Davies has argued, seems to have been envisaged, primarily at least, as a movement aimed at those in exile.¹¹⁵ Simon Brooks argues that Wales missed the opportunity to develop as a nation at this point due to its adherence to the Liberal Party (to which Elis and most of the members of Cymru Fydd belonged) and its emphasis on the rights of individuals rather than community rights for language groups.¹¹⁶ Wales would have to wait until 1925 for its own political party and even longer for any serious agitation on Home Rule. In Davies' opinion, many of the talented young Welshmen of the time were more concerned with regaining confidence in their heritage – his example being the Welsh students at Oxford who created the Dafydd ap Gwilym society whose members “sought to comprehend the true characteristics of the Welsh language...”¹¹⁷ Thus although both nations experienced a cultural and political awakening in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it seems fair to say that Wales' was less political and more purely culturally based.

In contrast to these cultural revivals however, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were also the time when the presence of the Spanish and English languages hugely increased. The factors usually given for this increase are education and industrialisation – in particular the massive migration this caused. Catalonia had long been Spain's leading industrial province along with the Basque country. Consequently workers poured in from all parts of Spain to find work. This was particularly true in the run up to the 1888 World Fair which created yet more jobs. In Wales meanwhile, the industrialisation of the valleys region proceeded quickly in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as first iron and

¹¹⁴ Davies, p. 441.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 441.

¹¹⁶ Simon Brooks, *Why Wales Never Was* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018).

¹¹⁷ Davies, p. 442.

then coal was discovered, mined and worked, and, as in Catalonia, workers rushed there to find jobs that offered far higher wages than working on the land. At first most of the migrants came from other parts of Wales but later many Irish and English also came and by sheer weight of numbers the language of the workplace and of many of the communities became English. This is of necessity a simplistic view and some historians have suggested that the relocation of whole communities from the rural parts of Wales allowed for the formation of Welsh-language communities that actually helped preserve the language and culture.¹¹⁸ However, it is certainly true that the influx of workers increased the number of English speakers in Wales, whether or not it directly damaged the Welsh language. A similar shift occurred in Catalonia, particularly in the cities.

Another factor was education. In 1870 and 1889 Education Acts that made schooling available to every child in the United Kingdom were passed, but generally that schooling was provided in English. This led to a generation of children whose first language was Welsh but whose education and subsequent professional life was lived through the medium of English. Many abandoned their mother tongue and forgot or half forgot it. Speaking Welsh was sometimes seen as a badge of shame. This was encouraged by measures like the Welsh Knot – a device hung around the necks of schoolchildren caught speaking Welsh. The only way to get rid of it was to report another child for speaking Welsh and at the end of the day the child left wearing the device was punished – usually beaten. Thus English was becoming more and more the professional and educated language of Wales with Welsh relegated to the hearth or completely ignored. In Catalonia numerous similar Acts were passed in 1768, 1834, 1838, 1849, 1857 and 1870, making Spanish the language of education although, as Stewart King points out, the number of Acts suggests that they were not very successful.¹¹⁹

As well as an increase in the amount of English/Spanish spoken in the country, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also saw a rise in protests, many heated and violent, but not necessarily nationalist.

¹¹⁸ The main exponent of this argument has been Brinley Thomas. See Brinley Thomas, ‘Wales and the Atlantic Economy’, *Scottish Journal of Political Economy* VI (November 1959), 169-92, and ‘Cauldron of Rebirth: A: Population and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century’, *Welsh History Review/Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru* 13 (Jan 1, 1986), 418-37. Similarly, Glyn Jones writes of the rich Welsh-language cultural activity that existed in his home town of Merthyr Tydfil at the height of the industrial period in the nineteenth-century. Glyn Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, ed. by Tony Brown (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 11-12. M. Wynn Thomas, meanwhile, drawing on his experiences of growing up in the Rhondda region in the twentieth century, vehemently rejects the idea that Welsh, “was somehow an ‘illegitimate language,’ of Valleys experience...” M. Wynn Thomas, *All That Is Wales: The Collected Essays of M. Wynn Thomas* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017), p. 6.

¹¹⁹ King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 43.

In Wales there was frequent unrest in the coalfield, the most striking of which occurrences were the Merthyr Rising in 1831, the Newport Rising in 1839, and the Tonypany riots in 1910. However, as we will see in the work of some of the authors in this thesis, these revolts may have been more Welsh in character than was previously thought. Workers in the mines gradually became more class conscious and better organised and strikes against low levels of pay or poor or dangerous working conditions sometimes spilled over into riots and violence. In all the above cases the army was called in to restore order. In the cities of Catalonia, Barcelona in particular, anarchist ideas developed and spread, inciting resistance among members of the working class.

As already noted, Catalan was strengthened by the Statute of Autonomy granted by the Second Spanish Republic. Naturally therefore when the Spanish Civil War broke out the Generalitat and the majority of Catalans supported the Republic.¹²⁰ They were consequently on the losing side and suffered accordingly, as did other defeated regions under Franco's dictatorship. However, Catalonia with its own culture and customs, was an obstacle to Franco's vision of a united, (monocultural) Castilian Spain. Most of the Generalitat, along with several prominent Catalan intellectuals and artists, managed to flee across the border into France but any who remained faced severe punishment and repression. Hernández estimates that some 150,000 Catalans who fought for the Republic were imprisoned and at least 4,000 shot.¹²¹ When the President of the Generalitat, Lluís Companys, was arrested in France by the Gestapo and returned to Spain, he was executed. The Catalan language was banned in public; Spanish was now effectively enforced as the language of school as well as of business and the law. Teachers were imported from other parts of Spain and Catalan teachers in turn were sent to work in other regions to help enforce this. Publishing in Catalan was not permitted; Catalan literature was continued virtually exclusively by writers in exile like Mercè Rodoreda. Migration from other parts of Spain was encouraged, flooding Catalonia with Spanish-speaking immigrants in an effort to further dilute Catalan.

Despite all these efforts by the dictatorship, the Catalan language persisted, spoken in the home. The Generalitat also persisted, managing to organise while in exile in Mexico. From 1959 resistance to the dictatorship grew stronger and despite a brutal police response it could not be annihilated. During the latter years of the dictatorship restrictions slackened a little and in 1962 Edicions '62 publishing house opened and began publishing Catalan texts. Catalan-language magazines began to emerge under the

¹²⁰ Hernández points out that some of the Catalan bourgeoisie did support and even help Franco's nationalists, mainly because of their fear of the Republic-supporting anarchist organisations that were taking over Barcelona. Hernández, p. 130.

¹²¹ Hernández, p. 135.

protection of institutions like the Church and in 1961 the Nova Canço (new song) Catalan music movement began.¹²²

Wales fortunately has experienced nothing as traumatic as the Civil War and its aftermath. However, the twentieth century was still a difficult time for the Welsh language and Wales as a whole. Increasingly there was felt to be a divide between the Welsh-speaking mainly rural North and West and the English-speaking industrial areas of the South-East. The Nationalist Party Plaid Cymru (the Party of Wales) was formed in 1925 but its initial emphasis on the Welsh language as being a crucial component of Welshness alienated many in the South who felt themselves to be Welsh despite being unable to speak the language (this issue will be discussed in greater detail later).

Wales was also made to feel increasingly ignored by the British government during the twentieth century. A series of decisions sparked protests in Wales. The first of these was the Penyberth incident in 1936. This was aroused by the government's decision to build a bombing school on the Llŷn peninsula, despite opposition from nearly every part of Wales on the grounds that the location was a site of extreme importance in Welsh culture. The government's refusal to change its mind caused great bitterness as it was effectively dismissing the Welsh culture as unimportant. This was seen as particularly callous in view of the fact that another possible location in England had had its protest upheld on the grounds of damage to wildlife. So three leading figures of Welsh culture decided to protest by burning down the bombing school buildings then turning themselves in to the police for the publicity the trial would cause. This trial produced Saunders Lewis' 'Caernarfon Court Speech' – a magnificent defence of their actions and protest at the attitude of the British government.¹²³ The mainly Welsh jury was unable to reach a decision and the men had to be retried in England where they earned short prison sentences. They were hailed as heroes and martyrs in Wales by many.

Another series of protests were aroused by the government's policy of creating reservoirs in Wales to supply water to big English cities like Liverpool and Birmingham. This often involved the break up and removal of Welsh-speaking communities, an action that Welsh nationalists claimed was harmful to the culture of Wales, as well as cruel to those forced to leave their homes. Tryweryn is the best known of these cases, attracting fierce protest that also ultimately failed.

¹²² Ibid., p. 142.

¹²³ Saunders Lewis, 'The Caernarfon Court Speech', in *Presenting Saunders Lewis*, ed. by Alun R. Jones and Gwyn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1983), pp. 115-26.

These and a number of other factors such as the growing practice of English people buying second homes in Wales, which increased the amount of English spoken and disrupted the community by leaving these houses empty for half the year and raising house prices beyond the reach of local people, led to the formation of organisations like Cymdeithas yr Iaith (the Welsh Language Society) that engaged in campaigns of civil disobedience in an attempt to protest this treatment of the language and people of Wales. They had some success – their vandalisation of road signs eventually led to the provision of bilingual signs and more schools began to teach Welsh and through the medium of Welsh. There were also groups that favoured more radical methods like Meibion Glyndŵr, who burned down second homes, and Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru (MAC), who tried to sabotage the building sites of reservoirs and even planted explosives at sites of political importance though generally they were careful not to harm people. MAC targeted the investiture of Charles as Prince of Wales in 1969 in particular, decrying the installation of another foreigner as Prince of Wales. The majority of nationalist protestors were, however, entirely pacific.

The nationalist movement suffered a distinct setback in 1979 when the British Government offered the people of Wales a referendum on devolution; the vote against devolution was virtually four times the affirmative vote. However, eighteen years later in 1997, a second referendum was held and this time devolution was voted for, albeit by a very small margin. This led to the creation of the Welsh Assembly which, despite fairly limited powers, has managed to change several things. Wales is now officially bilingual and Welsh must be taught in all state schools. Numerous books are published in Welsh and all official material must be produced in both English and Welsh.

Catalan has also flourished in the latter part of the twentieth century and the early part of the twenty-first. After Franco's death in 1975, his successor King Juan Carlos declared Spain to be a democracy and a new constitution was drafted which recognised the existence and rights of the 'historic nationalities' – Catalonia, Galicia, and the Basque Country. In 1978 Catalonia was granted its Statute of Autonomy which permitted it, among other things, to make Catalan a co-official language in the region. The Generalitat was restored and embarked on a programme of 'linguistic normalisation' attempting to promote the use of Catalan in every sphere of life. This was largely successful. All legislation passed by the Generalitat is in Catalan, it is taught in schools and it is estimated that some 80% of the population speak Catalan. Some people have complained that the intensity of the Catalanisation discriminates against those who do not speak it, in particular migrants from other parts

of Spain, and risks the repression of Spanish.¹²⁴ However others argue that the emphasis on language as a marker of national identity is a good thing as it creates an open nationality; membership of the nation is granted to all who can speak the language and a language is something that anyone can learn. It does not rely on birth or blood. The long-serving President of the Generalitat Jordi Pujol famously claimed “és Català tothom que viu i treballa a Catalunya.”¹²⁵ Incoming immigrants are encouraged to learn the language and are provided with plenty of opportunities to attend classes to do so, as they also are in Wales.

Wales seems currently to be fairly content with its position and Plaid Cymru focus on representing Wales in Westminster and making the most of the powers that the Welsh Assembly possesses. However, post-Brexit calls for Welsh independence have been increasing and gaining this independence was part of Plaid Cymru’s manifesto for the 2019 election. Generally, though, the desire for independence is not that strong even if it is increasing. In Catalonia, however, things are very different. Within the last decade desire for independence has been growing in spectacular fashion. Demonstrations in favour of independence have been held on September 11th (Catalan National Day) and on other occasions since 2010. Over a million people joined a march for independence in 2010.¹²⁶ The 2012 demonstration was even larger, being attended by around 1.5 million people.¹²⁷ The next year, a human chain that stretched from the northern to the southern borders of Catalonia was formed.¹²⁸ The then President of the Generalitat, Artur Mas, who had previously remained quiet on his opinion of Catalan independence, came out in open support of it in 2012 and called snap elections in the hope of strengthening his mandate to negotiate with the Spanish government. In fact his party did less well than he had hoped but pro-independence parties made a large majority. Mas began negotiations in the hope of holding a referendum in which Catalans could vote on the independence issue, but the Spanish government declared that such a referendum would be unconstitutional as

¹²⁴ In the second half of the 1990s a group of prominent Catalans from various professions formed a movement called Foro Babel and claimed they were uneasy about the proposed Law of Linguistic Policy. They wanted a society based on the principles of freedom, justice and plurality and wanted citizens of Catalonia to have the free choice of either Catalan or Spanish, rather than being heavily pushed in the direction of Catalan. They argued that this law endangered the peaceful cohabitation that had existed between immigrants and natives and Catalan speakers and Spanish speakers since the death of Franco. These propositions sparked furious responses and fierce debate. King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 161.

¹²⁵ Jordi Pujol, quoted in Crameri, *Language, the Novelist and National Identity in Post-Franco Catalonia*, p. 36. “Anyone who lives and works in Catalonia is a Catalan.” All translations are mine unless stated otherwise.

¹²⁶ Crameri, *Goodbye, Spain?*, pp. 44-5.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

arranging referenda is a state power not one devolved to the regions, and refused to negotiate or even discuss the issue. Not surprisingly this aroused the ire of many Catalans and increased their determination to go ahead with the referendum. The designated date was November 11th 2014, some two months after the Scottish referendum. The Spanish government insisted that the referendum was illegal and would not take place. The Generalitat offered a compromise, asking permission to hold a non-binding consultation instead of the referendum but this too was refused. However the non-binding consultation was carried out anyway on the date originally proposed for the referendum. As it was unofficial and technically illegal it could not use the state apparatus; instead volunteers turned out in their thousands to organise the vote. The result unsurprisingly was an overwhelming ‘yes’ vote as most who were anti-independence did not turn out to vote, though some did as they were against independence but in favour of the right to decide. Nothing official happened as a result of this consultation, though some Catalans hoped the Generalitat would make a unilateral declaration of independence. There was even some concern that the Spanish army would be sent in. In fact neither of these things happened and the discontent and wrangling continued. Then in 2017 the Generalitat declared that a referendum would be held on October 1st – a move the Spanish government immediately declared illegal. The government tried to interfere in the preparations for the referendum but it went ahead thanks to the determination of the Catalan people who went to extraordinary lengths to ensure its success. The Catalan police force were given orders to prevent people voting but refused to do so. The official reason given for this was that they wanted to avoid violence. The Spanish police who were drafted in to help did use force which led to horrifying scenes that were broadcast around the world and shocked many. The Generalitat hoped that this would arouse support for Catalonia in other countries and the EU but this has not happened at an official level. The current President of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, is in exile in Belgium, having fled Spain to avoid arrest, and has so far successfully avoided Spanish extradition attempts. Recently (October 2019) several of his colleagues and other figures of political and cultural importance were tried in Madrid and received gaol sentences of up to thirteen years on charges like sedition and inciting to riot. This has sparked furious protests in Catalonia but again the international community has failed to intervene.

Interference in the Catalan education system and economic grievances, exacerbated in recent years by the Spanish government’s rejection of a proposed Pacte Fiscal (financial deal) that would give Catalonia greater control over her finances,¹²⁹ are among the factors that have increased Catalan desire for independence. The major cause of the sudden upsurge however was the revision of the Catalan

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp. 46-9.

Statute of Autonomy in 2006. Under the Socialist central government, all regions were given an opportunity to update their statutes if they chose to do so. Catalonia did, and the draft they sent to Madrid for approval contained clauses that were unacceptable to the Spanish government. The statute was finally passed in watered down form but the right-wing Partido Popular (in opposition at the time) challenged it as unconstitutional.¹³⁰ Some, the Catalan Socialist Party in particular, were in favour of a federal system like Germany or the United States but a growing number of Catalans felt independence was the only answer. However the question that was proposed for the referendum and used for the consultation covered all options by splitting into two parts: “Would you like Catalonia to be a state? In the case of an affirmative response, would you like that state to be independent?”¹³¹ Thus those who wanted to keep the status quo could answer no to both questions, advocates of federalism could answer yes to the first and no to the second, and supporters of full independence could answer yes to both. As already seen, those wanting change of some sort, that is those who answered yes to at least the first question, were in the majority.

Despite the difference in current status, it can be seen that Wales and Catalonia have much in common. Both are nations that were once independent but that have been incorporated into larger states and have consequently had to fight for the continued existence of their language and culture. That being the case, it might seem that the most obvious comparison in the case of these two nations is their literature written in Welsh and Catalan. Indeed for many Catalans the only language in which Catalan literature can be written is Catalan. This is usually known as ‘*criteri filològic*’ (philological criteria) – that is the language in which it is written governs the nationality of the text. Work written in Spanish even by Catalan authors, is Spanish literature. A similar idea is held by many in Wales. Thus a comparison of the literature of Wales and Catalonia should surely be a comparison of Welsh and Catalan language literatures which would certainly be an interesting and valuable study. Paul Birt has begun this with his book *Cerddi Alltudiaeth*,¹³² in which he discusses the general development of nationalism and literature in Wales, Catalonia and Quebec before examining one writer from each culture. Hannah Sams continued the process, comparing the Welsh-language playwright Aled Jones Williams with the

¹³⁰ Cowling, p. xi.

¹³¹ Juan Rodríguez Teruel and Astrid Barrio, ‘Voting Beyond Constitutional Borders. Catalan Unofficial Referendums of Independence in 2014 and 2017’, *Fédéralisme REgionalisme* 19 (2019) <<https://popups.uliege.be/1374-3864/index.php?id=1891#tocto1n5>> [Accessed February 25, 2020].

¹³² Paul Birt, *Cerddi Alltudiaeth: Thema yn Llenyddiaethau Québec, Catalunya a Chymru* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1997).

primarily Catalan-language dramatist Sergi Belbel.¹³³ Subsequently Sams has expanded on this comparison and published an article in *Llên Cymru*.¹³⁴ However, there is still ample space for comparisons between Welsh-language and Catalan-language literature.

However, I believe that the comparison of English-language works by Welsh authors and Spanish-language work by Catalan authors will provide an equally interesting and valuable study. The importance of the national language and the pride in its survival has led to a kind of ‘reverse prejudice’ against what are often seen as the ‘oppressor’s tongues’ – English and Spanish. As noted above many Welsh and Catalans have difficulties with the idea of a national text written in anything other than Welsh or Catalan. A resolution passed by the Primer Encontre d’Escriptors dels Països Catalans,¹³⁵ held in 1976, declared that “Són escriptors Catalans els qui escriuen i/o publiquen llurs obres de creació en català.”¹³⁶ Indeed Maria Aurelia Capmany went further and claimed that Catalan writers who wrote in Spanish were contributing to the cultural colonisation of Catalonia by the central state.¹³⁷ In Wales meanwhile, Saunders Lewis denied that there could be such a thing as an Anglo-Welsh literature and claimed that poets like Dylan Thomas were English not Welsh.¹³⁸ In justification it must be said that later in life he modified his views and accepted even Dylan Thomas as a Welsh writer. But his statements both expressed and influenced the prevailing feeling at the time – Welsh literature was literature written in Welsh. Writers who write in Spanish/English have often been seen as less than truly Catalan/Welsh; their identities at best ambivalent, and certainly they have not until recently been considered part of their nation’s literature. They are also vulnerable to accusations of betraying their nation by portraying their people for the enjoyment of outsiders, or for being motivated purely by financial gain (there is of course a far wider market for English and Spanish texts than there is for those in Welsh or Catalan). The possibility that there could be genuinely nationalist authors writing in ‘the oppressor’s tongue’ was more or less dismissed.

¹³³ Hannah Sams, *Ffarwel i’r Abswrd?: Agweddau ar y Theatr Gymraeg Gyfoes* (Unpublished PhD thesis Swansea University, 2016).

¹³⁴ Hannah Sams, ‘Dramodwyr Rhwng Dau Fyd: Aled Jones Williams a Sergi Belbel’, *Llên Cymru*, 42.1 (October 2019), 186-233.

¹³⁵ The First Meeting of the Writers of the Catalan countries.

¹³⁶ Quoted in King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 47. “Catalan writers are those who write and/or publish their work in Catalan.”

¹³⁷ Maria Aurelia Capmany, quoted in King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 3.

¹³⁸ Saunders Lewis, ‘Is there an Anglo-Welsh Literature?’ (Cardiff: Cardiff section of the Guild of Graduates of the University of Wales, 1939).

However in the last twenty to thirty years in Wales, the study of Welsh writing in English has developed as an academic discipline and attempted to reclaim English-language work by Welsh authors as an essentially Welsh literature in spite of the language in which it is written. Critics such as M. Wynn Thomas and Tony Conran began to study the English and Welsh-language literatures side by side and discovered similarities of influence, themes and style,¹³⁹ while others like Raymond Garlick and Roland Mathias have established that the history of Welsh Writing in English can be said to go back to the Middle Ages.¹⁴⁰ This suggested that English has been in literary use in Wales for a long time and that the English-language literature of Wales could be considered a legitimate literature of Wales. It is now widely recognised as such and much further study of the English-language writing of Wales has been carried out.¹⁴¹

As regards Catalan literature in Spanish there has probably been less work done, at least work that considers it as Catalan literature as opposed to or as well as Spanish literature. But Stewart King and Kathryn Cramerer have both published work on this issue. In *Language, the novelist and national identity in post-Franco Catalonia* Cramerer compares the Spanish-language authors Juan Goytisolo and Juan Marsé with the Catalan-language writers Biel Mesquida and Monserrat Roig,¹⁴² while King discusses the issue of language and identity at length in *Escribir la Catalanidad*.¹⁴³ Félix de Azúa, himself a Catalan who wrote in Spanish, felt that while Spanish was the only possible adjective to describe his work, that did not mean that it was not also Catalan; rather, as King explains, he used Spanish as a linguistic term to encompass all literatures written through the medium of Spanish for example those from South and Central America as well as different regions of Spain. Within this definition, King claims, Azúa could consider himself and others like him to be Catalan authors who

¹³⁹ M. Wynn Thomas, *Internal Difference: Twentieth-Century Writing in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), *Diffinio Dwy Lenyddiaeth Cymru* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1995), *Corresponding Cultures: The Two Literatures of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999); Tony Conran, *The Cost of Strangeness: Essays on the English Poets of Wales* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1982), *Frontiers in Anglo-Welsh Poetry* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997).

¹⁴⁰ Raymond Garlick, *An Introduction to Anglo-Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1970); Roland Mathias, *Anglo-Welsh Literature: An Illustrated History* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1987).

¹⁴¹ The development of Welsh Writing in English and much of the discussion about its claim to Welshness have been discussed at length by M. Wynn Thomas in *Corresponding Cultures*, Tony Conran in *The Cost of Strangeness* and *Frontiers in Anglo-Welsh Poetry*, Raymond Garlick in *An Introduction to Anglo-Welsh Literature* and Glyn Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001).

¹⁴² Kathryn Cramerer, *Language, the Novelist and National Identity in Post-Franco Catalonia* (Oxford: Legenda [in Association with] European Humanities Research Centre, University of Oxford, 2000).

¹⁴³ Stewart King, *Escribir la Catalanidad: Lengua e Identidades Culturales en la Narrativa Contemporánea de Cataluña* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2005).

wrote in Spanish – a parallel situation to Welsh writers in English.¹⁴⁴ David Knutson published a spirited defence of the Spanish-language Eduardo Mendoza claiming him as a Catalan author,¹⁴⁵ while José Saval has done important work on Mendoza and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, another Spanish-language Catalan writer.¹⁴⁶

Another important point made by the study of English-language Welsh writing and Spanish-language Catalan writing is that many of the authors, particularly in the twentieth century, who write in these languages do not do so out of choice. In Wales in particular, as we have seen, a large percentage of the population cannot speak their national language. Glyn Jones explained this by examining his own experience in his book *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*.¹⁴⁷ Even those who can speak Welsh, may have been educated solely through the medium of English and studied English-language literature. As a result they may not feel able to write in their native language. The same is true of Catalan authors. While they are more likely to speak their native language, those who grew up under the dictatorship will have been educated entirely through the medium of Spanish and this will surely affect their writing ability in their own language and the literary models that are available. In an interview Juan Marsé mentioned the influence that the Spanish-language books that he had studied at school had had upon him.¹⁴⁸ Most of the writers discussed in this thesis were or became bilingual and some have produced work in both languages but with the exception of Albert Sánchez Piñol who will be discussed in the second chapter, the majority of their work is in Spanish or English and the reasons for this in each case are similar. Therefore there seem to be grounds to compare the Spanish-language writing of Catalonia with the English-language writing of Wales.

I will build on the works of these critics from both literatures by taking as my starting point that texts in English/Spanish can be part of a Welsh/Catalan national literature. I will attempt to answer Parry's call

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁴⁵ David Knutson, 'Eduardo Mendoza ¿Novelista Catalán?' in *La Cultura Catalana de Expressió Castellana: Estudios de Literatura, Teatro y Cine*, ed. by Stewart King (Kassel: Reichenberger, 2005), 72-83.

¹⁴⁶ See for example, José Saval, *La Ciudad de los Prodigios, de Eduardo Mendoza* (Madrid: Editorial Síntesis, 2003); 'Creatividad e Ironía Contra la Censura: La Obra Periodística de Manuel Vázquez Montalbán', in *Encrucijadas Históricas de la España Contemporánea: Textos y Contextos que Marcan Época*, ed. by Wendy Llyn Zaza and Roberto González Casanovas (Auckland: Ambosmundos, 2011), pp. 139-46.

¹⁴⁷ Glyn Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001).

¹⁴⁸ Juan Marsé, quoted in *Novel·la Entre Dues Llengües: El dilemma Català o Castellà*, trans. by Laura Puigdomènech (Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 1996), p. 52.

for renewed focus on resistance, by examining selected texts from both literatures and seeing if, by the criteria of Parry, San Juan and others, the English-language literature of Wales and the Spanish-language literature of Catalonia can be considered resistance literatures. I shall now discuss whether this is a valid approach to take with regards to these two countries.

Wales and Catalonia – Nations of Resistance?

Before adopting the approach outlined above, a very important issue must be considered, that is – is it correct and ethical to apply resistance theory to Wales and Catalonia? Critics like Parry and San Juan are writing about nations of the Third World.¹⁴⁹ Neither Wales nor Catalonia can in any way be described as belonging to the Third World – to do so would be insulting to those countries that do. I would like to stress from the outset that it is not my intention to consider Wales or Catalonia as Third World countries or to suggest that there is any similarity in their material circumstances. The similarities that I see are in the uneven power relationships between these countries and those that are politically or economically stronger, and some of the issues this imbalance causes; for example cultural oppression and economic inequality (though it is important to emphasise that the scale of the latter differs greatly between the situations of the two nations under consideration, as well as between them and the generally recognised Third World Countries).

Some work has already been done on considering Wales and Catalonia as colonies – a term usually restricted to Third World Countries. For the purposes of this thesis, it is not necessary to establish that Wales and Catalonia can be seen legitimately as colonies. Resistance theory is not limited to colonies or former colonies. San Juan focuses on the Philippines as a former Spanish and U.S. colony and now a neo-colony of the latter, but also looks at the experiences of Asian-Americans and African-Americans, groups which would not normally be referred to as colonies. However, as Wales and Catalonia bear little apparent similarity to such groups, an outline of the debates surrounding their colonial status (or lack thereof) will help provide the justification for examining them through a theory usually applied to the Third World.

¹⁴⁹ The term Third World is a contentious one associated as it is with the time of Communist dominance in the East. Generally the term ‘developing’ is preferred today. However, the majority of resistance theory critics use Third World and so I shall follow their lead in this thesis.

Considering Wales and Catalonia as colonies is not a particularly new step. The author Emyr Humphreys argued that Wales had undergone “colonial ‘occupation’,” and remained in a “post-colonial situation,”¹⁵⁰ while Dylan Phillips has noted that much of the language of Welsh politics since the foundation of Plaid Cymru has talked of Wales in colonial terms, an example being the referring to successive Secretaries of State for Wales as ‘governor general.’¹⁵¹ The Galician scholar Helena Miguélez Carballeira has worked on a project towards an understanding of Spain as postcolonial “that is, as a country where unequal power relations among its internal cultures (Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque) have given rise to discursive and material forms of conflict, today reaching a historical peak that may lead to separation.”¹⁵² Many Catalans see themselves as colonised, at least culturally. Some external experts have taken the same view. In 2014 a Catalan website quoted a letter originally published by the British ex-consul Geoff Cowling, in which, according to the article, he claimed that Catalonia had been an independent country until 1714, and that it had not joined Spain willingly but had been brutally conquered, thus implying its status as a colony.¹⁵³

Much of the work on Welsh Writing in English has taken a postcolonial approach and consequently sees Wales as, at least partly, a colony. In 2004 Stephen Knight and Kirsti Bohata published seminal works that interpreted Welsh Writing in English in postcolonial terms.¹⁵⁴ Bohata in particular discussed the issue of considering Wales as a colony and her arguments will be summarised shortly. There has been less such work in the field of Catalan studies and, as Stewart King remarks, few of these studies offer a satisfactory explanation for regarding Catalonia as a colony. The exception, in his view, is Kathryn Cramer. King writes:

Kathryn Cramer entienda la colonización española de Cataluña como un fenómeno que ya existía durante varios siglos antes del franquismo. La hispanista británica afirma que la colonización de Cataluña fue muy diferente a la experimentada por los indígenas

¹⁵⁰ Emyr Humphreys, *Emyr Humphreys: Conversations and Reflections*, ed. by M. Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), p. 189.

¹⁵¹ Phillips, pp. 101-2.

¹⁵² Helena Miguélez Carballeira, ‘Abstract from Application for Mid-Career Fellowship’, <<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/funding/mid-career-fellowships-past-awards-2015>> [Accessed 22 February 2020].

¹⁵³ “‘Catalunya no va unir-se voluntàriament a Espanya, va ser brutalment conquerida’” *ara.cat* 27/02/2014, https://www.ara.cat/politica/dret-decidir-cayetana-PP-cowling-escocia-catalunya_0_1092490981.html [Accessed 18 December 2019].

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction: Writing Wales in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004); Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004).

latinoamericanos, puesto que no hubo un principio violento, sino una serie de mezclas entre pueblos y culturas desde el siglo XV(118).”¹⁵⁵

While the colonisation was not, for Crameri, primarily a violent one, it still involved relegating the native language and culture to a lesser status which gradually threatened its continued existence.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, King argues, it is justifiable to regard Catalonia as a colony and thus take a postcolonial approach in studying its literature and, as he points out Crameri does this, as does King himself: “Cataluña demuestra muchos rasgos comunes con otros países anteriormente colonizados si la vemos en términos del imperialismo cultural que llevaron a cabo varios regímenes centralistas, y dada la naturaleza de los medios adoptados por los catalanes para resistir tal dominación.”¹⁵⁷ Interestingly, King talks of resistance here. His postcolonial approach will be discussed in more detail in the section entitled Existing Approaches.

As in Catalonia, Wales’ language and culture was adversely affected by union with England. As discussed earlier, the laws that were part of the union led to the gradual belittling and marginalising of the Welsh language for some of the same reasons as King cites for the decline of the Catalan language.¹⁵⁸ English was the language of the court and of power and advancement; administrative positions in Wales could only be held by Welshman who spoke English and abjured their native language. Janet Davies has shown the anglicising effect the Union had on the upper class in particular.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, the experience of both Wales and Catalonia over the years could be seen as that of being culturally colonised and Crameri’s understanding of the colonisation process in Catalonia is also relevant to Wales.

As can be seen, when commentators talk about Wales and Catalonia as colonies, they focus mainly on cultural issues. However, it can be argued that Wales and Catalonia have also been exploited economically by central governments (as colonies were) and have suffered as a result. Michael Hechter

¹⁵⁵ King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 5. “Kathryn Crameri understands the Spanish colonisation of Catalonia as a phenomenon that existed for some centuries before the Francoist dictatorship. The British hispanist states that the colonisation of Catalonia was very different to that experienced by the natives of Latin America, since there was no violent beginning but rather a series of mixings between peoples and cultures from the fifteenth century onwards.”

¹⁵⁶ As we have just seen some Catalans do regard Catalonia as having been conquered.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3. “Catalonia demonstrates many features in common with other countries that have previously been colonised if we see it in terms of cultural imperialism carried out by various centralist regimes, and the naturalness of the means adopted by the Catalans to resist this domination.”

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-2. These reasons include the increasing prestige of Spanish as a literary language and the predominance of Spanish in the royal court along with its removal to Madrid.

¹⁵⁹ Janet Davies, pp. 21-2.

claims that: “In general, political incorporation forced the Celtic territories to develop in a manner which complemented, but did not permit competition with England.”¹⁶⁰ He argues that the Union damaged Wales’ industry in the long term. Later the industrialisation of South Wales devastated the landscape, depopulated the rural areas and, as discussed earlier, may have contributed to the decline of the Welsh language. While it undoubtedly did bring wealth to Wales it was only a very few who benefited and while at times the standard of living may have been better than in the rural areas, industrial strife caused untold suffering. The decline of these industries devastated the region and it is still one of the poorest in Britain.

Catalonia also became heavily industrialised in the nineteenth century, developing well ahead of most of the rest of Spain. Catalonia benefited rather more than Wales did from the industrialisation though there were still areas of extreme poverty, both in the countryside and in the slums of Barcelona and other cities. Today Catalonia, one of seventeen autonomous communities,¹⁶¹ produces nearly a fifth of Spain’s GDP. This has long caused resentment as Catalans believe they get very little in return from the central government budget. These grievances have fuelled the recent talk of independence. So Catalonia and Wales have experienced both cultural and economic inequality and, consequently, it seems not unreasonable to consider them, in some ways at least, as colonies. However there are many arguments against this which must be considered.

In *Postcolonialism Revisited* Bohata usefully summarises some of these arguments in the case of Wales, many of which are also applicable to Catalonia. Firstly and most importantly is the issue that Wales as part of Britain took part in the colonising British Empire, something King also mentions with regards to Catalan involvement in the Spanish empire.¹⁶² Bohata notes that the authors of the classic postcolonial study *The Empire Writes Back* argue that it is hard for colonised peoples outside of Britain to accept Wales and Scotland as colonised because of their participation in the Empire. However Bohata responds: “Disqualification on the grounds of complicity and the concomitant valorization of a form of victimology have, however, been questioned by more sophisticated readings of colonization and imperialism.”¹⁶³ She quotes Ken Goodwin who suggests:

¹⁶⁰ Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p.81.

¹⁶¹ In addition to these autonomous communities, the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla situated on the Moroccan coast are also part of Spain.

¹⁶² King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 3.

¹⁶³ Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, p. 4.

There is a sense in which the theory of postcoloniality ought to encourage the view that we are all colonial, imperialist, and postcolonial in various proportions. It generally doesn't however. It tends more towards the view that my postcoloniality is more suffused with suffering and unfairness than yours; it is a species of victimology.¹⁶⁴

Victimology is a harsh and potentially contentious word and denigrating former colonies and their attitudes is neither right nor helpful. However Goodwin is right to suggest that a hierarchy of colonial experiences can arise, which is equally unhelpful. His idea that people and nations are all to a greater or lesser extent colonial and imperialist is useful, particularly when it comes to regarding nations like Wales which has formed part of an empire-building state, far more so than Ned Thomas' defence of Welsh involvement in the British Empire. Thomas claims that the Welsh took part in empire as British, rather than as Welsh, and therefore the Welsh nation and Welsh-language culture can be exonerated from involvement in the British Empire.¹⁶⁵ This argument is flimsy at best and has been soundly critiqued by Bohata, among others, as "entirely inadequate and thoroughly misleading," making "a convenient but flawed and simplistic division between 'Welshmen' and 'Britishers'..."¹⁶⁶ Goodwin's view of degrees of postcoloniality is far more suitable and solidly reasoned.

Questions of complicity with, and benefiting from, empire are also an issue with regards to Catalonia. King comments on the problems that can arise when regarding Catalonia as a colony; after all it is part of Spain, a onetime colonial power, and Catalans assisted willingly in the colonisation of Latin America, many making large profits from it.¹⁶⁷ He stresses that in no way can Catalonia be considered postcolonial in the way countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America are.¹⁶⁸ However, as already shown above, he believes that Catalonia has enough features in common with colonies to justify studying it in a postcolonial light.¹⁶⁹

Bohata raises two other main arguments as to why Wales cannot be considered postcolonial, both of which could equally apply to Catalonia. The first is that Wales does not conform to a postcolonial pattern in the sense of progressing from colonialism to independence, (neither does Catalonia yet) but she also goes on to say that many scholars have concluded that 'post' in the case of postcolonial studies need not imply that the country has gained independence or that colonialism is at an end. This is,

¹⁶⁴ Ken Goodwin, quoted in Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, p. 4.

¹⁶⁵ Ned Thomas, quoted in Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁶⁶ Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁷ King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

therefore, not a particular problem when it comes to considering Wales as postcolonial.¹⁷⁰ Similarly, Wales does not fit in with the time period usually considered in postcolonial studies, which sees colonialism as beginning with the discoveries of ‘new’ lands in the sixteenth century and reaching its peak with nineteenth century imperialism as exemplified by the ‘Scramble for Africa.’ If Wales was colonised it was done so much earlier – in the thirteenth century or even prior to that. Catalonia perhaps fits the time period more closely if we take as a rough date of colonisation the union of the crowns of Aragon and Castile towards the end of the fifteenth century, or the loss of its own institution under Philip V in the second decade of the eighteenth century, but cannot be said to fit the pattern in other ways as there was no one moment of conquest and incorporation. However, Bohata notes that studies are beginning to challenge this timeframe and medieval Welsh historians frequently use the word colony to describe Wales at that time.¹⁷¹ Thus, not conforming to the time period should not be a barrier to considering either Wales or Catalonia as a colony and certainly does not affect their ability to resist central state hegemony.

The second argument Bohata raises is that of geographical proximity. The definition of a colony often heavily emphasises physical distance between the colony and the imperial centre. The distinction between colonisation and ‘national’ expansion generally depends on whether the two lands are separated by a sea. So by this light Ireland was colonised by Anglo-Normans while Wales was conquered and assimilated into the nation-state.¹⁷² This could apply equally to Catalonia. However, Bohata argues that:

While it is of course correct to draw distinctions between the attempt to assimilate a territory and the mercantile, imperial or colonial exploitation of other lands, the absence of sea-space dividing Wales from the rest of Britain should not undermine the case of considering Wales through the prism of postcolonial theory.¹⁷³

Thus geographical proximity should not preclude postcolonial consideration of a country and indeed to insist upon the presence of a dividing sea seems a somewhat pedantic quibble. It is certainly not an

¹⁷⁰ Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

issue for societies examined by resistance theorists – both San Juan and Harlow discuss a number of Palestinian writers.¹⁷⁴

While Bohata rightly raises these arguments, her purpose is to counter them. As the title of her book indicates, she argues that Wales can be considered from a postcolonial angle. Chris Williams, on the other hand, argues that Wales is not postcolonial.¹⁷⁵ He proposes that Wales could perhaps be considered a colony between the death of the last Welsh Prince of Wales in 1282 and the Acts of Union of 1536-42, as the English king Edward I's castle building policy was clearly intended to subjugate the Welsh, and the Welsh had inferior status under the law and in some places were moved off fertile land which was gifted to English settlers. For Williams the Glyndŵr rebellion "took on at least some of the characteristics of a national revolt or anti-colonial rebellion."¹⁷⁶ However, Wales was transformed by the Acts of Union which Williams sees as making it part of the kingdom: "For all intents and purposes the Acts of Union abolished the distinctions between Wales and England; Wales was no longer a colony, but part of an expanded England or Greater Britain."¹⁷⁷ He argues that after the Union Wales sent members of Parliament to Westminster and with one exception Welsh and English had equal status before the law. The one exception was that officials in high posts had to be able to speak English and he points out that this was a linguistic not a racial barrier.¹⁷⁸ These arguments are not of course so relevant to Catalonia which has experienced far more active oppression in recent times.

Williams also argues Wales is not postcolonial as much of its history contrasts with that of other countries more generally accepted as postcolonial:

It should not take long for us to recognize that any parallels that might be drawn between Wales and any of the former 'non-white' colonies of the British Empire, let alone that of the French, Dutch, German, Spanish or Portuguese empires, are little more than self-indulgent and potentially offensive illusions. Where, in the history of modern Wales, is the Welsh equivalent of the Amritsar Massacre? (And no, neither the Merthyr nor the Newport Risings qualify.)

¹⁷⁴ Harlow discusses the work of Ghassan Kanafani (Harlow, pp. 84-92, 167, 170-5, 177, 181), Mahmud Darwish (Harlow, pp. 62-72), and Leila Khaled (Harlow, pp.181-92). San Juan meanwhile discusses their compatriot Ghassan Abdullah (San Juan, *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression*, pp. 195-7).

¹⁷⁵ Chris Williams, 'Problematizing Wales: An Exploration in Historiography and Postcoloniality', in *Postcolonial Wales*, ed. by Jane Aaron and Chris Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 3-22.

¹⁷⁶ Chris Williams, p. 4.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Welsh people made money out of slavery: they were not slaves themselves. The Welsh experience of colonization and decolonization simply does not translate into the standard language of Third World historical trajectories. It is scarcely more relevant to think in terms of the White Dominions (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa) or of the United States of America, the establishment of each of which involved a major reordering of indigenous peoples and their access to power...The clearest parallels are instead with Scotland and Ireland, with the Irish debates being the most developed...¹⁷⁹

There are valid points here. Wales, thankfully, does not really have an equivalent of the Amritsar Massacre, although a little more explanation as to why the Newport and Merthyr Risings do not qualify would be welcome. Catalonia perhaps does in its experience of the repression after the Civil War with thousands executed and imprisoned, though this happened elsewhere in Spain, particularly in areas that had supported the Spanish Republic, and cannot be attributed definitely to any colonial status Catalonia might have. But there seem to me to be at least two flaws in this passage. Firstly is the claim that Welsh people made money out of slavery. This is undoubtedly true but it should be stressed that it was an elite minority that did so. The majority of the people of Wales, at least until industrialisation, probably worked on the land of this elite in very poor conditions for very low wages. While their suffering cannot match the trauma of the slaves taken from Africa and shipped to the Americas, it is extremely unlikely that these people benefited greatly from slavery. In addition, many Africans were also complicit in the slave trade. This fact is not used to discount the postcolonial status of modern day African countries, nor should it.

Secondly is the view that the Welsh experience of colonisation and decolonisation “does not translate into the standard language of Third World historical trajectories.”¹⁸⁰ Why should it need to? As Bohata has shown, colonialism does not need to follow one set path. Williams himself acknowledges the difference between ‘non-white’ and ‘settler’ colonies. Thus, the fact that Wales’ experience is different to that of other colonies, and more similar to Scotland and Ireland, should not preclude it from being viewed as a colony. While Williams makes some valid points, I do not agree with him.

Perhaps the best defence of comparing ‘regional peripheries’ of empire-building states with oppressed peoples can be found in Daniel Williams’ book *Black Skin, Blue Books: African Americans and*

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

Wales.¹⁸¹ In this work Williams compares aspects of the two cultures mentioned in the title. He notes with particular regard to comparative cases: “This resistance to comparison is intensified in cases where the making of connections between Wales and other minority and post-colonial contexts is seen to be little more than an act of ‘self-aggrandising self victimisation’.”¹⁸² These are very real issues; as Williams acknowledges “...there is always a danger, when comparing two very different experiences, of callous appropriation or of buttressing potentially offensive illusions.”¹⁸³ He concludes however:

But I would also argue that the ‘regional peripheries’ are not only implicated in the excesses of imperialism and racism, but have also developed forms of thought and action that are themselves resistant to the ‘dominant forms’ of ‘national imagining’. The political and cultural forms of acculturation and resistance that were developed by the Welsh and by the African Americans are certainly not identical, but they are analogous.¹⁸⁴

Thus Williams justifies his comparison and I would argue that this can hold true for comparing Wales or Catalonia with more recognised Third World countries. The situations are not in any way identical but they can be seen as analogous. This also holds true for comparisons between Wales and Catalonia; there are some large differences between them. Wales, fortunately, has not experienced within living memory anything like the Spanish Civil War and its oppressive aftermath. Therefore comparisons between these two nations too must be carefully drawn and it must be emphasised that while they may have similarities, they are not *the same*.

This view is supported by resistance theorists who link struggles all over the world, not only those of the Third World, but also those oppressed classes and nationalities within industrialised countries. In *Moving the Centre* Thiong’o wrote:

Over the last four hundred years the developments in the West have not just been the result of internal social dynamics, but also their relationship with Africa, Asia and South America. But both the internal relationships within them and their external relations with Africa, Asia and

¹⁸¹ Daniel Williams, *Black Skin, Blue Books: African Americans and Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16. It is interesting to note that Williams talks of resistance here, though he is not applying a resistance theory approach.

South America, have not been those of equality but of dominance and domination at the economic, political and cultural levels...¹⁸⁵

Thiong'o also saw parallels between the linguistic situations in colonies and in stateless nations:

But the Third World was not the only place where English tried to grow on the graveyard of other peoples' languages. Even in Britain I have heard similar complaints from regions whose original languages had been swallowed up by English or in regions where they are putting up a last ditch struggle to prevent their languages from being killed and buried forever.¹⁸⁶

Thiong'o is clearly talking about languages like Welsh, Gaelic and Manx here, and his words could apply equally well to Spain where Spanish has dominated the country's other languages. He acknowledges that there are parallels in the struggles of oppressed people everywhere even if the magnitude of the oppression and suffering is very different, and recognises that while colonising powers like Britain and Spain have wronged others through colonial exploitation, they have also been guilty of the same offences towards people within their own borders.

It seems then that it is possible to justify applying resistance theory to Catalonia and Wales in spite of its usual association with the Third World. But is it a suitable tool through which to examine these literatures? Wales has never had a very strong independence movement; the majority of battles in the twentieth century have been for increased autonomy within Britain and particularly for the safeguarding of the Welsh language. Not much more than a decade ago there was little enthusiasm for independence within Catalonia either though this has changed rapidly. Moreover the majority of protests in both nations were peaceful and had little in common with bloody wars of independence like those of Vietnam and Algeria. Harlow's definition of resistance literature as being literature that is part of an armed struggle can scarcely apply to these nations. But as discussed in the previous section, San Juan, Parry and others have developed the idea of 'resistance' to extend beyond the armed uprising. In this way the peaceful mass demonstrations in favour of Catalan independence could be seen as a form of resistance; as could the civil disobedience campaigns of Cymdeithas Yr Iaith. It may be possible to forge a chain linking the Glyndŵr rising and the defence of Barcelona in 1640 and 1714 with these modern day acts of resistance, particularly in Catalonia, where citizens had to resist the very real and threatening power of the Franco regime. Wales has traditionally been regarded as more docile and happy with its situation within Britain but Ned Thomas writing in the early 1970s claimed:

¹⁸⁵ Thiong'o, *Moving the Centre*, p. 27-8.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Sometimes it seems as if the whole of Wales is consumed in endless protest. The immediate reasons why people oppose bringing an artillery range to the Carmarthenshire coast, the drowning of a mid-Wales valley, the second-class treatment of the Welsh language, the last government's Rural Development Board for Central Wales, are different. Yet at a deeper level they connect, or are felt to connect, which comes to the same thing; and this is what distinguishes the protests in Wales from those in some parts of England to preserve the environment, that they converge on a special kind of consciousness which is a national consciousness.¹⁸⁷

This would suggest that Wales was not and perhaps is not as docile as it seemed. It also links different types of struggle in a way commonly seen in resistance literature.

Thus I think that, with a little adaptation, resistance theory can be applied to the literatures of Wales and Catalonia. Part of this adaptation will come from considering the work of a Welsh critic and a Catalan author who have discussed similar issues with regards to their respective nations.

Types of Resistance

San Juan and Parry have noted that certain types of nationalism can be unhelpful and even damaging to their nation (see above). I will argue in this thesis that there are different types of resistance and that some of these can also be dangerous and risk damaging the nation they seek to protect.

Albert Sánchez Piñol, a Catalan writer whose work will be examined later in the thesis, has claimed that every human group subjected to intensive pressure has two main opposing adaptive strategies. “La primera, muy simple, devenir objeto pasivo, hasta dejación de si mismos. Diluirse.”¹⁸⁸ For Sánchez Piñol, this is the most frequently taken option. The alternative “la resistencialista consiste en intentar pervivir blindando la identidad propia, en crear compartimentos estancos a los que el recién llegado jamás podrá acceder.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Ned Thomas, *The Welsh Extremist: A Culture in Crisis* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 1973), p. 13.

¹⁸⁸ Albert Sánchez Piñol, ‘Prólogo’, in *Sumáte: Cuando Todos Contamos*, ed. by Núria Clotet and Jordi Fexas (Barcelona: La Campana, 2014), Kindle Locations 19-92 (Kindle Location 36-41). “The first, simply, is to become a passive object, until their self is gone. To dilute oneself.”

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Kindle Location 41. “...resistance [which] consists of trying to survive protecting their own identity by creating watertight enclaves that those recently arrived can never penetrate.”

This second option, which comprises a form of resistance, is perhaps even more likely to occur in the cases of nations like Wales and Catalonia than with those countries more traditionally considered as colonies. Unlike many of these, for example India and Algeria, Wales and Catalonia do not possess a native population several times the size of that of the coloniser. Their numbers are comparatively few. Moreover they also border the ‘colonising country’ which makes it even easier for cultural influence to affect them. People from the dominant culture can move in to all parts of the country and mingle with those of the dominated far more easily than in the case of an overseas culture, and members of the minority culture can travel to the centre of the dominant culture with equal, or almost equal, ease. As a result of all this, the minority cultural identity comes under a huge amount of direct stress. Consequently, those who manage to resist assimilation will often do so by adopting Sánchez Piñol’s second option. They create cultural ‘enclaves’ that are intent on preserving their culture and securing it from outside influence.

Daniel G. Williams has identified a similar tendency to this ‘enclave production’ in the work of certain English-language Welsh writers, especially in the poems ‘Welcome’ by R. S. Thomas, ‘The Water Diviner’ by Gillian Clarke, and ‘Second Language’ by Christine Evans.¹⁹⁰ These works present Welsh language culture as somehow closed and inaccessible. Thomas’ poem in particular is addressing incomers to Wales, accepting that he cannot prevent them entering the country but claiming that there is a Wales, specifically a Welsh-language Wales – Cymru - that is hidden or barred from them, beyond their capacity to experience. Williams writes: “In this respect the poem may be read as a rhetorical defensive strategy, an act of ‘strategic essentialism’, challenging the monolingual complacency of the English tourist and evoking a sense of bravado in the face of potential cultural death,”¹⁹¹ in other words a form of cultural resistance that denies the coloniser’s arrogant assumption of easy access. While Williams is not using resistance theory, certain of his ideas here fit very well with such an approach. Meanwhile Evans’ poem describes her experience teaching English to native Welsh-speaking children, aware always that they were part of something she had no access to “the green depths of a culture/older than I can fathom,”¹⁹² that is Welsh-language culture which she also describes as “an old walled garden.”¹⁹³ Like Thomas, Evans is depicting Welsh-language culture as apart from and inaccessible to those from another country, especially perhaps England.

¹⁹⁰ Daniel Williams, *Wales Unchained: Literature, Politics and Identity in the American Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015), pp. 142-4.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-3.

¹⁹² Christine Evans, ‘Second Language’, quoted in Williams, *Wales Unchained*, p. 144.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

This, Williams argues, can be seen as praiseworthy: “This seems admirable. The Anglophone writer is showing an awareness of, and a respect for, the Welsh language and its culture within his or her work.”¹⁹⁴ However he goes on to say that:

But, if the notion of an internal language or culture is enabling at an aesthetic level, such a conception of minority languages is potentially disastrous for those of us who wish a viable future for the Welsh language. Once the Welsh language is portrayed as a ‘walled garden’, or as a suppressed water source, or as a ‘barrier’ to entry, then it is difficult to conceive that the language and its culture might be developing entities.¹⁹⁵

In other words, this type of thinking makes Welsh almost a museum language, one that is spoken by only a remnant and that will one day, probably in the not too distant future, die out entirely as it cannot adapt to a changing world. An entity that cannot develop cannot really grow and that is an extremely dangerous situation for a minority language.

Earlier in the chapter Williams discusses Etienne Balibar’s ‘two great competing routes’ to the production of ethnic difference: race and language. Though they can sometimes be combined, for example when someone’s accent identifies them as belonging to a particular race, for analysis purposes Balibar insists on keeping the two categories separate. Linguistic community, he notes “possesses a strange plasticity: it immediately naturalises new acquisitions.”¹⁹⁶ That is to say that linguistic communities are inherently open to outsiders, as languages can be learned by anyone and once the language is learned the incomer can, in theory at least, be fully absorbed into the community. Racial communities, on the other hand, are closed to outsiders as no one can change their ancestors. The national communities of Wales and Catalonia are primarily linguistically-based – the importance of the national language to both nations has already been mentioned, and intermarriage and immigration over the centuries make it impossible to identify a Welsh or Catalan ‘race.’ Thus, both national communities should be open to those outsiders who wish to join them.

The rhetoric of both national movements seems to support this. Jordi Pujol, the first post-Franco President of Catalonia famously declared: “és Català tothom que viu i treballa a Catalunya,”¹⁹⁷ while

¹⁹⁴ Williams, *Wales Unchained*, p. 145.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁹⁶ Balibar, quoted in Williams, *Wales Unchained*, p. 140.

¹⁹⁷ Pujol, quoted in Cramer, *Language, the Novelist and National Identity in Post-Franco Catalonia*, p. 36. “Anyone who lives and works in Catalonia and wants to be a Catalan is a Catalan.” It should be noted that this highly rooted in the rhetoric of the 1980s and attitudes have changed since then.

Welsh writer Glyn Jones remarked: “To me, anyone can be a Welshman who chooses to be so and is prepared to take the consequences.”¹⁹⁸ Williams notes however that certain critics of Welsh Writing in English like Chris Wiggington and Ian Gregson tend to conflate race and language. He then argues that this is essentially what the English-language poets discussed above are also doing, portraying Welsh-language culture as a marker of race rather than an open linguistic community that can absorb any newcomer that makes the effort to learn the language. As a result of this, Welsh becomes a purely symbolic language rather than one used for communication. Williams explains:

Language is perceived as a ‘closed’ system. Once a language dies it can move from being a mode of communication to becoming a symbolic marker of ethnicity. Symbolic language functions like race – it is a practice or characteristic of past generations which cannot be opened up to new members in the present. A living language, however, in Balibar’s terms, ‘immediately naturalizes new acquisitions’.¹⁹⁹

The major danger in this, Williams argues, is that: “To conceptualize linguistic difference in this way ultimately denies the possible existence of a multicultural society expressing itself through the medium of Welsh.”²⁰⁰ He predicts bleakly:

The monolingual, anglophone, form of multiculturalism informing much cultural debate in Britain today is rooted in the belief that the English language is the only legitimate bearer of all civic-democratic nationality, and that those lying beyond its generously catholic embrace are little better than atavistic racists. But the Welsh-language world cannot be a closed system if it is to survive. Once Welsh-language culture is conceived of in racial terms, as a closed system, and as a constraint on communication between peoples, it becomes easy to wish that it should disappear.²⁰¹

A Welsh language unable to act as a vehicle for a multicultural society will not survive in an age of globalisation and transnationalism; it will die out. All this can equally apply to Catalonia, although generally the Catalan linguistic community is an open one. After discussing the normal strategies adopted by cultural groups under pressure mentioned above, Sánchez Piñol mentions that Catalonia has taken a third way:

¹⁹⁸ Glyn Jones, p. 192.

¹⁹⁹ Williams, *Wales Unchained*, p. 145.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

Ante la disyuntiva de desvanecerse o fortificarse, la catalanidad opta por una vía sociológica imprevista, originalísima, generosa y genial: transmutar al presente enemigo en amigo efectivo; abrirle los goznes culturales para que se incorpore a sus filas, y así nutra y vigorece la catalanidad.²⁰²

This is an interesting and inspiring idea, although I would argue that it is not as unprecedented as Sánchez Piñol appears to think, as similar ideas were discussed in Wales over fifty years ago. Ifor Huw Wilks wrote in *The Welsh Republican*: “Distinct from this alien society was the Welsh nation proper – no racial entity, but a vigorous and ancient community which absorbed all immigrants so that they became as Welsh as the Welsh themselves.”²⁰³ Here Welsh culture is seen as non-racially-based and inclusive of outsiders. It is an open not a closed system able to absorb newcomers and remain the stronger for it.

So the national language in the case of Wales and Catalonia need not be equated with race, and resistance need not mean merely portraying the desperate last stand of a culture under siege, asserting its separateness by making it inaccessible in a way that will ultimately lead to its demise. Williams looks at ways in which various authors use bilingualism as a strategy for bringing Welsh literature to the attention of an international audience and for including those who do not speak Welsh. Menna Elfyn is a good example of this; she publishes her Welsh-language poetry with facing English translations and dedicated her collection *Eucalyptus* “to the new Welsh speakers.”²⁰⁴

²⁰² Sánchez Piñol, ‘Prólogo’, Kindle Location 50. “Facing the choice of vanishing or fortifying itself, Catalan culture instead opts for a way which was sociologically unprecedented, highly original, generous and brilliant: transforming the enemy of the present into an effective friend, opening the cultural doors to include their ranks, and by doing so nourishing and invigorating Catalan culture.”

²⁰³ Ifor Huw Wilks, quoted in ‘Gweriniaethwr’, *The Young Republicans: A Record of the Welsh Republican Movement – Mudiad Gweriniaethol Cymru* (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 1996), p. 141.

²⁰⁴ Menna Elfyn, quoted in Williams, *Wales Unchained*, p. 150. It is also important to note, however, as Williams does, that bilingual editions of Welsh-language poets’ work have been criticised and Elfyn’s collections have provided something of a focus for the debate (Williams, *Wales Unchained* p. 150). Robert Rhys expresses his concern that with the advent of these bilingual editions the views and judgments of the darllenwyr Cymraeg (Welsh readers – in this case those able to read Elfyn’s work in its original language) will be ignored in favour of the international critics who read her work in English and will not be aware of weaknesses that critics have highlighted in the original Welsh language poems (Robert Rhys, ‘Menna Elfyn’ in *Y Patrwm Amryliw: Cyfrol 2*, ed by. Robert Rhys (Llandybïe: Cyhoeddiadau Barddas, 2006), pp. 234-47). Others in the Welsh-language community have reacted more strongly. Elfyn stated in an interview that, “many thought it [the publication of bilingual editions] was sheer treachery and that if someone wanted to read Welsh poetry they should learn Welsh...”

Some of the writers looked at in this thesis like Sánchez Piñol himself and the Welsh writer Harri Webb manage to produce writing that can certainly be classified as resistance writing but still portray their nation as open to newcomers and multicultural. Others are less successful. Generally the Catalan writers are more successful, perhaps because Catalan is easier for Spanish speakers to learn than Welsh is for English speakers, perhaps because the experience of the dictatorship created a bond between Catalan born and incomer as they had a natural resistance in common, or perhaps for some other reason entirely.

I would argue that this open inclusive resistance is closer to the idea of resistance espoused by Harlow, Parry, San Juan and others. As discussed previously San Juan warned of the danger of xenophobic nationalisms and stressed that true nationalist movements had to be for everyone, not just for an elite. Moreover, if resistance literature must be part of a movement, either directly or indirectly, then that portraying the national culture's last stand is less effective as a movement implies progress and a vision. In much of the work discussed by Harlow and San Juan there is a vision for the future of the nation and the sense of an on-going struggle that will make progress eventually despite everything. Equally, a movement that is unable to adopt newcomers will not be able to grow.

In a very rough way these different resistances can be equated to ethnic and civic nationalism. As a general rule, ethnic nationalism defines membership of a nation as being based on certain characteristics, usually ethnicity and blood ties – one must be born in the nation to parents from that nation in order to be a true member. Civic nationalism, on the other hand, states that effectively anyone who lives and works in a nation and voluntarily commits themselves to the good of that nation and chooses to identify with it can be a member. Sánchez Piñol epitomises the ideal of this definition

(Elfyn quoted in Diarmait MacGiolla Chríost, *Welsh Writing, Political Action and Incarceration: Branwen's Starling* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Such commentators felt that the presence of the English language rendered the Welsh unnecessary and thus undermined the language's status. Moreover by employing English the poet could be seen as attempting to “pass” as English in order to improve [her] fortunes...” (Tudur Hallam, *When a Bardd Meets a Poet: Menna Elfyn and the Displacement of Parallel Facing Texts* in *Slandorous Tongues: Essays on Welsh Poetry in English 1970-2005*, ed. by Daniel G. Williams (Bridgend: Seren, 2010), pp. 89-111 (p. 90)). This is a similar accusation to that levelled at certain English-language authors that they are turning away from Wales because they want a wider audience. However, as Tudur Hallam points out in Elfyn's case, “...the force of any inflammatory legal metaphors – guilt, crime, betrayal, treachery – is extinguished when one recalls that Menna Elfyn has twice been imprisoned for her part in Welsh-language campaigns...” (Hallam, p. 90). In spite of this and the fact that Elfyn could be seen as opening up Welsh poetry to a wider audience, these bilingual editions have not been universally accepted in Welsh literary circles.

writing about the Catalan case: “¿Quién puede ser catalán? Quien quiere serlo. ¿Hay un requisito menos exigente?”²⁰⁵

Linguistic nationalism is a tricky case that can fall part way between the two types of nationalism. On the one hand, it requires a certain characteristic to be part of the nation, but on the other, as Williams points out, it is a characteristic that anyone can acquire and is therefore tied to choice in the manner of civic nationalism. Therefore linguistic nationalism should probably be defined as civic. However, Williams has shown that it is not always that straightforward, particularly in the case of Wales. In an earlier work he demonstrates that nationalism based on culture (linguistic or otherwise) tends to be linked with ethnic nationalism:

...in the – often repetitive – analyses of nationalism offered by political theorists and historians in recent years, an atavistic, backward and reactionary cultural nationalism is contrasted with a healthy, civic, political nationalism. John Hutchinson has noted how even those theorists, who register the importance of authors, poets, historians and linguists in the task of nation building, continue to consider cultural nationalism to be a regressive force, ‘a product of intellectuals from backward societies, who when confronted by more scientifically advanced cultures, compensate for feelings of inferiority by retreating into history to claim descent from a once great civilisation.’²⁰⁶

Williams shows that in mainstream nationalist theory, ‘civic’ nationalism tends to be equated with political and institutional nationalism and is considered progressive while cultural nationalism is seen as ethnic, backward and reactionary. He argues though that in fact all nationalisms contain cultural and political elements and that the easy binary between civic and ethnic nationalism is not as distinct as it might at first appear:

If a theoretical distinction can be made between ethnic and civic forms of nationalisms, in practice these types will frequently overlap, and a given national culture will display ethnic as well as civic components in its forms of nationhood. Whether nations are created in the crucible of culture, or emerge through the evolution of their political institutions, it is my belief that all

²⁰⁵ Sánchez Piñol, ‘Prólogo’, Kindle Location 50. “Who can be Catalan? Anyone who wants to be. Could there be a less demanding prerequisite?”

²⁰⁶ Daniel Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority: from Arnold to du Bois* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 14-5.

nationalisms are to some extent ‘cultural’ nationalisms; all nationalisms have, or seek to foster, an ethnic dimension.²⁰⁷

Moreover, following Williams’ analysis of Balibar’s work, it seems that primarily cultural-based nationalisms need not be ethnic in the sense of being closed and exclusive; as already discussed a linguistic community is inherently open as anyone can learn a language. Culture, whether linguistically-based or not, is something one can acquire if a committed and sensitive effort is made. Therefore it does not seem to me that the idea of a civic linguistic/cultural nationalism is a contradiction in terms, though it might appear so to some theorists. Indeed, I would argue that Catalonia, in particular, is a good example of a nation based on such nationalism. Catalonia has its own Parliament and President and various national institutions of which it is proud. Yet the Catalan language is also an extremely important part of Catalonia’s national identity. As Crameri points out, Catalans see their language as part of that civic nationalism and as a means of integrating newcomers.²⁰⁸ It is not usually used to exclude others however. Newcomers are encouraged to learn it and there are numerous opportunities for them to do so. Once an incomer has learned Catalan they will generally be accepted as Catalan; as demonstrated by Pujol’s statement cited above, the ideal of Catalan nationalism is an open accepting society. Consequently, the Catalan language can constantly gain new speakers, and so it is unlikely to suffer the fate that Williams fears for the Welsh language of being purely symbolic and then dying out.

As a result of this deliberation, when I use ‘civic’ nationalism in this thesis it will mean an open nationalism regardless of whether that nationalism is based on political or cultural dimensions, or, as Williams argues is likely, a mixture of the two. ‘Ethnic’ nationalism will refer to a closed nationalism that does not even attempt to welcome or naturalise incomers – the type of nationalism that could perhaps justifiably be critiqued as reactionary, xenophobic or even racist as it is based on a requisite like blood or heritage that cannot be acquired in the way that language or citizenship can.

Therefore, in addition to considering the texts in this thesis as resistance texts, I will also consider the type of resistance that they espouse. The most effective will espouse an open and inclusive resistance that fits with Sánchez Piñol’s third option and Williams’ premises. While Williams is talking about the Welsh language, I will expand this to include Welsh and Catalan cultures as a whole in both the nation’s languages and the resistance these texts espouse. As with a minority language, a minority culture’s resistance must be open to incomers who wish to join its cause if it is to be successful.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

²⁰⁸ Crameri, *Goodbye, Spain*, pp. 54-71.

Existing Approaches

I will now consider the work already done on postcolonial and resistance approaches to Welsh Writing in English and Catalan Writing in Spanish, as well as comparative discussions of one or both literatures. As already mentioned, a number of critical studies of these literatures adopt a postcolonial approach. The line they take is mainly that of orthodox postcolonialism though, rather than resistance theory; Homi Bhabha has been extremely important to a number of Welsh critics. There is thus much discussion of hybridity, ambivalence and other concepts. However, many of these critics do discuss notions of resistance though they are not always clearly theorised. Knight in *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, for example, frequently mentions the word ‘resistance’ in conjunction with literature, but does not really define resistance or what exactly it is that the authors are resisting against. His section on Gwyn Thomas is subtitled ‘Hybridized Resistance’ and he does mention resisting the British Empire in some way, but it cannot be seen as a truly Welsh resistance as he also emphasises how Thomas turned against Welsh-language culture and nationalism.²⁰⁹ Diane Green in *Emyr Humphreys: A Postcolonial Novelist?* begins three of her chapter titles with ‘Strategies of Resistance’ but again does not really theorise the nature of this resistance or what exactly the author is resisting.²¹⁰ Bohata goes in to more detail, briefly discussing the Gramscian notion of hegemony which as we have seen is important to resistance theorists like San Juan and Parry, and stressing the importance of resistance:

Significantly, Welsh nationalism has focused on resisting the cultural imperialism of England, with political autonomy regarded as a means to securing and protecting Welsh cultural difference. It is this cultural imperialism and the resistance to its organizing principles that form the main axes of a postcolonial study of the literature and/or history of the Welsh.²¹¹

Bohata draws on the work of anti-colonial thinkers like Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi who are important to resistance theorists. However, she also draws heavily on the work of Bhabha and concepts such as hybridity and alterity that have been criticised by resistance theorists. Neither does she discuss Bhabha’s generally hostile attitude towards nationalism and nationalist movements which makes it difficult to discuss resistance when working within his paradigm.

²⁰⁹ Stephen Knight, *One Hundred Years of Fiction*, pp. 93-113.

²¹⁰ Diane Green, *Emyr Humphreys: A Postcolonial Novelist?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009).

²¹¹ Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, p. 9.

M. Wynn Thomas and Tony Brown importantly distinguish between postcolonial and anti-colonial in discussing the work of Alun Lewis; they claim that Lewis is a postcolonial writer due to his awkward positioning between his Welsh and British identities. For them, Lewis' work displays a dislike of British imperialism and an instinctive sympathy for anti-colonial Indian nationalism which nevertheless he cannot condone and this reflects his ambivalent attitude to Welsh nationalism in his own country:

Basically, though, Lewis was caught in a double bind. Critical of colonialism, he nevertheless could not condone the anti-colonial struggle. Or to put it differently, critical (as a Welshman) of anglocentric British imperialism, he nevertheless could not embrace the Welshness of Welsh nationalism.²¹²

Thus, although Thomas and Brown see Lewis as a postcolonial writer, he is certainly not an anti-colonial writer. His work reveals unease with but no real resistance to British imperialism. As Lewis is the subject of the paper Thomas and Brown do not continue to explore the possibility of Welsh writers in English who produce works in a more anti-colonial mode, but they do at least acknowledge the difference between anticolonial and postcolonial as resistance theorists do.

Jane Aaron has probably come closest to employing resistance literature theory in a Welsh context, claiming that the continuation of Welsh culture "has depended to such an extent on developing a resistant spirit which insists on survival... that a mental pattern has evolved conditioning the Welsh to respond in this way."²¹³ She develops the idea of cultural resistance further in her essay 'Bardic Anti-colonialism.'²¹⁴ The very title suggests a shift from orthodox postcolonial approaches – it says anti-colonial not postcolonial and this links back to the thinkers involved in anticolonial struggles. To begin with the essay focuses on Welsh-language writing, particularly the strict metre poetry tradition of the bards, as a form of resistance to English domination over the years. Then, however, Aaron notes that some English-language poets make use of this tradition, some deliberately like Tony Conran in order to protest against imperialism, some, like Dylan Thomas, with perhaps less of a political agenda but still continuing the tradition. Aaron also notes that the radical tradition of (mainly) Welsh-language writing

²¹² M. Wynn Thomas and Tony Brown, 'Colonial Wales and Fractured Language', in *Nations and Relations: Writing Across the British Isles*, ed. by Tony Brown and John Russell Stephens (Cardiff: New Welsh Review, 2000), pp. 71-88 (p. 77).

²¹³ Jane Aaron quoted in Jasmin Donahaye, 'Gartref – bron': Adversity and Refuge in the Jewish Literature of Wales' in *Beyond the Difference: Welsh Literature in Comparative Contexts; Essays for M. Wynn Thomas at Sixty*, ed. Alyce von Rothkirch and Daniel Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), pp. 38-53 (p. 38).

²¹⁴ Jane Aaron, 'Bardic Anti-colonialism', in *Postcolonial Wales*, ed. by Jane Aaron and Chris Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 137-58.

in the nineteenth-century saw capitalism and colonialism as equally inimical and alien to the Welsh and protested against them both. In the twentieth century, however, there was a split between those who were preoccupied by socialist values and those who mourned and resisted the decline of the Welsh language. They did not seem to be able to link the two issues in the way that nineteenth century writers had. Among the writers mentioned are R. S. Thomas and Harri Webb who will be discussed in this thesis, and Idris Davies who will not but could have been.

Despite the far more openly resistance based approach in this essay, Aaron still refers to Bhabha and talks of his interpretation of Fanon – an interpretation that San Juan has heavily criticised for what he sees as depoliticising the anticolonial writer.²¹⁵ Thus it seems that although there are several postcolonial approaches to Welsh writing in English some of which have taken more resistance based approaches than those from other nations, none has followed the resistance approach advocated by Parry and San Juan. In general, Welsh critics have remained too attached to Bhabha to consider other theories of postcolonialism and resistance.

One other, older, study that should be mentioned briefly is Ned Thomas' *The Welsh Extremist*.²¹⁶ This was written in 1973 before the development of postcolonial theories, though not prior to the theories of anticolonial thinkers and activists. He writes about the work of various Welsh-language authors in the context of protest and discusses the issues of cultural domination by England and its effects on the Welsh language, as well as the protest movements that were springing up in Wales at the time. He does not use the word 'resistance' but his account of Welsh protest literature reveals ideas that are not too dissimilar to those of the resistance theorists. His work of course is not influenced by that of Bhabha as it precedes it and it provides an interesting model for the viewing of Welsh literature as a literature of protest and resistance rather than of hybridity and ambiguity. This study is limited mainly to Welsh-language writers, with Idris Davies being the only English-language writer mentioned. Applying Thomas' ideas to other English-language writers, for example Harri Webb, should provide new insights.

Considering postcolonial and resistance approaches to Catalonia is complicated by the fact that in Catalan studies resistance means something very different. Resistance literature to Catalans is produced through writing in Catalan because that is what continues the Catalan language, a language that has struggled for survival (Aaron's comments in relation to Welsh culture cited above are in many ways equally applicable to the Catalan case). The language used is key; the form, style and content of a text

²¹⁵ San Juan, *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*, pp. 27-8.

²¹⁶ Ned Thomas, *The Welsh Extremist: A Culture in Crisis* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 1973).

are almost irrelevant as long as its language is Catalan. By writing in their national language Catalan authors resist the cultural dominance of the Spanish language and the Spanish state. Moreover, at times, particularly during the earlier part of the Franco dictatorship, writing in Catalan was illegal and thus writing in it could be seen as an act of defiance of the regime as well as of the more powerful culture.²¹⁷ In Catalonia resistance literature is literature in Catalan. This is an understandable response to oppression but it makes it difficult to talk about Spanish-language Catalan writing in terms of resistance. However, as I will show in this thesis, I believe that Spanish-language Catalan writers can form part of a Catalan literature of resistance, albeit potentially in a different way to their Catalan-language counterparts.

There are fewer postcolonial approaches to Catalan literature in either language than there are to Welsh writing. King discusses most of them in *Escribir la Catalanidad*; mentioning two by Irene Boada-Montagut, one by Monserrat Palau Vergés, one by Crameri, and a previous one by himself in addition to the current study.²¹⁸ Apart from the current study and Crameri's work, all deal exclusively with Catalan-language literature. Indeed King criticises Boada-Montagut in particular for failing to delve deeply into the issues of language that are so important in Catalonia. Although she asks the question

²¹⁷ King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 54; Ute Heinemann, *Novel.la Entre Dues Llengües: El dilemma Català o Castellà*, trans. by Laura Puigdomènech (Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 1996), p. 10.

²¹⁸ King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 4. The studies mentioned are: Irene Boada-Montagut, 'Nationalism and Language in Catalan and Irish Contemporary Short Stories: Feminist and Postcolonial Perspectives', *Catalan Review: International Journal of Catalan Culture*, 12.1 (1998), 9-21; Irene Boada-Montagut, 'Nacionalisme i Llengua en el Conte Contemporani Català i Irlandès. Algunes perspectives feministes i postcoloniales', *Journal of Catalan Studies / Revista Internacional de Catalanística*, 2 (1999), <http://www.uoc.es/jocs/2/articles/boada/index.html>; Montserrat Palau Vergés, 'Autoras Catalanas: Doble Marginación y Doble Rebelión (Género y Nacionalismo en Cataluña)', in *Identidades Multiculturales: Revisión Dos Discursos Teóricos*, ed. by Ana Bringas López and Belén Martín Lucás (Vigo: Universidade de Vigo, 2000), pp. 169-76; Kathryn Crameri, *Language, the Novelist and National Identity in Post-Franco Catalonia* (Oxford: European Humanities Research Centre of the University of Oxford, 2000); and Stewart King, 'Orquestando la Identidad: Estrategias Poscoloniales en *L'opera Quotidiana* de Montserrat Roig', in *Proceedings of the First Symposium on Catalonia in Australia / Actes del Primer Simposi Sobre Catalunya a Austràlia (La Trobe University, Melbourne, 27-29 September 1996)*, ed. by Robert Archer and Emma Martinell Gifre (Barcelona: PPU, 1998), pp. 59-76. Two other studies by King and Boada Montagut are also worth a mention. King's is an essay which outlines the ideas described at greater detail in *Escribir la Catalanidad*, while Boada Montagut's is a book-length study of the comparison of women's writing from Catalonia and Ireland that she began in the articles cited above. Stewart King, 'Transformando el Estado Español: Los Discursos Regionalistas y Poscoloniales en la Literatura Catalana de Expresión Castellana', in *Identidades Multiculturales: Revisión Dos Discursos Teóricos*, ed. by Ana Bringas López and Belén Martín Lucás (Vigo: Universidade de Vigo, 2000), pp. 113-20; Irene Boada-Montagut, *Women Write Back: Irish and Catalan Short Stories in Colonial Context* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003).

“pot la literatura en castellà ser literatura catalana?”²¹⁹ she does not offer any sort of response to it, this is the only time it is mentioned, and all the works from Catalonia that she engages with during the study are Catalan-language texts.²²⁰ King is particularly critical of this approach as it occurs in a study comparing works from Catalonia and Ireland but whereas the Irish works examined are written in English, ‘the coloniser’s language’, the Catalan works are all in Catalan. King writes that:

Por ejemplo al referirse a las escritoras irlandesas afirma que a pesar de expresarse en la lengua de los colonizadores – el inglés – ‘el problema no tiene tanto que ver con la lengua en sí, sino con cómo se usa la lengua’... Sin embargo, no pregunta si se puede defender lo mismo en los casos de Esther Tusquets y Ana Maria Moix, que son las únicas escritoras catalanas de lengua castellana que menciona en su primer estudio...²²¹

King attributes this contradiction to a tension in Boada-Montagut’s work between postcolonialism and nationalism. While postcolonialism can accept texts written in the coloniser’s language, Catalan nationalism struggles to include texts written in languages other than Catalan. Thus the use of postcolonial theory is somewhat uneven in this study – applied to Ireland in one way and to Catalonia in another.

King acknowledges that in his previous work on Monserrat Roig he was also guilty of not considering Spanish-language Catalan authors,²²² but he rectifies this in *Escribir la Catalanidad*, examining the work of Spanish-language authors like Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Juan Marsé and Luis Goytisolo. Crameri compares Goytisolo’s brother Juan who also wrote in Spanish to the Catalan-language author Biel Mesquida and Marsé to Monserrat Roig who also wrote creatively in Catalan.²²³ Thus postcolonial theory is beginning to be applied to Spanish-language Catalan texts but there is still much work to be done in this area.

²¹⁹ Boada-Montagut, quoted in King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 6. “Can literature in Castilian be Catalan literature?”

²²⁰ King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 6. “For example, when referring to the Irish writers, she [Boada-Montagut] affirms that despite expressing themselves in the colonisers’ language – English – ‘the issue needs to be seen as not so much the language itself but rather the use of the language’... However, she does not ask if the cases of Esther Tusquets and Ana Maris Moix, the only two Castilian-language Catalan writers that she mentions in her first study, could be defended in the same way.”

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²²³ Crameri, *Language, the Novelist and National Identity in Post-Franco Catalonia*, pp. 116-55 and 156-80.

Generally the postcolonial work in Catalan studies is less heavily influenced by Bhabha than that in the field of Welsh Writing in English. King mainly refers to *The Empire Writes Back* rather than any of Bhabha's work. He also discusses ideas of resistance against the dominant culture though he focuses mainly on cultural resistance rather than political: "La cuestión de la representación, sobre todo las autorepresentaciones, están en la raíz de los discursos coloniales y de la resistencia poscolonial."²²⁴ However, he does acknowledge the other aspects of liberation struggles: "El centrarse en la narrativa no quiere decir que el colonialismo y la resistencia anticolonial fueron poco más que un ejercicio textual, ya que entre las líneas de estas narrativas se leen las luchas por el control de espacios geográficos y sociales."²²⁵ Resistance against domination is all one – it may have many aspects but they are part of the same movement. This is essentially the same as Harlow's idea of resistance literature though King is not necessarily saying that armed struggle is required to make a resistance movement.

Boada-Montagut also mentions resistance though she goes into less detail in theorising it. In her introduction she writes: "In literature, it may be said, the postcolonial and the woman's text is a space of resistance..."²²⁶ and labels literature as a "site of struggle,"²²⁷ wording which again echoes Harlow's. She also insists that the postcolonial text is politically engaged and thus follows Parry's and San Juan's calls for recognition of this fact. However, she does not really theorise what a literature of resistance is or could be, talking only about women and postcolonial subjects 'writing back' to the metropolitan/patriarchal centre. Thus, it would seem that ideas of a literature of resistance are not completely new to either Welsh or Catalan literature, but that there is plenty of work to be done in building on and developing those ideas.

Comparisons between the literatures of Wales and Catalonia are exceedingly rare and those of literature in languages other than the national language virtually non-existent. This is perhaps not surprising as the study of Welsh writing in English is a relatively new field and that of Catalan writing in Spanish even more so. Paul Birt, as already mentioned, has compared Welsh language and Catalan language

²²⁴ King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 4. "The question of representation, above all of self-representations, is at the root of colonial discourses and postcolonial resistance."

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4. "Focusing on narrative does not mean that colonialism and anticolonial resistance were little more than a textual exercise, rather that between the lines of the narratives the struggle for the control of geographical and social spaces can be seen."

²²⁶ Boada Montagut, *Women Write Back*, p. 11.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

literature along with the French literature of Québec.²²⁸ But his focus, and that of Hannah Sams also mentioned above, is solely on texts in the national languages of these stateless nations, not on those of their states.

Comparisons with Ireland are more common on both sides, particularly from a feminist angle. Linden Peach has compared English-language writing by women from Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland,²²⁹ while Boada-Montagut's comparison of Irish and Catalan women's short stories has already been mentioned. Boada-Montagut justifies the comparison on the grounds that,

both were colonial societies at one time; both have had experiences of bilingualism; both existed in the shadow of a political and cultural giant and responded to this position of cultural subordination in literature as well as in politics, and both experienced a cultural revival during the second half of the nineteenth century... In both cases literature was exploited in the service of a nationalist ideology... Moreover, within each society, there has been a fair degree of self-questioning which runs along roughly parallel lines. What does Irishness mean? What does it mean to be Catalan, both in the past and the present?²³⁰

This is all true and provides reasonable grounds for comparison. However these points are equally true of Wales too and I would argue that in some ways the situations of Wales and Catalonia are closer than those of Ireland and Catalonia or those of Wales and Ireland. For one thing, the majority of Ireland became independent from Anglo-dominated Britain in 1922, whereas Wales and Catalonia have remained part of the states that dominated them to the present day. Thus, politically, their situations are more similar to each other than to Ireland. Since the early twentieth century Ireland has been able shape its own policy in a way that Wales and Catalonia have not, even in more recent years with greater devolution and autonomy.

Secondly, I would argue that the linguistic situation in Wales is a little more similar to Catalonia than the Irish one is (though it has to be noted that the native language in Catalonia is far stronger than in either Wales or Ireland). However the Irish language has been in decline for longer than the Welsh and its revival has been largely imposed by the government. Though in Wales, Welsh has been heavily encouraged by government schemes and grants, it has on the whole been a more natural revival with

²²⁸ Paul Birt, *Cerddi Alltudiaeth: Thema yn Llenyddiaethau Québec, Catalunya a Chymru* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1997).

²²⁹ Linden Peach, *Contemporary Welsh and Irish Women's Fiction: Gender, Desire and Power* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007).

²³⁰ Boada Montagut, *Women Write Back*, p. 1.

many people still speaking it as their first language. In addition, the nineteenth century literary revival in Wales took place in the country's native language, as it did in Catalonia. In Ireland, on the other hand, it took place in English. English-language literature is well-established in Ireland and while Boada may ask: "Is Anglo-Irish literature Irish?"²³¹ alongside the question discussed earlier regarding whether Catalan writing in Spanish could be considered Catalan, the two questions are not equally problematic. Few people would deny that figures of Anglo-Irish literature like Yeats and Joyce are Irish, even if they have at times been appropriated by the English literary canon. However, as we have seen, the question of regarding Spanish-language writers as part of Catalan literature is far more problematic, and the same is true to a certain extent with English-language Welsh writers. Thus I would argue that the cultural situations of Wales and Catalonia are closer to each other than either are to Ireland. None of this is meant to suggest that comparing Catalonia or Wales with Ireland is invalid – it is simply meant to show that comparisons between Wales and Catalonia are also valid and interesting and – in the light of recent events – potentially important.

Choice of texts

Naturally, a study of this length must be selective about the texts and authors included and difficult decisions had to be made. On the Welsh side, it seemed almost imperative to include R. S. Thomas. Thomas is an integral part of the Welsh Writing in English canon (recently developed though it is, this area has still developed a canon though academics are frequently attempting to expand it), well known and studied both in Wales and further afield. He was also a fervent Welsh nationalist. He is one of the English-language writers that critics consider to be closest to Welsh-language literature.²³² Images from this literature abound in his work, and several critics have commented on the influence that Saunders Lewis had on him. He cared deeply for Wales, writing about it in his poetry, attending demonstrations and protests and never being afraid to speak out either to defend or criticise his country. Therefore including him in a thesis considering English-language Welsh resistance was crucial, particularly as the word 'resistance' has already been used by some critics to describe his work,²³³ and as he was one of the poets Daniel Williams discusses with regards to his poetic presentation of the Welsh language.²³⁴ As will be seen, I actually claim that Harri Webb is more of a resistance writer, at least in the sense

²³¹ Ibid., p. 1.

²³² See for example, M. Wynn Thomas, *Corresponding Cultures*, p. 52; Glyn Jones, p.

²³³ See for example, Tony Brown, *R. S. Thomas* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), p. 2.

²³⁴ Daniel Williams, *Wales Unchained*, pp. 144-5.

meant in this thesis, but it was still important to include Thomas to provide that contrast and to re-examine a (comparatively) well-studied figure in the light of this new approach.

In contrast, Harri Webb has received very little critical attention within Welsh Writing in English (possible reasons for this will be discussed in the next chapter). However, as will be seen, he is, if anything, even more fervently nationalistic than R. S. Thomas. He is a highly politicised writer whose works fit very well with the ideas of resistance literature outlined in this introduction. I have included him for this reason and also in an attempt to expand the canon and draw attention to a much neglected writer. I believe that Webb has been ignored at least in part because much of his writing is both political and simple. The majority of his work is not as aesthetically pleasing as that of more recognised poets; indeed some of it could almost be called doggerel. By focusing on the aim of the work, resistance theory reveals hitherto ignored strengths of the work. Therefore, Webb seemed the perfect author to include, both as an exemplar of a resistance writer and as an author that has received relatively little critical attention.

The final Welsh writer, Rhys Davies, was a less obvious choice. He is a reasonably well-established figure in the Welsh Writing in English canon but a very different type of writer to R. S. Thomas both in style (he wrote short stories and novels primarily) and in apparent attitude to Wales and politics. However, I will argue that his views are not as clear cut as they appear and that a close examination will reveal the seeds of resistance literature in his work, in particular his assertion of the Welshness of the industrial struggles in the southeast valleys. He has therefore been included as an example of a writer like San Juan's Nick Joaquin – an apparently conservative author who, nevertheless, should not be excluded from the national literature but instead re-evaluated and reclaimed for Wales and Welsh resistance writing.

On the Catalan side, Albert Sánchez Piñol was included because *Victus*, in spite of being written in Spanish, is so clearly a pro-Catalan text. As a historical novel, *Victus* provided a fine example of an attempt to recover a nation's history. Moreover, the timing of the novel, written during the growth of the independence movement, the status of the author in Catalonia and the statements he had made in favour of independence, supported its claim to be an important resistance text. The novel's depiction of a democratic Catalonia, its Castilian hero and the implicit parallels between the historical period it covered and the present day were also fascinating. As a result, it was necessary to include it in this thesis.

The final author to be included, Eduardo Mendoza, was another fairly clear cut choice. He is one of the most famous Catalan writers writing in Spanish today. The Catalan sociolinguist Francesc Vallverdú used him as an example of a Catalan writer who, despite writing in Spanish, supported the Catalan

language and culture.²³⁵ However, as we shall see, he has not always been considered a Catalan writer and the ambiguities in his work make for an interesting discussion. The similarities between *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* and Rhys Davies' 'Rhondda Trilogy' provide the closest direct comparison in the thesis and the distinctly pro-Catalan passages in the novel ensured his inclusion.

These authors and the chosen texts cover a range of time with some eighty years between the publication of Rhys Davies' work in the 1930s and Sánchez Piñol's novel *Victus* which was released in 2012. However, all the authors are writing at times of great change and uncertainty for their nations and they are attempting to resist English/Spanish hegemony through their work. Thus the time difference is not important; by stating that all struggles are linked resistance theory allows for comparisons across time as well as space.

There are a few authors that I would have liked to include but could not for various reasons. The original draft contained a chapter comparing the Welsh author Emyr Humphreys and the Catalan author Juan Marsé, examining their use of Welsh/Catalan in their English/Spanish texts, but this had to be cut for reasons of space. The Welsh poets Nigel Jenkins and John Tripp wrote in a similar vein to Harri Webb; Jenkins was a friend of Webb's and they published a collection of poetry together. The Catalan Manuel Vázquez Montalbán who wrote political journalism, novels and poetry would have been equally interesting to study from a resistance point of view, especially as he has spent time in prison as a result of his writings. Unfortunately, time and space did not permit their inclusion either but they can hopefully be studied at a later date.

It will be noticed that all the authors discussed in this thesis are male. This is in no way trying to suggest that women are incapable of writing resistance literature much less of participating in acts of resistance; both Harlow and San Juan discuss female resistance writers and activists,²³⁶ while Rohini Hensman claims that "it would be hard to deny that women have played a significant role in resistance

²³⁵ Francesc Vallverdú, 'Pròleg', in Ute Heinemann, *Novel.la Entre Dues Llengües: El Dilema Català o Castellà*, trans. by Laura Puigdomènech, (Kassel: Reichenberger, 1996), pp. ix-xiii (p. xii).

²³⁶ Harlow discusses, among others, the prison memoirs of the South African Ruth First and the Egyptian Nawal al-Saadawi in addition to the latter's novel, *Woman at Point Zero*, based on her experience of incarceration. She also discusses the career of the Palestinian commando Leila Khaled at some length. San Juan, meanwhile, discusses the Filipino guerrilla fighter Maria Lorena Barros, the Guatemalan peace activist Rigoberta Menchu, and Native American novelist Leslie Marmon Silko to name just a few. Clearly then women are capable of all types of political and cultural resistance.

struggles and national liberation movements.”²³⁷ It is simply that those authors that most suggested themselves for inclusion were all male. As I have shown above, there were important reasons for including every author that was selected for discussion in this thesis. This may be partly because more critical attention has been paid to male writers over the years. Most of the Spanish-language Catalan writers that King and Cramer discuss are male and while a great deal of work has been done by Jane Aaron, Katie Gramich, Kirsti Bohata and others to rediscover women’s writing on the Welsh Writing in English side,²³⁸ it is still true that the canon is very male-dominated and most of the best known Welsh writers in English within the field are male: Dylan Thomas, R. S. Thomas, Emyr Humphreys, and so on.

It is also possible to argue, though, that women’s approaches to resistance literature may be, in general, a little different to men’s. Many commentators have commented on the somewhat problematic position of women with regards to nationalism movements.²³⁹ Nationalisms are often male-dominated discourses with the women being seen to represent the nation rather than able to take active part in the struggle.²⁴⁰ This has been discussed extensively in the Catalan case by Monserrat Palau among others,²⁴¹ and in the Welsh situation by Kirsti Bohata among others.²⁴² Palau in particular stresses that Catalan female writers have suffered and continue to suffer a double marginalisation – excluded from the centre by both their nationality and their gender.²⁴³ This has also been discussed by Kathleen McNerney and Cristina Enríquez de Salamanca in their work *Double Minorities of Spain*. They write of women “doubly marginalized – by prejudice against their sex and against their choice of literary

²³⁷ Rohini Hensman, ‘The Role of Women in the Resistance to Political Authoritarianism in Latin America’, in *Women and Politics in the Third World*, ed. by Haleh Afshar (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 48-72 (p. 48).

²³⁸ See for example, Jane Aaron (ed.), *A View Across the Valley: Short Stories by Women from Wales c. 1850-1950* (South Glamorgan: Honno, 1999), *Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Identity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010); Katie Gramich, *Twentieth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales: Land, Gender, Belonging* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007); Katie Gramich and Catherine Brennan (eds.), *Welsh Women’s Poetry, 1460-2001: An Anthology* (Dinas Powys: Honno, 2003); Kirsti Bohata and Katie Gramich (eds.), *Rediscovering Margiad Evans: Marginality, Gender and Illness* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013).

²³⁹ See for example, Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: SAGE, 1997); Graham Day and Andrew Thompson, *Theorizing Nationalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 108-27.

²⁴⁰ Day and Thompson, p. 115; Yuval-Davis, p. 47.

²⁴¹ Montserrat Palau Vergés, ‘Autoras Catalanas: Doble Marginación y Doble Rebelión (Género y Nacionalismo en Cataluña)’, in *Identidades Multiculturales: Revisión Dos Discursos Teóricos*, ed. by Ana Bringas López and Belén Martín Lucás (Vigo: Universidade de Vigo, 2000), pp. 169-76.

²⁴² Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, pp. 59-79.

²⁴³ Palau Vergés, p. 169.

language,” explaining that Spanish literature has traditionally meant writing in Spanish and that writers in other languages are ignored by the dominant centre.²⁴⁴ Of course, Welsh women who wrote in English and Catalan women who wrote in Spanish would not be in the same situation but within their own nations they were likely to be marginalised more for not writing in the national language.

This can lead to a linking of struggles similar to that espoused by resistance theory. Anne Charlon, noting repeated occurrences of the link between the subordination of women and the colonisation of Catalonia in the works of Catalan female authors like Roig, Oliver, Simó and Riera, writes that “el aspecto más característico de la prosa narrativa femenina catalana es la voluntad de encontrar una solución común a la lucha catalanista y a la lucha feminista.”²⁴⁵ The Catalan poet Maria Mercè Marçal wrote that she was grateful for three things: “A l’atzar agraeixo tres dons, haver nascut dona/ de classe baixa i nació oprimida / I el tèrbol atzur de tres voltes rebel.”²⁴⁶ Here, the gender struggle is linked with the national struggle in true resistance style; gender is one of the areas that Thiong’o saw as crucial.²⁴⁷

However, as critics have noted, nations struggling for freedom may still be patriarchal and seek to dominate their women, either during the struggle or afterwards.²⁴⁸ Thus women may well need a different solution to purely national realisation. Resistance literature with its linking of struggles can offer them that but it is perhaps less straightforward for them to adopt this method of writing, particularly if their nation does not want their contribution. A search for female resistance writers in the Welsh and Catalan contexts would make for an interesting and important follow up study. Resistance writing could then be compared across the genders with fascinating results.

²⁴⁴ Kathleen McNerney and Cristina Enríquez de Salamanca, *Double Minorities of Spain: A Bio-Bibliographic Guide to Women Writers of the Catalan, Galician and Basque Countries* (New York: MLA, 1994), p. 1.

²⁴⁵ Anne Charlon, quoted in Palau Vergés, p. 174. “The most characteristic aspect of narrative prose by Catalan women is the desire to discover a common solution to the Catalan struggle and the feminist struggle.”

²⁴⁶ Maria Mercè Marçal, quoted in Boada Montagut, *Women Write Back*, p. 8. “I am grateful to fate for three gifts: to have been born a woman, from the working class and an oppressed nation. And the turbid azure of being three times a rebel.” Trans. by Boada Montagut.

²⁴⁷ Thiong’o, *Moving the Centre*, p. xvii.

²⁴⁸ Yuval-Davis, p. 113.

Thesis Outline

This thesis will show that the authors discussed demonstrate various degrees of resistance. Broadly the chapters are ordered so that those with a greater degree of resistance are considered ahead of those with a lesser. I hope that this will allow the earlier chapters to establish that the authors discussed in them are resistance writers and to show how the resistance writing paradigm can be applied in practice. The later chapters will then draw on this and show that there are at least traces of resistance ideas and techniques in the apparently more conservative authors.

The first chapter will focus on Harri Webb, discussing a range of his prose and poetry. It will begin by illustrating and explaining his view that Wales is a colony, before going on to examine his ideas about resistance and his attempts to unite Wales through focus on the nation, then his efforts to recover a lost Welsh history. It will finish by considering his claim to be a ‘popular’ writer – an important attribute for a resistance author. Many of the attributes found in Webb’s work will be shown to be present to a greater or lesser extent in the work of the other authors so the following chapters will frequently refer back to this one.

The next chapter will focus on Albert Sánchez Piñol’s historical novel *Victus* and consider both its primary aim of attempting to recover a Catalan-sided history as a means of inspiring Catalans of all languages and origins to work for the good of their nation, and its secondary aim of speaking truth to the power of the Spanish state. It will also examine how the novel depicts Catalonia and consider Crameri’s argument that *Victus* is attempting to speak subtly of a Catalan state. Similarities with Webb will be illustrated, justifying the comparative nature of this work.

The following chapter will consider a range of R. S. Thomas’ poetry and prose, examining his depiction of the relationship between Wales and England and the vital question of his intended audience (Thomas has been extremely successful inside and outside Wales). It will then argue that his wider audience is not a handicap to his status as a resistance writer; rather it allows him to speak truth to power. Finally, the type of resistance his work espouses will be considered. For the first time examples of an exclusive resistance forming Sánchez Piñol’s ‘enclaves of resistance’ will be seen, but I will also argue that there are signs of a more open inclusive resistance in some of Thomas’ work.

The final chapter is a comparative one. It compares a historical novel by Eduardo Mendoza with a historical trilogy by Rhys Davies. As with Sánchez Piñol’s *Victus*, this chapter will consider the authors’ attempts to recover the history of their nations for their compatriots and to speak truth to

power – the Spanish and British states respectively. It will demonstrate that traces of the ideas present in *Victus* can be found in these works though they are less radical. It will also show that Mendoza's use of humour, while it might at first appear to undermine the message of the text, can actually be seen as a device to make its readers question all facts and history – an important tactic in the resistance against educational hegemony. It will concede that these texts are not as strongly resistant as the ones previously discussed and that the type of resistance proclaimed is generally more racially-based and backward-looking, particularly in the case of Davies. However, it will also demonstrate that traces of many of the ideas and techniques found in the other writers are present. It will also argue, following San Juan, that it is important to read these texts for signs of resistance as to do otherwise is to surrender them to the opposition (see above).

Finally, in the conclusion I will consider the types of resistance discovered in the texts studied and compare any similarities and differences between Catalonia and Wales. I will also make connections to the current affairs of those nations and explain why I believe that it is important to search their literatures for signs of resistance.

Chapter 1 – Harri Webb and ‘The Saga of Welsh Resistance’

Introduction

Of all the writers discussed in this thesis, Harri Webb is the one who comes closest to producing resistance literature in the sense of Harlow’s original definition of a writer who is part of an independence movement. Joining Plaid Cymru in 1948, Webb quickly became “dissatisfied with what he saw as the Party’s ‘milk-and-water’ stance,”²⁴⁹ and in 1949 he joined the Welsh Republican Movement which called for Welsh independence at a time when Plaid Cymru was still uncertain about its exact aims, and remained involved until its dissolution in the late 1950s. During this period he also became an active member of the Labour Party. However, he became disillusioned with Labour too, seeing them as a British party with no true concern for Wales. A couple of years after the Welsh Republican Movement dissolved, Webb rejoined Plaid Cymru arguing that it had changed (improved in his view)²⁵⁰ but was always on the most radical edge of the party. He wrote extensively for both Movements’ newspapers, including a spell as editor of each. In numerous articles he outlined the Movements’ views and aims and campaigned for an independent Wales, arguing vehemently that it was the only thing that could solve the nation’s many problems.²⁵¹ His articles consistently affirm the necessity for an independent Wales. The majority of his poetry was also written in the same cause.

Webb is also a resistance writer in the wider sense of the term used by San Juan and Parry – a committed writer who makes no distinction between his art and his politics. Meic Stephens, a longstanding friend of Webb’s stated: “Harri made hardly any distinction in his verse and prose

²⁴⁹ Meic Stephens, ‘Introduction’ in *No Half-Way House: Harri Webb Selected Political Journalism* ed. by Meic Stephens, (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 1997), pp. 11-24 (p. 12).

²⁵⁰ “After seven years of vigorous propagandizing in the industrial valleys, the Welsh Republican Movement felt that its mission was largely accomplished within the limitations of its capacities. Plaid Cymru had become much more of the left, had learned to communicate with industrial workers, was not so obsessed with the language issue, was altogether more political and realistic. Most Republicans now felt they could join Plaid Cymru with a clear conscience.” Harri Webb, ‘Reactions to a Non-Event’, in *No Half-Way House: Harri Webb Selected Political Journalism* ed. by Meic Stephens, (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 1997), pp. 300-307, (p. 304).

²⁵¹ See for example, ‘Alien Rule the Road to Ruin’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 155-8; ‘The Green Gold of Wales’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp.136-40; ‘Tory War on Wales’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp.149-51.

between the literary and the political, the two were so closely linked in his mind.”²⁵² Webb himself claimed,

... I chose political activity of an unorthodox character, with the Welsh Republican Movement, rather than any but the most occasional and contingent literary activity. Not that I have ever been able to make much of a distinction... I never wrote anything of worth before I became a political activist.²⁵³

While not claiming that all literature should be political, Webb knew that because of his commitment to his politics, primarily Welsh Nationalism but also Socialism, that there was no other path he could follow. Stephens explains that: “No politician, at least not in the usual sense, he [Webb] therefore used the best means at his disposal in an attempt not to describe his country but to change it.”²⁵⁴ As is the case with all resistance writers, his writing was the main way that he could spread his convictions and was thus of necessity politicised. He himself claimed his writing as a vocation: “My job is to communicate with as wide an audience as possible...”²⁵⁵ and consequently he used whatever means were at his disposal to achieve this.

Webb has not received much critical attention, even within the field of Welsh Writing in English,²⁵⁶ and this fusion of politics with writing may be one of the reasons. As already mentioned, both Harlow and San Juan note that resistance writers are likely be ignored or disparaged by mainstream criticism which sees politics, particularly local politics, as an unsuitable subject for such art. Nigel Jenkins echoes this view in his analysis of Webb’s poetry where he claims caustically that for many “in its

²⁵² Meic Stephens, ‘Introduction’, in *A Militant Muse: Harri Webb Selected Literary Journalism 1948-80*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Bridgend: Seren, 1998), pp. 7-11 (p. 7).

²⁵³ Harri Webb, ‘Webb’s Progress (II)’, in *A Militant Muse*, pp. 196-204 (p. 198).

²⁵⁴ Stephens, ‘Introduction’, *A Militant Muse*, p. 11.

²⁵⁵ Harri Webb quoted in Mercer Simpson, ‘Harri Webb, Poetic Canvasser or Rebel Joker?’ *Welsh Review* 23.2-3 (1988), 37-40 (p. 39).

²⁵⁶ Apart from the short but informative book by Brian Morris in the Library of Wales series (Brian Morris, *Harri Webb* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), there are only a handful of articles dealing with Webb’s life and work and the majority of these are quite brief. Moreover, with the exception of Meic Stephens’ introductions to *No Half-way House* and *A Militant Muse*, all the critical articles focus on the poetry rather than the prose, though Nicholas Jones does incorporate some of the prose into his examination of the images of struggle and violence in Webb’s poetry – Nicholas Jones, ‘Supercharging the Struggle: Models of Nationalist Victory in the Poetry of Harri Webb’ in *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, 9 (2004), 102-22. Likewise, Elidir Jones discusses both genres in the chapter of his thesis that compares Webb with the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid but with the exception of these two works and Morris’ book the focus is very much on Webb’s poetry. (Elidir Jones, *Nationalism and Welsh Writing in Comparative Contexts, 1925-1966* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Cardiff University, 2011), pp. 110-44.).

[Webb's poetry's] "narrow" and "parochial" obsession with Wales, it fails the test of "universality".²⁵⁷ Jenkins dismisses this view but an earlier review by Belinda Humfrey seems to be heavily influenced by it. Humfrey calls Webb's first poetry collection *The Green Desert* a "higgledy-piggledy," collection unified only by its theme of Wales.²⁵⁸ She criticises his "unusually small vocabulary,"²⁵⁹ though she does explain it "as possibly because of his declared themes and purposes,"²⁶⁰ and describes him as "an 'easy' poet, not just because he writes for *every*-Welshman but because of his patriotic propagandist purposes."²⁶¹ While acknowledging that: "Some of his simplicities are indeed strengths,"²⁶² the overall tone of the review is disparaging and closes with the claim:

But such earnestness requires better craft from the poet. At the emergence of *Poetry Wales*, its editor declared, "our first commitment... is to the craft. Our second is to the country". Her poets would serve Wales best by knowing her their second muse.²⁶³

To read Webb in this way however is to do him a disservice, as Chris O'Neill argues cogently in an article in response to Humfrey's.²⁶⁴ It is effectively to miss the point of his work. Instead his achievements as a nationalist poet should be considered, as O'Neill does, by comparing his nationalist poems with those of Meic Stephens.²⁶⁵ When judging his work the critic should remember Webb's ultimate aims. He is not trying to write great literature; he is trying to arouse a national consciousness. As such, commitment to Wales is part of his art - putting Wales second to his craft would be a betrayal of both. Stephens writes that: "He was a writer whose engagement in left-wing politics...was an integral part of his outlook, and without an understanding of it his writing loses much of its immediacy and lasting appeal..."²⁶⁶ something that Humfrey did not seem to fully comprehend.

It is also important to note that Webb's style and subject matter was his choice not his only mode. Stephens writes:

²⁵⁷ Nigel Jenkins, 'The Poetry of Harri Webb', *Planet*, 83 (October/November 1990), 24-8 (p. 25).

²⁵⁸ Belinda Humfrey, 'Harri Webb in "The Wrong Language"' *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, 21 (1972), 9-17 (p. 9).

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁶⁴ C. B. O'Neill, 'Harri Webb and Nationalist Poetry', *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, 65 (1979), 90-9.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ Stephens, 'Introduction', *A Militant Muse*, p. 7.

It should be remembered, too, that if what he wrote was sometimes closer to doggerel than to poetry, or to polemic than to literary criticism, at least it was in a deliberate response by a fully equipped writer, who, putting aside purely aesthetic considerations, chose to write in this way. ‘Poetry that makes nothing happen,’ he wrote, alluding to Auden’s elegy for W. B. Yeats, ‘is a luxury we just cannot afford.’²⁶⁷

This emphasis on choice is crucial. If it is true to say that some of Webb’s poetry is not particularly good by traditional critical standards, then it is because he *chose* to write in this way not because he was unable to write in any other. As M. Wynn Thomas notes he was “a richly cultured man,”²⁶⁸ an Oxford graduate and gifted linguist who translated poems from French, Spanish, Breton, Martiniquais, Sardinian, Galician and, most interesting for the purposes of this thesis, Catalan, into English and Welsh. Sally Roberts Jones claims that poems like ‘Saraband’ show that Webb was capable of far more ‘literary’ poetry.²⁶⁹ Clearly, therefore, his use of simple language, satire, at times crude humour, and popular forms such as the ballad are a choice. He chooses to write in a way that is both politically engaged and accessible to all. Some writings are meant to stir the blood, others to rouse people through shame or laughter but all are written “for *every*-Welshman,”²⁷⁰ as Humfrey acknowledges. While critics like Humfrey may not see the value of this accessibility, the majority of Webb’s work fits well with San Juan’s ideas of a popular-democratic culture discussed in the introduction. It is effectively “of the masses, for the masses.”

Another, connected, reason for the neglect of Webb, even within the field of Welsh Writing in English, is that postcolonial work within that discipline has tended to be heavily influenced by Bhabha and thus has deployed categories like “hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence,”²⁷¹ none of which are very appropriate for talking about Webb. There is little that is hybrid or ambivalent about Webb’s work; in general it declares his opinions straightforwardly. As seen in the thesis introduction, During argued that this focus on ambivalence had led to a “rejection of resistance along with any form of binarism, hierarchy or telos.”²⁷² Webb is very binary in his depictions, particularly of Wales and England and thus cannot

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁶⁸ M. Wynn Thomas, *Corresponding Cultures*, p. 53.

²⁶⁹ Sally Roberts Jones, ‘A Matter of Choices: the Poetry of Harri Webb’, *Poetry Wales* 26.2 (1990), 27-30 (p. 27).

²⁷⁰ Humfrey, p. 9.

²⁷¹ Parry, ‘The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies,’ p. 76.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 76.

be examined easily through the lens of orthodox postcolonialism. Resistance theory seems a far more effective tool.²⁷³

Writing in the early 1990s, Roberts Jones also argues that Webb's themes may be another reason for his neglect, explaining: "Nationalism, Welsh history, the fight for the language are no longer fashionable as themes, and those who use them are often seen as naïve."²⁷⁴ I agree but think that Webb is ignored further because he portrays and supports an aspect of Welsh history that many might rather forget – the use of direct action and even violence in the Welsh cause.²⁷⁵ This goes against the pacifist tradition in Wales which governed the mainstream line of Plaid Cymru during Webb's lifetime. During the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in reaction to the drowning of Welsh valleys to provide water for English cities, many nationalists became frustrated with Plaid Cymru's relentlessly constitutional approach and joined movements like Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru (MAC) which advocated the use of direct action, though most stopped short of violence. Indeed part of MAC's original oath was not to take human life and not to injure anyone, even those who might attempt to prevent them from carrying out the Movement's acts.²⁷⁶ In numerous writings Webb declares himself in favour of direct action and even of people laying down their lives for the country. He writes about places and independence movements which have used violence such as Ireland, Algeria and Israel, though as Nicholas Jones notes, his attitude is complex and he stops just short of advocating violence in the Welsh case.²⁷⁷ He had no such ambivalence towards direct action; writing poems and articles in favour of such action and

²⁷³ As will be demonstrated throughout the chapter Webb's writings express many of the ideas propounded by San Juan and also have some similarities to the works of anticolonial Marxist theorists like Fanon and Cabral. I have not been able to prove any definite influence but Webb's poem 'For Frantz Fanon' shows that he was at least aware of Fanon and admired him and therefore was likely familiar with his work though Webb's earlier writings predate Fanon's masterpieces *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks* (both published in English in 1967). San Juan's work of course was produced much later (c. 1980 onwards) and so cannot have influenced Webb directly but, as will be shown, there are many similarities in their ideas.

²⁷⁴ Sally Roberts Jones, p. 27.

²⁷⁵ These terms obviously mean different things to different people. 'Direct action' was used by its proponents in Wales like Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru to mean unconstitutional methods of protest such as vandalism and the use of explosives to damage property but that did not endanger human life. In this thesis I will use their term 'direct action' to refer to such methods while violence will mean deliberate violence against human life.

²⁷⁶ John Humphreys, *Freedom Fighters: Wales's Forgotten 'War', 1963-1993* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 28.

²⁷⁷ Nicholas Jones, 'Supercharging the Struggle: Models of Nationalist Victory in the Poetry of Harri Webb' in *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, 9 (2004), 102-22.

applauding those who undertook it.²⁷⁸ However, this is not a view shared by much of the rest of Wales. John Humphreys notes that at the time there was more support for these actions than might have been expected,²⁷⁹ but also notes that today there is little recognition of this and that these actions are not something the prevailing view of Welsh history is comfortable with:

Forty years later, the phantoms of Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru flicker dimly. Welsh consciousness is uncomfortable with the memory of the 1960s sabotage campaign that targeted water pipelines, government offices and the Prince of Wales.... While cultural activists were lionised, there was little place for any of these [those who resorted to violence or direct action] in the pantheon of Welsh heroes. They were best forgotten, as was their insurrection.²⁸⁰

Webb's enthusiastic support for, and discussion of, events that Wales as a whole wishes to forget may partially explain why he is not widely discussed today. It is to be hoped that this chapter begins to remedy that neglect, showing the value of Webb's work in the light of ideas of resistance literature as a writer who expresses many of the characteristics described by Harlow, San Juan and Parry.

Webb is also the best example in this thesis of a Welsh writer who espouses an open, inclusive Welshness as called for by Daniel Williams. The Welsh Republican Movement's definition of a Welshman was simply "...a citizen of Wales who – no matter what his race or language or country of origin – contributes to this country's welfare, maintains its best traditions and defends its rights and interests."²⁸¹ This is a view that Webb wholeheartedly endorses in his writings. Neither the English-speaking native of Wales nor the incomer who wanted to become Welsh were barred from Webb's view of Wales.²⁸² This will be discussed further shortly.

²⁷⁸ After his death it was discovered that he had had links to MAC, providing activists with safe houses, beds and food and also acting as the group's contact with Breton nationalists. He also designed the White Eagle badge used by the Free Wales Army. John Humphreys, p. 68; Wyn Thomas, *Hands off Wales: Nationhood and Militancy* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2013), pp. 31, 193.

²⁷⁹ John Humphreys, p. vii.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁸¹ Gweriniaethwr, *The Young Republicans: A record of the Welsh Republican Movement – Mudiad Gwerinaethol Cymru* (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 1996), p. 44.

²⁸² It is true that later in his life Webb became disillusioned with the actions of the majority of Welsh people, and with the Welsh cause, leading him to declare in a 1985 interview with Mario Basini that he would not write another word in English, implying that he was completely fed up with it as a language. Morris, pp. 102-3. Morris, however, opines that not too much should be made of these statements: "Harri Webb was in very poor health at the time, and it may well be that he said things, for dramatic effect, which he would not otherwise have said." I agree with Morris and would argue in any case that, as all the writing discussed in this chapter precedes the interview, it cannot be said to have been

This chapter will cover several areas of resistance literature that can be found in Webb's work. The most important is its political content including the nature of the resistance it espouses and its analysis of the uneven structures of power between Wales and England. This is a crucial part of his entire oeuvre. His attempts to move people to activism particularly his focus on the nation and to recover Welsh history, his linking of different struggles, and the popular appeal of his work will also be considered. The chapter will begin with a brief discussion of Webb's views of Wales as a colony of England, his arguments and justifications of this view and his comparisons with other colonies. This will focus mainly on political content and the linking of struggles and will help set the context for the rest of the chapter. Next it will examine the type of resistance he espouses, then his efforts to unite Wales which reflect San Juan's concept of the 'national popular'. The following section will discuss his attempts to recover Welsh history and to use it to define and unite the Welsh people. Finally his claim to be a popular poet, speaking to and for the common people, will be examined. His attempts to move people to activism will be considered throughout. A range of Webb's writings will be studied and will reveal how many resistance theory ideas he embodies in his work.

Wales as a Colony

This section will argue that Webb saw Wales as a colony of England. As seen in the thesis introduction, a nation does not need to be a colony, official or otherwise, to produce resistance literature. It is thus not necessary to establish that Webb saw Wales as a colony in order to claim him as a resistance writer. However, his view of Wales is crucial to an understanding of his writings and of his vocation as a resistance writer. He saw Wales as a colony of England and thus felt compelled to resist English dominance and work for Welsh independence. The image of a dependent, colonised Wales is one his major tropes. Thus a deeper examination of this will provide useful context for the rest of the chapter.

Unlike many who claim colonial status for Wales, Webb does attempt to justify his statements to some extent. In his 'Letter to Mr. Jones' in the February-March 1951 issue of *The Welsh Republican*,²⁸³ he wrote:

influenced by it. The fact that Webb later became disillusioned with his nationalist project does not mean that he was not fully committed to it at the time; nor does it adversely effect the power of that project.

²⁸³ These letters to the everyman citizen of Wales appeared regularly in *The Welsh Republican*.

A Colony, surely, is a country that, in the first place, has no Government of its own, or only an inferior Government with not much more power than, say, a County Council. And as a consequence of not having a proper Government, a Colony is an exploited country, that is to say, its economy is run for the benefit of the country that ‘owns’ the Colony, not for the welfare of the inhabitants themselves. Wales is a Colony by both these tests, Mr. Jones, and I shall prove it!²⁸⁴

Webb’s definition of a colony seems reasonable, if basic. While some might claim that colonies are usually overseas from the colonising country, Bohata and Crameri have argued that this should not be a barrier to considering Wales and Catalonia as colonies.²⁸⁵ Equally, a colony is usually a territory acquired by military force, though Crameri has also questioned this, focusing in Catalonia’s case on a “gradual intermixing of people and cultures... and the enforced suppression of cultural differences.”²⁸⁶ This last is important; most accepted definitions of a colony include cultural colonisation – that is the colonising country sees their own culture as superior and consequently attempts to impose it forcibly upon the colonised. Indeed this superior culture is often given as a justification for the colonisation – it is the coloniser’s duty to bring their culture to the colonised so that they can be ‘improved’.²⁸⁷ Webb’s definition is therefore lacking a few aspects but encapsulates the most fundamental.

Equally while some of these aspects may be missing from Webb’s definition quoted above, all are mentioned at other points in his work. Webb frequently talks of the invasion and conquest of Wales and the effects of the education system that attempted to impose English on the whole of Wales. Thus he is constantly dealing with issues of ‘colonisation’ in Wales, whether or not he labels them explicitly in this way.

The article cited above continues his argument that Wales is a colony in terms that are definitely explicit. It argues that despite sending elected MPs to Parliament, the numerical discrepancy between them and their English counterparts is so great that Wales will never get a fair say in the affairs of the United Kingdom. He points out the majority of Welsh MPs voted futilely against conscription: “But what were their twenty-odd voices among the uproar of the hysterical English in full cry?”²⁸⁸ To rouse emotion, he adds: “The fate of your own flesh and blood will answer you soon enough, as the youth of

²⁸⁴ Harri Webb, ‘Letters to Mr Jones’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 49-63, (p. 55).

²⁸⁵ Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, p. 7; Crameri, *Language, the Novelist and National Identity in Post-Franco Catalonia*, p. 118.

²⁸⁶ Crameri, *Language, the Novelist and National Identity in Post-Franco Catalonia*, p. 118.

²⁸⁷ King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, p. 4.

²⁸⁸ Webb, ‘Letters to Mr. Jones’, p. 55.

Wales is sacrificed on some far-flung futile battlefield for England's fading Empire,"²⁸⁹ before asking: "Do you have to wait until that happens before you will be convinced that Wales is a Colony?"²⁹⁰ The image of youth being sacrificed creates pathos and the final impatient question is designed to sting the reader into action.

Webb then moves on to discuss the lack of jobs in Wales, arguing:

And if you like to go on thinking that Wales is getting a square deal, well go on thinking it, but don't blame me when you find there's no job nearer than Birmingham, and 'No Welsh need apply.' Because it's the same thing with industries as with armies. You are there to do the dirty work.²⁹¹

He goes on to compare the 'Colonial Economy' that he imagines most people think of "...the poor blacks sweating in the sun to grow groundnuts or some other raw material which is then sent to England to be processed and re-exported, and all the profits going to the guzzling parasites who live in luxury in London,"²⁹² with the wholesale claiming of Welsh resources by the government in England. He argues that the Welsh do the hard and dangerous manual labour to extract the resources while the processing jobs are carried out in England for much better money. He sees little difference between this and the situation in England's other colonies. Wales is simply another English colony to be oppressed and exploited.

There are two tactics that Webb uses in this article that I would like to highlight as they reoccur constantly in his work. One is the illustration of how Wales has been adversely affected by its colonial status. The second is comparison with other acknowledged colonies. A few examples of each are worth considering as they help define the specifics of Webb's understanding of Wales as a colony. Moreover, the first leads to Webb analysing the uneven power structures between groups, another common feature of resistance writers. Mentioning these negative effects is also more likely to move people to act. The second approach, meanwhile, is the first step towards the resistance theory view that all struggles are linked.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 55.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

²⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 55-6.

²⁹² Ibid., p. 56.

Webb opens his article ‘Alien Rule the Road to Ruin’ with the claim:

Every day brings fresh evidence of the grievous state to which the economy of Wales is being brought by the ineptitude of the English government.

Every day brings fresh evidence that only by means of her own government can Wales achieve an efficient and equitable economy.²⁹³

This is a clear and damning statement and it is followed by a list of the issues that Wales faces, beginning with the Tory government that won very few votes in Wales; a government that insists that “the ‘United Kingdom’ is one and indivisible, yet its financial provision is so niggardly that it has led to widespread protest.”²⁹⁴ Other issues: the Welsh Tourist Board’s lack of power, poverty in rural Wales, redundancy and automation in the industrial sectors, closing collieries which affect fishing fleets as well as the communities supported by those collieries, follow. Moreover, Webb leaves his readers in no doubt as to the reason for this. The Government is labelled “a government of financiers and imperialists.”²⁹⁵ Phrases such as “criminal irresponsibility,” and “the sabotage of alien rule,”²⁹⁶ are used to describe its policies towards Wales. These words carry heavy overtones of blame as well as criticism, and “sabotage” implies a deliberate policy of destruction carried out by the Westminster government. ‘Criminal irresponsibility’ could be caused by ineptitude or carelessness but “sabotage” is intended. Here Webb is doing more than just analysing the uneven power structures between the two nations. This article is intended both to arouse anger in its readers and to construct the ‘alien’ government as a threat which must be countered. Patrick Hogan has noted the importance of constructing another nation as a threat in order to gain support for action against that nation.²⁹⁷ While Hogan is talking primarily about motivating a populace to support a war, his points apply to any kind of national action, in Webb’s case working for Welsh independence. Fear of governmental sabotage will incline the Welsh people to support this.

Hogan also explains though, that while fear of a threat will encourage people to support national action, it tends to encourage them to support that action being undertaken by other people. In order to rouse individuals to act themselves, it is usually necessary to evoke anger and this, above all, is what Webb

²⁹³ Webb, ‘Alien Rule the Road to Ruin’, p. 155.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 156.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 155.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 157.

²⁹⁷ Patrick Colm Hogan, *Understanding Nationalism* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009), pp. 106-9.

does in this article.²⁹⁸ By angering his readers with his emotive language directed against the government, he hopes to move those readers to act in the interests of Wales rather than just accepting British rule. Therefore this article both seeks to make readers aware of Wales' status as a colony and to rouse them to do something about it. What appears to be a simple rant is actually cleverly constructed to arouse emotions deemed necessary in his readers. This is not to say that Webb's own emotions are not genuine – they may well be. But it is his attempt to arouse these emotions in others that is important here.

A similar effect is created in his article 'Against Military Conscription.' This begins with another blunt and definite statement: "So long as the Welsh nation is deprived by English Government of its rightful sovereignty, military exploitation of the people and resources of Wales is inevitable."²⁹⁹ Like the 'Letter to Mr Jones' quoted above, the article reminds the readers that Welsh MPs speaking for their people had opposed conscription but that it had been passed overwhelmingly by the Government. It then goes on to speak of the effects of conscription on colonial Wales. The language is again emotive; "Welsh Youth has been used indiscriminately for the protection of English imperial interests for generations,"³⁰⁰ and "the annexation of Welsh land for the training and development of English Armed Forces is a further injury to Welsh honour and interest."³⁰¹ As before the mention of youth evokes pity, while annexation implies a hostile takeover. Most striking though is the repeated juxtaposition of 'Welsh' and 'English.' The two nations and their people are by their very positioning in the sentence set at odds, with the Welsh always suffering as a result. Once again, this article is carefully constructed to arouse anger.

Interestingly, unlike many Welsh nationalists, Webb was no pacifist. In this article he decries the fact that Wales has been denied her own Armed Forces: "Deepest of all her indignities, Wales is forced to be without those necessary institutions of present-day Statehood – National Forces, maintained for the defence and integrity of the Motherland."³⁰² He sees Armed Forces as both practically and psychologically essential for Wales:

We have to acknowledge not only the necessity of Armed Defence in the modern world, but also the social and psychological value of the Military Department of State. A nation without its own Government, without its own Defence Forces, cannot hope to survive, even in a cultural

²⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 109-12.

²⁹⁹ Webb, 'Against Military Conscription', in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 72-4 (p. 72).

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 72.

³⁰¹ Ibid., p. 72.

³⁰² Ibid., p. 72.

backwater. Nor can we in Wales afford to ignore the very real dignity and valour of National Armed Forces, trained in self-sacrifice, honour and vigilance for the People's security.³⁰³

For him, in this article at least, possessing its own Armed Forces would appear to be the ultimate validation of Wales' status as a free nation. Denying them this is one of the greatest wrongs England has perpetrated against Wales and a sure sign of its colonial status.³⁰⁴

Alongside military matters and the economy, one of the biggest issues that Webb felt arose from Wales' colonial status was the flooding of Welsh valleys to create reservoirs to supply English cities, with little or no compensation to the Welsh localities involved. This occurred on several occasions in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but the most infamous case, one that is still remembered today, was that of Tryweryn in 1965, where Welsh land was appropriated to serve English purposes, and, worse still, the all-Welsh-speaking village of Capel Celyn was forced to move to make way for the flooding, dispossessing its inhabitants and breaking up a traditional Welsh community.

Webb was far from alone in seeing this as a demonstration of imperial power and total disregard for Wales. Opposition to Tryweryn united the country as Webb himself notes.³⁰⁵ Gwynfor Evans, President of Plaid Cymru, accompanied the villagers of Capel Celyn on a protest march through Liverpool and several times sought to meet with the city's council and dissuade them.³⁰⁶ When constitutional protest and dissuasion failed, some individuals carried out acts of sabotage at the construction site.³⁰⁷ Webb wholeheartedly supported these efforts and like others rued the destruction of Capel Celyn but seemed to see the theft of the water as a greater outrage than the drowning of the village. In his article 'Tryweryn' he argued:

Under different auspices, Tryweryn Lake would be welcomed as a vast storehouse and as a source of power. Piped water to farmyard and cottage kitchen would alleviate the domestic lot. As one of the basic raw materials of modern industry, the great supply would do much to remedy the deficiencies in the economic pattern of Gwynedd. In fact, if Tryweryn Dam were to

³⁰³ Ibid., pp. 72-3.

³⁰⁴ Interestingly, Hogan notes that Gandhi made a similar claim: "Among the many misdeeds of the British rule in India, history will look upon the Act depriving a whole nation of arms as the blackest," surprising though that may seem given his emphasis on pacifism and non-violent protest. Patrick Colm Hogan, *Understanding Nationalism*, p. 284.

³⁰⁵ Webb, 'Welsh Water for Wales', in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 144-6 (p. 144).

³⁰⁶ Wyn Thomas, pp. 4-5.

³⁰⁷ See Wyn Thomas, pp.1-56 and John Humphreys, pp. 12-32.

be built in the interests of Wales, we would welcome the scheme, as we would welcome the installation of any other valuable item of capital equipment.³⁰⁸

While completely logical, this was a brave line to take in the face of the tragedy of people losing their homes. However, as will be seen repeatedly in this chapter, Webb was unafraid of being controversial, and his articles focus mainly on the theft of water and thus the cost to Wales as a whole economically, rather the personal side of people being dispossessed or the cultural issue of the breaking up of a Welsh-language community. In ‘Welsh Water for Wales’ he shows the effects of lack of water:

All Wales, from Cardiff with its humiliating memories of drought restrictions among the rainiest hills of Europe, from Ebbw Vale facing shut-down and unemployment at the great steelworks because of water shortage, up through Mid Wales, where the great reservoirs mock the waterless farms and farm-kitchens, to Anglesey, where water riots have not been unknown...³⁰⁹

He goes on to dismiss the claim that Liverpool will go without water: “Let it. For this is not drinking water they are after. It is industrial water. Water is one of the great raw materials of modern industry...”³¹⁰ He claims that Liverpool and the Forestry Commission are both exploiting Wales by taking its raw materials, paying little for them and using the locals for the backbreaking work of primary production while “the lucrative secondary industries are siphoned off to England.”³¹¹ Here again he analyses the uneven structures of power between the two nations. Angrily, he states: “The contribution which English cities pay into the rates of Brecon and Radnor and Montgomery are hardly a compensation on this wholesale looting,”³¹² before informing the readers that Birmingham had recently managed to get its rates reduced.³¹³ The tone is at the same time informative and indignant, crafted to evoke an answering indignation in his readers. Throughout, the focus is on the exploitation of resources and the suffering it causes, using Tryweryn as an example to highlight other cases. For Webb, Wales is economically a colony exploited by England and must struggle to defend its own rights and resources.

³⁰⁸ Webb, ‘Tryweryn’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 165-6 (pp. 165-6).

³⁰⁹ Webb, ‘Welsh Water for Wales’, p. 144.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

I now want to move on to the second tactic that Webb uses – comparisons of Wales with other acknowledged colonies. These can be found in both prose and poetry and are sometimes only references, while on other occasions his work can provide a sustained argument or comparison. The sharp pithy four line ‘Feet First’ reads simply:

To lesser breeds his brothers represent
The far-flung splendour of the British Raj:
He wears the homely Labour Party badge
And does the same among the wogs of Gwent.³¹⁴

This short poem contains many of Webb’s most common themes and arguments. The similarity (in Webb’s eyes at least) between the subjugation of the Indians and the Welsh by the ‘British’ government is clear, as is the contempt government officials and others of their race feel for their subjects in these countries; “the lesser breeds”, “the wogs of Gwent.” These are the natives in need of civilising that are the common justification for colonialism. Webb’s dislike of imperialism in general is also in evidence. In addition it shows the influence Webb believed the Labour Party had in disseminating British imperial ideology in the industrial areas of South Wales and betraying the needs of Wales as a nation. This is discussed at more length in articles like ‘A Free and Independent People’ where he claims:

Gradually there has developed in the [Labour] party a difference of opinion which in the course of time will amount to an open schism: the difference between the purblind careerists who wish to maintain the exploitation of Welsh resources and labour by English Imperialism and on the other hand the genuine Socialists and patriots who believe in a Free Wales.³¹⁵

Elsewhere he scathingly describes the comments and actions of Labour Members in the House of Commons:

...the alleged successors of Keir Hardie and Lansbury and Henderson invoking imperialist standards and values with a fervour worthy of Lord Kitchener or Rudyard Kipling.

‘Britain’, they say, must be unitary, monolithic, centralized, ruled paternalistically from Westminster and Whitehall, otherwise all is lost, all will be chaos and corruption.... Your

³¹⁴ Webb, ‘Feet First’ in *Collected Poems*, ed. by Meic Stephens, (Llandysul: Gomer, 1995), p. 46.

³¹⁵ Webb, ‘A Free and Independent People’ in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 165-6 (p. 95).

Taffies and your Jocks may be stout fellows in a scrap, and they can live off the smell of an oil-rag, but they've got to be kept in their place by the White Man, after all, and the idea that they should govern themselves is bally ludicrous, what! Karl Marx says so.³¹⁶

The message of this paragraph is the same as that implied by the final two lines of 'Feet First,' albeit more detailed. Obviously an article has more space to elaborate than a poem and this is a common pattern in Webb's work – the articles elaborating upon and justifying issues and opinions only hinted at in the poems.

Another interesting poem to examine in the context of Webb's view of Wales as a colony is the aptly named 'An Imperial Hymn.' This work was prompted by a specific occasion as its epigraph explains "on the appointment of Dr Judas Griffiths M.P. as His Majesty's Secretary of State for all the Colonies – except Wales."³¹⁷ James Griffiths was the Labour M.P. for Llanelli between 1936 and 1970 and was made Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1950; he later became the first Secretary of State for Wales, which in Webb's view no doubt constituted negating the final part of the epigraph. Stephens notes that: "Despite his [Griffiths'] sympathy for the principle of self-government for Wales, he was one of the Republicans' bête-noires; they attacked him for what they saw as his sanctimonious Welsh feeling and ambivalence to the claims of Wales in the context of British politics."³¹⁸ This poem is certainly part of that attack, revealing Webb's dislike of imperialism in general and his sense of kinship between Wales and more recognised colonies which fuels his disgust at the blindness and treachery of a Welshman accepting such a position. The substitution of Judas for Griffiths' first name is unambiguously calling him a traitor and this is supported by the italicised last two lines of the first stanza: "*On the old Imperial way that I travel to betray/My people and my country who believe in what I say.*"³¹⁹ Not only is he turning his back upon his country and going instead in service to the British Empire, he also admits to abusing his people's trust. He has no time for Wales:

³¹⁶ Webb, 'Remember Mafeking!' in *No Half-way House*, pp. 342-4 (p. 344).

³¹⁷ Webb, 'An Imperial Hymn' in *Collected Poems*, p. 26.

³¹⁸ Meic Stephens, 'Notes on the Poems', in *Collected Poems*, pp. 381-467 (p. 387).

³¹⁹ Webb, 'An Imperial Hymn', p. 26.

By the old redundant tinworks staring idly at the sea
There's a chilly breeze a-blowing and it's far away I'd be
Where the moon shines on the mudhuts and the heathen chant their hymn
And I'm far from Llangyfelach and the stink of Ffatri Jim.³²⁰

Having the speaker talk so disparagingly of the areas of South Wales where Labour was strongest also emphasises the speaker's treachery and his lack of care for his own country and people. His reference to specifically Welsh names and places has a similar effect. This is not an outsider – this is a native of Wales, betraying his people for the sake of the British Empire. He feels more responsibility for the Empire's 'heathen' subjects than for his own constituents.

The narrative voice of the poem also adds to the severity of the portrayal. Jones, talking about the French coloniser in 'For Frantz Fanon,' notes: "As so often in Webb's work, the political enemy is given a voice which is self-incriminating..."³²¹ and this is certainly the case here. The speaker is convicted out of his own mouth and the effect is far more damning than the third person voice of 'Feet First'.

In the vicious third stanza, the speaker is criticised for rejecting not just Wales but also Socialism, in addition to carrying out imperial acts:

For I'll lay the White Man's Burden on the brown man and the black
And I'll leave my country lying with the Long Knives in her back
And there's tear gas for the natives if they wave a flag of red
For my masters must sleep soundly in their soft and splendid beds.
I was once as red as they, but rebellion doesn't pay
*And the English are the English, we must all do as they say.*³²²

Treachery to his country and to the principles of Socialism are linked here to the imperialist attitude. He will oppress the natives of the overseas colonies having happily left his own nation "with the long

³²⁰ Ibid., p. 26.

³²¹ Jones, p. 114.

³²² Webb, 'An Imperial Hymn', p. 27.

knives in its back,” (this is a reference to the Saxon treachery against the Welsh that was named the Night of the Long Knives – an event frequently referred to by Welsh nationalists). The Anglocentric British imperialist ideology that has indoctrinated the speaker has taught him the inferiority and unimportance of both the Welsh and the natives of the overseas colonies. Socialism meanwhile, must be brutally repressed in these colonies, lest it lead to nationalist uprisings and independence movements as this would disturb his English ‘masters’ – those same masters that govern Wales. The last line reveals the type of Anglophilia that Webb detested, and also suggests a link between the national and socialist struggles that is common in resistance literature. The phrase “rebellion doesn’t pay,” meanwhile, accuses Griffiths of selling out to the English Imperial government, abandoning both nation and political principles in order to profit. This poem is a damning portrait of Griffiths and others like him.

Other colonial references are scattered throughout Webb’s work, one of the sharpest being: “All the loyal Kikuyu who will be parading and posturing at Caernarfon.”³²³ This was written in the run-up to the 1969 Investiture of Charles as Prince of Wales an event most nationalists opposed but many figures in Welsh public life welcomed. Webb’s contempt in this line is equally for the English who have made the Welsh subservient colonial subjects and the Welsh who remain “loyal” and have thus accepted this status. This reference carries extra charge as some Kikuyu were part of the 1952-64 Mau Mau rebellion against British rule. It is clear from Webb’s tone that he does not expect the ‘loyal Kikuyu Welsh’ to follow suit, but the possibility of rebellion still hovers in the background and adds another layer to this criticism of Anglophilia.

So it can be seen that Webb considered Wales to be a colony and that he offered arguments and evidence to support his view. Much of his work refers to the ills of Wales that he sees as resulting from colonial rule and he frequently compares Wales to other colonies, whether by reference or extended argument. He criticises British imperialism and colonialism in general but mainly with regards to Wales and calls for resistance against this colonial rule. The form he sees this resistance as taking will be discussed in the next section.

³²³ Webb, ‘Posturing in the Last Agony’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 308-10 (p. 310).

Resistance

In this section I will discuss Webb's vision of Welsh resistance. I will first demonstrate that he saw all resistance that took place in Wales as linked in some way – a vision that echoes the wider ideal of resistance literature that sees all struggles as linked. I will then argue that his resistance is based on the common people of Wales, in a way similar to San Juan's idea of the 'national-popular.' Finally, I will consider to just what extremes Webb felt Welsh resistance should go.

Webb saw all Wales-based resistance as linked and essentially Welsh in character. The strikes in the industrial valleys were no less Welsh and no less an act of resistance to English power than Glyndŵr's rebellion or the burning of Penyberth. While the strikes and workers' uprisings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are often seen as issues of class rather than nation, Webb stresses their national character. If there are class issues this is only because of the disparity of wealth and power between England and Wales; the English capitalists were exploiting the Welsh working-class. Jones notes that Webb translated 'The Burgos Trials,' a text by Sartre that described the Basques as being 'super-exploited' – by Capitalism as workers and additionally colonially exploited as Basques and argued: "it is in colonies that the class struggle and the national struggle merge."³²⁴ Jones claims that Webb's work expresses similar ideas to Sartre's, seeing the Welsh working-class as "super-exploited,"³²⁵ though I would argue that the emphasis is always on the national element – the Welsh workers were being exploited as a nation rather than as a class. Thus Welsh working-class resistance is an important part of the national struggle. It is here, in the merging of the national and class struggles albeit with the emphasis on the national, that Webb comes closest both to San Juan's vision of a national-popular resistance and to the ideas of anticoloial Marxist thinkers like Fanon and Cabral.

In an article entitled 'The Saga of Welsh Resistance' Webb claims "the history of Wales may be written as the saga of one long struggle of the Welsh people against English oppression and exploitation – the longest continuous struggle of any nation against an aggressor."³²⁶ While "there have been many changes of fortune between the dateless, unrecorded beginning and the present mustering of new forces... throughout, the spirit of Wales remained unconquerable."³²⁷ The article moves from the death of Llywelyn ein Llyw Olaf in 1282 through the Glyndŵr rising in the early fifteenth century to

³²⁴ Jones, p. 103.

³²⁵ Ibid., p. 103.

³²⁶ Harri Webb, 'The Saga of Welsh Resistance', in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 79-83 (p. 79).

³²⁷ Ibid., p. 79.

the Battle of Bosworth after which the Welsh Henry Tudor ignored Wales' claims. It continues through the following years, preserving the language and using the Nonconformist chapels as "the focus of resistance to landlord and squire, parson and bishop."³²⁸ The value of this for Webb was that "the Welsh people learned democracy and self-respect, decency and discipline, so that when the Industrial Revolution came, the Welsh proletariat were already well-trained and thoughtful, able to resist from the first the new form of English exploitation,"³²⁹ – note the English nature of the exploitation. It is not capitalism or industrialisation that is the main enemy for Webb – it is England. He goes on to mention various small risings that led to the Merthyr Rising "which gave Wales one of her great heroes and martyrs, Dic Penderyn,"³³⁰ and the 1839 Newport Rising. Elsewhere he affirmed the Welshness of this Rising by claiming that their leader John Frost had inspired them by invoking Glyndŵr and opines:

These rebels who had forged their pikes in the caves of Llangyndir Mountain were the direct descendants of the spearmen of Craig y Dorth; they were treading the same ground and in the same spirit as their forebears; it was an appropriate invocation.³³¹

The activities of the Scotch Cattle and the Rebecca Rioters are also mentioned, as are the Tithe Wars and later strikes. Penyberth is of course discussed: "Saunders Lewis and his comrades struck at the English Air Force in 1936, and their burning of the aerodrome marked a new phase in the struggle."³³² The final act of resistance mentioned is the bombing of the Elan pipeline.³³³ The article finishes with the confident prediction: "Wales has seen the darkest hours before the dawn. To the struggles of the future, Welshmen look forward in the light of a glorious past, and in the full confidence of victory."³³⁴ This strident prophecy is typical of Webb and reveals his belief in Wales and the Welsh people. In the context of this discussion however, the most important part of this article is its view of the past not the future – the link it draws between all the struggles mentioned. All these are acts of Welsh resistance, though some are not often thought of as such, and all form a tradition of resistance leading to the present day where it should be continued.

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 80.

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 80.

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

³³¹ Harri Webb, 'Owain Glyndŵr: Profligate Rebel or National Hero?', in *A Militant Muse*, pp.72-76 (p. 75).

³³² Webb, 'The Saga of Welsh Resistance', p. 81.

³³³ Ibid., p. 82.

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

I now wish to turn to Webb's consistent emphasis on the people, both as the focus of resistance and as the basis of the nation. In one article he wrote, simply: "The common people *are* Wales."³³⁵ In another he elaborated a little, describing the common people as "the Rock upon which the modern Welsh Nation is built."³³⁶ He praises their discipline and organisation in "perfecting a self-contained national community with its own language and discipline under the very eyes of the English,"³³⁷ which along with the shift to Nonconformity prepared them to resist capitalism and industrialisation as shown above. In another article, he writes:

Because it is the unconquerable soul of the Welsh people that we trust we do not need to tout for the favours of the great. What better off is Wales for the energy and eloquence of Lloyd George or the brilliance and bounce of Aneurin Bevan?

No, it is to the plain people we speak, and from whom we take inspiration: the plain people who marched with John Frost to Newport or rode out with Rebecca against oppression, the country folk who for a generation fought the Tithe wars against Queen Victoria's redcoats, the collier who faced Churchill's bloody bayonets and the women who kept house and family, yes and nation, together while the Christian gentlemen of England garroted them with the Means Test.³³⁸

Welsh resistance must be enacted by the Welsh people as a whole, not just by an elite. This is both more effective and the Welsh way – Webb frequently stresses Wales' democratic past and even seems to suggest that it is a characteristic inherent to the Welsh people.³³⁹ As the host of examples in the quotation above show, the majority of Wales' struggles against the English were based on the common people. In this, he echoes the ideas of many resistance thinkers. As already stated, Fanon decried the native bourgeoisie, arguing that they were likely to benefit only themselves after seizing power.³⁴⁰ Cabral, meanwhile, stressed the difference between the "masses who preserve their culture," and the "native elites created by the colonising process," and is clearly in favour of the former.³⁴¹ Following the

³³⁵ Harri Webb, 'We Believe in the Welsh People', in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 64-6 (p. 64).

³³⁶ Webb, 'The Saga of Welsh Resistance', p. 80.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³³⁸ Harri Webb, 'We Speak in the Name of Wales', in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 83-4 (pp. 83-4).

³³⁹ See for example his article 'The English Monarchy', where he describes Wales as, "the People's Nation," and 'The Green Gold of Wales', where he expresses the Welsh farmer's preference for democracy. Webb, 'The English Monarchy', in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 77-8 (p. 77); 'The Green Gold of Wales', p. 137.

³⁴⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. pp. 27-84.

³⁴¹ Amilcar Cabral, quoted in Parry, 'Edward Said and Third World Marxism', pp. 115-6.

example of these earlier thinkers, resistance critics like San Juan combine Marxist ideas of the masses being the agents of change with anticolonial ideas of national freedom. For such critics, national freedom must be based on the people as a whole. In recognising the need to mobilise the whole people of Wales, Webb is enacting the theory that these thinkers espouse.

Importantly, for both Webb and San Juan the term ‘the people’ does not necessarily refer to just the proletariat, the peasantry or any one class of society. San Juan argues that while classical Marxism usually sees the working-class as the basis for revolution, “...the concept “people” is what Marx really used in characterizing transitional societies evolving from feudal to capitalist modes of production.”³⁴² He then extrapolates from Gramsci’s term ‘national-popular’ which puts,

... stress on the active will and motion of the people which comprises all those classes, groups, sectors and individuals that find a common language in their subaltern condition and so unite in the constantly negotiated project of liberating themselves from their oppressors.³⁴³

All, regardless of class, birth, occupation, language or religion, can participate in the struggle for freedom and national self-determination. This sentiment in some ways echoes the Welsh Republican Movement’s definition of a Welshman quoted in the introduction to this chapter. Class is of secondary importance to the national struggle, or rather it is subsumed within it. San Juan explains that class as a category is complicated in the Philippines because “we have not yet constituted the Filipino subject from which the class subject originates.”³⁴⁴ In his view a focus on class “universalized the economic positions of workers and peasants as equivalent or identical to the nation.”³⁴⁵

Similarly, in Wales there has been a tendency to identify the peasants or the proletariat with the nation. Competing views have idealised one or the other group as the ‘true’ or ‘most authentic’ Welsh. Welsh cultural nationalists beginning with O. M. Edwards and his contemporaries helped create the image of the *gwerin* – the Welsh peasant class who though poor were upright, religious, self-educated and cultured – paragons who are the soul of the Welsh nation.³⁴⁶ This continued into the early days of Plaid

³⁴² San Juan, *Allegories of Resistance*, p. 87.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

³⁴⁶ For a more detailed definition of the *gwerin* and a discussion of how the ‘myth’ was created and perpetuated see Prys Morgan, ‘The *Gwerin* of Wales: Myth and Reality’ in *The Welsh and Their Country* ed. by I. Hume & W. T. R. Pryce (Llandysul, Dyfed: Gomer Press, 1986), pp. 134-52.

Cymru when it discussed deindustrialising the South and basing the Welsh economy on agriculture.³⁴⁷ More recent critics like Dai Smith have instead focused on the industrialised valleys of South Wales and the working-class people there.³⁴⁸ On both sides there has been a tendency to dismiss or ignore those who do not fit in with their view of Wales. Webb had little patience with either side. He valued the Welsh language and Welsh-language culture as he knew that many others in the predominantly English-speaking South did,³⁴⁹ but frequently criticised Plaid Cymru for being elitist and excluding non-Welsh-speakers.³⁵⁰

Therefore both Webb and San Juan recognise that focus on one group of people in a national struggle is problematic because: “This brand of class-reductionism instills [sic] a corporatist mode of thinking and behaviour that will never lead to mobilizing the broadest number of people.”³⁵¹ Instead,

the paramount task of both ideological and political organizations is the forceful articulation of this theoretical principle: the people as a nation with a revolutionary mission... The “democratic” task, then, which tries to resolve fundamental class contradictions based on property relation, is subsumed within the national-popular quest for freedom, justice, and self-determination, which are all components of an all-encompassing long-range agenda for socialist reconstruction... I think the cardinal point is the focus on “the people,” not on classes per se...³⁵²

In essence, he concludes “the people-nation, not the basic masses, serves as the motor force of any profound radical social transformation.”³⁵³

Webb’s writings reflect this view. While he was a firm Socialist and was certainly concerned about the Welsh proletariat, his major interest in them was as the *Welsh* proletariat. They are part of the Welsh

³⁴⁷ Saunders Lewis, *Ten Points of Policy, Deg Pwynt Polisi, Canlyn Arthur* (Aberystwyth: Gwasg Aberystwyth, 1938).

³⁴⁸ Dai Smith, *Wales! Wales?* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), particularly p. 5.

³⁴⁹ See for example, “It [Welsh] is still the language of one Welshman in three, and it belongs to us all even if a lot of us have been deprived of the opportunity of enjoying it.” Harri Webb, ‘Letter to Mr. Jones October-November 1950’ in *No Half-way House*, pp. 52-4 (p. 53)

³⁵⁰ “The other dominating feature of the Welsh scene was the hesitancy and general middle-class inadequacy of the established Nationalist organization, Plaid Cymru.” Webb, ‘A Free and Independent People’, p. 95. “We must never make the mistake of approaching our task in a spirit of middle-class superiority and exclusiveness, of indulging in Welsh-language snobbery...” Harri Webb, ‘We Believe in the Welsh People’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 64-6 (pp. 65-6).

³⁵¹ San Juan, San Juan, *Allegories of Resistance*, p. 85.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

nation, an important part certainly, as shown by his celebration of the miners whom he described as “the élite of the labour force of the Welsh nation,”³⁵⁴ but still only a part. Moreover this article is primarily about Wales as well as the miners; they are “the strength of *Wales*,” and “the élite of the labour force of the *Welsh nation*.”³⁵⁵ Here Webb calls on all of Wales to support the miners because they all face the same enemy – England.³⁵⁶ Elsewhere, he vehemently criticised Aneurin Bevan for disregarding the national component of Welsh Socialism.³⁵⁷ It is English capitalism and exploitation rather than capitalism as a worldwide movement that Webb blames for the condition of the Welsh proletariat. The class struggle is subsumed within the national movement as San Juan requires.

Webb also states outright in more than one place that all are welcome to join the Welsh struggle. Writing for Plaid Cymru’s English-language newspaper *Welsh Nation* he stated “...Plaid Cymru is a house built foursquare on the rock of nationhood... And its doors are always open.”³⁵⁸ As well as concurring with San Juan’s ideal of the nation people, this also fits well with Daniel Williams’ ideas of an open accepting multicultural Welsh society – where being Welsh is not a closed ethnicity but an open community, usually, but not of necessity, based on the Welsh language, where people can feel themselves to be citizens of Wales if they live there and work for the good of the nation no matter what their origins.

It is also interesting to note that in the passage about speaking to the common people quoted above, Webb specifically mentions the women as well as the men of Wales. As seen in the thesis introduction, women are often excluded from shaping nationalist discourses; instead they are represented by them as pure symbols of the nation. While this is an important role, it is a passive one – women represent the nation rather than being allowed to participate actively in shaping it. San Juan notes a similar difficulty

³⁵⁴ Harri Webb, ‘The Strength of Wales’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 134-5 (p. 135).

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 134, 135, my italics.

³⁵⁶ While the focus here is on the nation, it is also worth noting that this stance bears some resemblance to the resistance theory idea that all struggles are linked. It also fills, at least partially, a gap that Jane Aaron has noted in Welsh literature of both languages of the twentieth century. Aaron notes that while nineteenth-century Welsh writers, primarily in Welsh, equated abandoning the Welsh language and becoming a capitalist, in the twentieth-century there were poets who criticised the Welsh for abandoning Socialism (Idris Davies) or the Welsh language (R. S. Thomas) but not both in tandem. Aaron, ‘Bardic Anti-colonialism’, pp. 150-1. I would argue, however, that Webb frequently criticises any Welsh person who abandons either Wales (including the language – he does not require that people speak Welsh but he does expect them to respect it) or Socialism as for him Wales is inherently Socialist. Aaron does mention Webb briefly later in the essay but focuses on his ‘transnational’ voice, citing his poem ‘For Frantz Fanon’. Aaron, ‘Bardic Anti-colonialism’, p. 155.

³⁵⁷ Harri Webb, ‘Against Imperialism’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 97-9 (p. 98).

³⁵⁸ Harri Webb, ‘The Gathering Storm’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 280-6 (p. 286).

with women in classic Marxist doctrine: “And since women and ethnic or tribal minorities can only be classified as either workers, peasants or petty bourgeoisie, there is no room in the classic Marxist paradigm for their autonomous organizations and struggles.”³⁵⁹ However, in San Juan’s view of ‘the nation-people’ there is room for all who struggle for the nation, whether they are male or female, and for their own personal struggles. This follows the idea of the Marxist anticolonial thinkers and activists, many of whom stressed the importance of women to the success of the struggle.³⁶⁰ Webb’s specific mention of women in the above quotation seems to imply the same thing. Similarly, he once altered his letter to Mr. Jones to address Mrs Jones instead, writing: “Because it’s you that’s having to put up with the consequences of English mis-government.”³⁶¹ He acknowledged that the women as well as the men suffered under English rule and so they too had right and reason to work for the freedom of Wales.

So it can be seen that Webb’s ideas of a people’s resistance fits very well with ideas espoused by resistance theorists, in particular San Juan, and also fits with Williams’ vision of an open multicultural Wales. Both see the common people as the necessary means for change but do not limit their definition of the common people to a single group or class – instead ‘people’ for them includes anyone who is prepared to fight for their nation. To be successful these people, many very different from each other, must be united, and Webb’s attempts to do this for the Welsh people in his writings will be discussed in the next section.

Firstly though it is important to discuss the form he believed that resistance should take. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter Webb believed that something more than constitutional means was required, particularly when confronted with events like Tryweryn. He certainly supported direct action, writing effusively of those who made the sabotage attempts at Tryweryn and the destruction of the Elan pipeline.³⁶² However, his attitude to violence against people is harder to gauge. Jones points out that in

³⁵⁹ San Juan, *Allegories of Resistance*, p. 84.

³⁶⁰ See in particular Thomas Sankara, *Women’s Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle* (Lulu.com, 2020). This topic and Sankara’s views will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on Rhys Davies and Eduardo Mendoza. This idea is also perhaps closer to Marx’s original work as Mary-Alice Walters argues that Marx was “one of the most intransigent defenders of the fight for women’s equality the world has known,” and, “was among the first to point to the social status of women as a measure of the degree of progress of any society.” (Mary-Alice Walters, ‘Preface’ in Sankara, *Women’s Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle*, pp. 11-4 (p. 12).) Therefore, the custom of ignoring women’s struggles may have come in after Marx’s death. Either way, the women’s struggle is an important part of resistance theory.

³⁶¹ Harri Webb, ‘Letter to Mrs Jones’, *The Welsh Republican*, April-May 1951, p. 4.

³⁶² See for example the third verse of his poem ‘The Disclaimers:’ “When valiant Welshmen had a try / To blow the aqueduct sky-high,” *Collected Poems*, p. 40, and the articles ‘Emyr Llew Has Gone to

one article Webb argues “bloodshed is preferable to acceptance of the colonial status quo.”³⁶³ However, the article concerned is answering the fears of those who are concerned that independence for Wales would mean bloodshed by arguing that: “The Welsh connection with England has been one continuous blood tribute...”³⁶⁴ This might suggest therefore that he is talking about the spilling of Welsh blood, as he does elsewhere. It is true that the article ends: “The Welsh Republican Movement was formed largely by returned ex-servicemen... They do not want bloodshed between England and Wales, but if it comes and with it national independence, then it will be a small price to pay...”³⁶⁵ Here it does imply that blood would be spilled on both sides. This is Webb’s clearest public statement on the issue, although elsewhere, he wrote that: “‘Effective resistance’ has only one meaning – armed resistance,”³⁶⁶ Perhaps most explicitly in a 1963 letter to Gwilym Prys Davies, he discusses the need for a blood sacrifice. He believed that the Welsh people,

...have sunk so low, are so deeply stained with the guilt of servitude, that their condition may be likened (as Pearse likened it) to that original sin in which theologians say the human race is lost. The act of redemption can only come through the sacrifice, if necessary – and I believe it to be necessary – of the lives of the best.³⁶⁷

Certainly, explicit mention of bloodshed is made here, but again it is the blood of the Welsh that appears to be being shed. Webb seems to stop short of the final step, discussed in Fanon, of violence against the oppressors, focusing instead on the Welsh people’s need for redemption.³⁶⁸ A few sentences later he writes: “The Republicans said that they would not shrink from shedding blood if necessary...I say now that such sacrifice is not only probably necessary...but absolutely necessary.”³⁶⁹ The article in *The Welsh Republican* may have implied that it was justifiable to spill English blood but here the focus is firmly on the sacrifice of Welsh blood. Even the reference to Pearse and thus to the Easter Rising in Ireland is unclear in this regard. While the Rising involved armed insurrection and bloodshed on both

Prison’, *No Half-Way House*, pp. 246-51, and ‘The Breed of the Sparrowhawk’, *No Half-Way House*, pp. 210-14.

³⁶³ Jones, p. 108.

³⁶⁴ Harri Webb, ‘No More Blood for England’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 90-92 (p. 90).

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³⁶⁶ Webb, ‘The Saga of Welsh Resistance’, p. 79.

³⁶⁷ Harri Webb, ‘Letter to Gwilym Prys Davies’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 225-245 (p. 232).

³⁶⁸ In this, of course, he differs greatly from Fanon who saw violence as both inevitable and necessary. On a practical level it was needed to drive out the coloniser and on a psychological level it provided a kind of catharsis for the native traumatised by the brutality of colonial rule. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 27-84.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

sides, much of Pearse's writing focuses on the shedding of Irish blood as a quasi-theological sacrifice in order to redeem the Irish nation. Hogan notes that Pearse was "obsessed with the story of transgression, collective punishment and sacrifice,"³⁷⁰ and it is this aspect of his work to which Webb is referring in the above letter, though it is true that a little later he spoke admiringly of the revolutionaries in general.³⁷¹ However it is still far from clear that Webb is here advocating or justifying violence against the oppressors. Rather, it seems that he is saying that the sacrifice of a few Welsh lives for the country would redeem their countryman who are guilty of betraying Wales as a result of apathy and Anglophilia. It is also important to remember that these views were expressed in a private letter. While they may reflect Webb's opinions, they are not something that he was urging the Welsh people to undertake. In his public prose the most definite support for violence comes in the article already quoted and even there it is qualified by: "They do not want bloodshed."³⁷² Armed resistance is a last resort, not something that Webb is wholeheartedly endorsing.

Webb's poetry is if anything even more ambiguous. Morris argues that his second collection *A Crown for Branwen* contains a "scarcely concealed violence, the challenge to action, the call for 'commitment,'"³⁷³ that had disturbed the critics, causing them to ignore it.³⁷⁴ He notes the inclusion of the translation from Martiniquais of Auguste Macouba's 'Marwnad for Drums' - a poem given to Webb by the Breton poet Paul Keineg, and mentions a new theme in the work - blood and rebellion - that "unites Padraic Pearse, John Jenkins, Keineg, Macouba, the Stern Gang and Frantz Fanon."³⁷⁵ On the other hand, Jones points out that images of violence are rare in Webb's poetry,³⁷⁶ despite comparing Wales with countries like Algeria, Ireland and Israel where bloody independence struggles had taken place. In 'For Frantz Fanon', for example "the process of independence [for Algeria] seems almost to be inevitable, a spontaneous historical imperative, rather than something that results from a political or

³⁷⁰ Patrick Colm Hogan, 'The Sacrificial Emplotment of National Identity: Padraic Pearse and the 1916 Easter Uprising', *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology*, 5.1 (2014), 29-47 (p. 35).

³⁷¹ "The Easter 1916 Rising failed, and as the leaders were being marched off by the soldiers, the Irish people of Dublin, whose lives had been disrupted by the battle, and who had been put in terror by the firing, spat on Pearse and Connolly and cursed them. But within a year that mood had passed, the true significance of events had sunk in, and the battle of Ireland was as good as won." Harri Webb, 'Letter to Gwilym Prys Davies', pp. 234-5.

³⁷² Webb, quoted in Jones, pp. 107-8.

³⁷³ Morris, p. 87.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁷⁶ Jones, p. 108.

military struggle.”³⁷⁷ Likewise his poems on Israel, though they contain certain lines such as: “The mountains are red with their blood,”³⁷⁸ there is no description of the bloodshed and, Jones points out, “just as in “For Frantz Fanon” he does not directly say that violent revolution is the answer to the problems of Wales,” in spite of the constant comparisons between Israel and Wales.³⁷⁹ Moreover, it is interesting to note that the line quoted above talks of “their blood” which, given that the poem is speaking of the Jewish people, surely means Jewish blood. The Jews have sacrificed their own blood for their nation - they have not (in the world of the poem) necessarily committed violence against others for it. This reflects Webb’s view in the letter that it is Welsh blood that needs to be shed. There is no mention of the aggressor’s blood.

Jones suggests several reasons for the ambivalent attitude towards armed struggle that appears in Webb’s poetry. Firstly, specific mention of violence could damage the parallels with the Welsh situation, rendering his comparisons ineffective. Secondly, Webb did not wish to alienate potential readers from Wales who might disagree with his justification. Thirdly, he argues that Webb’s attitude towards political violence was by no means as straightforward as it might appear in his prose work (and as already seen the prose is ambivalent too): “Webb did wish to see a more radicalized form of nationalism within Wales, but it seems that he was not willing to follow his own pronouncements to their logical conclusion – namely, that an independent Wales should be forged through violent rebellion.”³⁸⁰ In the end, Jones feels, Webb could not bring himself to countenance violence in the Welsh case, however much it would have furthered the cause’s ends.

Therefore, it is difficult to identify Webb’s exact line on the justification or otherwise of political violence. It is certain that he disagreed with Plaid Cymru’s wholly constitutional approach and that he supported direct action. At times, he even appeared to condone people laying down their lives for Wales, but he invariably halts before suggesting that it is right that they should kill for it. In spite of comparisons with independence struggles where this has happened, he does not follow through and advocate violence in the case of Wales, possibly because, as Jones has pointed out, this would have alienated much of his Welsh readership at a time when he sought to unite the Welsh people – something that he saw as crucial to successful resistance. His efforts to do this will be discussed in the next section.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 116.

³⁷⁸ Webb, ‘Israel’ in *Collected Poems*, p. 92.

³⁷⁹ Jones, p. 111.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 108.

Wales united

This section focuses on Webb's attempts to unite the Welsh people. The first part will examine how he depicts Wales and the Welsh people as already one. The second will consider three of the strategies he employs to unite them further: focus on issues that affect the whole of Wales such as the economy, the setting up of England as a common enemy, and the use of humour as a bonding device.

Firstly, though, it is important to explain why uniting the Welsh people is so important to Webb. As seen in the previous section, San Juan warns about the danger of applying classical Marxism, which focuses on the working-class as the revolutionary agent of change, to a third-world national situation like the Philippines, particularly one that is ethnically and linguistically diverse. Focus on the nation, on the other hand, unites people and is necessary to create a successful resistance movement:

Once a hegemonic philosophy, say a national-popular Filipino ethos of liberation, has become diffused and preponderant, then the basis of power has shifted to the historic or social bloc (an alliance of classes, sectors, etc.) which has advanced that philosophy and which embodies the corresponding program.³⁸¹

Wales may not be as diverse as the Philippines but it too has divisions as Alys Thomas has noted:

It is true that Wales is characterized by multiple political identities reflecting its recent history of concentrated industrialization and subsequent Anglicization in linguistic terms, and the persistence of a Welsh-speaking society focused on the rural areas. Moreover, there is a geographical divide between north and south, historically reinforced by lines of communication that ran east-west rather than north-south, and meant that in north Wales Cardiff was perceived as more distant than London.³⁸²

Webb certainly recognised this diversity and potential for division but did not see it as necessarily problematic. Wales was still one nation. "The Welsh people is one," he wrote. "One nation, one achievement, one corporate act of faith in the dignity of man, one voice that will never be silenced, testifying to the eternal values of Justice and Freedom."³⁸³ Like San Juan he realised the value of the

³⁸¹ Ibid., p. 82.

³⁸² Alys Thomas, "Maîtres chez nous"? Awaiting the Quiet Revolution in Wales', in *Postcolonial Wales*, ed. by Jane Aaron and Chris Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 85-99 (pp. 94-5).

³⁸³ Harri Webb, 'We Speak in the Name of Wales', in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 83-4 (p. 84).

nation and its unity; Jenkins notes that: “As a political activist, Harri Webb has been conscious of the importance of seeing Wales whole, historically and physically...”³⁸⁴ Webb felt Wales’ diversity was a strength – as long as its people could be united and mobilised to work for Wales in spite of their differences. Much of his work is dedicated both to presenting the Welsh people as one and to attempting to make them so. I will consider a few more examples of his rhetoric concerning the wholeness and unity of Wales and then move on to an examination of the strategies that he employed to try to make this so.

In ‘We Believe in the Welsh People’ Webb warned:

We must never make the mistake of approaching our task in a spirit of middle-class superiority and exclusiveness, of indulging in Welsh-language snobbery, or of reproaching our fellow countrymen for their lack of patriotism.³⁸⁵

Webb felt Plaid Cymru was guilty of this in its early days.

Elsewhere he gives examples of such exclusivity and snobbery, discussing ‘The Welsh Establishment’ – “the Liberal-Nonconformist petty bourgeois,”³⁸⁶ which he regards as hopelessly out of touch with the rest of Wales. As an example he cites a nineteenth century guidebook written by a Welsh minister that says of the Industrial Valleys and ports:

These awful spots...in no true sense belong to Wales...Nevertheless, Cardiff people insist on regarding themselves and their city as Welsh... It is the head of one of the busiest industrial areas to be found on our planet and it would seem to all reasonable beings that Cardiff’s claim to be the capital of a land of poets, preachers, dreamers and farmers has been proved to the hilt!³⁸⁷

Webb responds in typically spirited fashion:

Here, for once, we have the Establishment with the white gloves off – sarcastic exclamation marks and all. Here is the Wales that exists in the imaginations of those people – and nowhere

³⁸⁴ Jenkins, p. 27.

³⁸⁵ Harri Webb, ‘We Believe in the Welsh People’, pp. 65-6.

³⁸⁶ Webb, ‘The Welsh Establishment’ in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 147-8 (147).

³⁸⁷ Guidebook by unknown author quoted in Webb, ‘The Welsh Establishment’, pp. 147-8.

else. The Wales to which Dowlais Top and Barry Dock and Abersychan ‘in no true sense belong’ – thank God!³⁸⁸

It is not that he despises or disregards the rural Welsh-speaking areas or the poets, preachers and farmers who primarily constitute their population – it is simply that he does not see them as the ‘only true Welsh’. When he proclaims his relief that Dowlais and Barry and Abersychan do not belong to such a Wales, it is of the idealised Wales of the Welsh Establishment that he is speaking, not the actual Wales that did of course contain farmers, preachers and poets as well as miners, quarrymen, dock workers and multiple other peoples. All these people are part of one Wales – varied but whole – and to attempt to dismiss certain people because they do not fit in with the ideal is both wrong and ultimately harmful to Wales, as it is only by uniting that the Welsh people can ever hope to achieve sovereignty. This is similar to Williams’ argument of the need for an open inclusive culture, though he was focusing on Welsh-language culture while Webb speaks of both languages of Wales and their speakers.

Elsewhere Webb elaborates on this need for unity:

It [Wales] consists of seaports and industrial cities, mining valleys and quarrying communities, market towns and a varied countryside. Each of these has its own problems, and every local problem is part of the overall national problem. With every local problem successfully solved, the nation is strengthened.³⁸⁹

Here he not only lists the different constituent parts of Wales but insists upon their inclusion as parts of the whole. However different they may be, they are inextricably interlinked as parts of the Welsh nation. When each individual community is strong, the whole nation prospers. This section gives equal importance to areas of Wales not seen traditionally as Welsh, for example the ports and industrial areas, and to those like the rural areas which were seen as quintessentially Welsh. Wales is one nation, Webb declares, sharing his vision with his readers. All its areas are equal and it is important to see them as such.

I will now examine the strategies that he employs to unite Wales further. The first of these, the focus on issues like the economy that affect the entirety of Wales, is the simplest. As already discussed, Webb saw Wales as a colony of England, a status that adversely affected its economy. He sees industry in Wales as having been encouraged to develop along lines that benefit England rather than Wales and argues that, consequently, there would be better run and more diverse industries and more jobs

³⁸⁸ Webb, ‘The Welsh Establishment’, p. 148.

³⁸⁹ Harri Webb, ‘The Joys of Battle’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 189-92 (p. 190).

available in an independent Wales.³⁹⁰ This is an argument that would appeal to Welsh-speaking and non-Welsh-speaking Welsh alike – a country’s economy affects all its citizens - and thus focus on it could act as a unifying factor in the desire for independence, something all citizens of Wales can invest in. Crameri notes a similar trend in the rhetoric of the Catalan independence movement in recent years. Growth in support for Catalan independence has coincided with an increased emphasis on the economic benefits of independence as opposed to those based purely on culture and identity.³⁹¹ Webb seems to have recognised this same possibility some fifty years earlier and is focusing on issues that affect all citizens of Wales.

Perhaps the biggest unifying focus in Webb’s work is Tryweryn. Humphries notes how the protests against the drowning of Capel Celyn and the subsequent sabotage attempts united the Welsh-language cultural heartlands of the North and West and the English-speaking Republican tradition of the Valleys, with saboteurs like Owain Williams of Pwllheli and Emyr Jones of Aberystwyth coming from the former and others like Dai Pritchard of New Tredegar and Dave Walters of Bargoed coming from the latter.³⁹² Webb, half a century earlier, makes a similar point describing Pritchard and Walters as “men... from an environment so dissimilar economically and culturally from Merioneth as to have made many despair, in the past, of ever welding such unlike communities into a united nation.”³⁹³ He likens Walters and Pritchard to a Cardiff supporter of Owain Glyndŵr, John Sperhawke, “who was executed for declaring, in the heart of that alien garrison town, as it then was, his loyalty to the rightful ruler of Wales.” Webb points out that Sperhawke’s name was not Welsh and claims:

His roots in our land must have been recent and shallow, and his environment as foreign as his forebears. One doubts that he knew much Welsh beyond the jargon of the market-place, and the rich cultural activity then in full flower could have meant little to him. Yet he threw in his lot with his country even though it meant death.³⁹⁴

Much of this appears to be conjecture - there seems to be no conclusive evidence to say that Sperhawke could not have been a third or fourth generation incomer and a fluent Welsh speaker – but the comparison is a powerful one. Webb notes that Walters and Pritchard come from towns not considered as traditionally Welsh:

³⁹⁰ See for example Webb, ‘The Green Gold of Wales’, p. 139.

³⁹¹ Crameri, *Goodbye, Spain?*, pp. 54-60.

³⁹² Humphries, pp. 23-4.

³⁹³ Webb, ‘The Breed of the Sparrowhawk’, p. 212.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 210-1.

...people from, more recognizably ‘Welsh’ parts of Wales, even from some of the neighbouring coalfield valleys, who find themselves in New Tredegar and Bargod [sic] often find it impossible to acclimatize themselves to the environment and will only grudgingly concede that such places are Welsh at all, and that in a sense so restricted as to be meaningless.

Yet it is from shallow-rooted, recent and hastily run-up villages like these, that the men have come who have made us all once again proud to be of the same blood with them.³⁹⁵

Here Webb acknowledges the differences that exist within Wales but is clearly critical of the attitude of the “more recognizably ‘Welsh’” parts towards the industrial valleys. He sees these differences pale before the united opposition of the Welsh people: “But now the nation lives as never before in this generation, united as never before.”³⁹⁶ In discussing an issue that did indeed draw protest from all parts of Wales, Webb hopes to unite the Welsh people further by reminding them of the common cause they have and proving that such disparate areas can unite.

The second strategy Webb uses to unite the Welsh people is the setting up of a common enemy – England. All groups need an ‘Other’ against which to define themselves. As Diana Boxer and Florencia Cortés-Conde explain: “Bonding against others perceived as different allows us to become a unit without having to define what we are for each other. What makes us part of an in-group is having in common an ‘out group’.”³⁹⁷ Having an ‘out group’, then, is an easy method of group identification that can ignore any differences that may exist within the group. Nations are no different to any other type of group in this respect. Hogan claims that as long as nationalism has existed “it has always followed the cognitive and affective principles of in-group/out-group division.”³⁹⁸ Feeling different to, or, even better, against, another group of people is a powerful way of defining and uniting a group.

England is the natural ‘out group’ for Wales, being both neighbour and adversary. Bernard Crick notes that the British nations apart from England have as an aid to identity formation “...a helpfully integrative anti-Englishness; or at least a pleasing consciousness of being different from the English.”³⁹⁹ For Webb though, England is more than a country different to Wales, it is an enemy. He

³⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 211.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 212.

³⁹⁷ Diana Boxer and Florencia Cortés-Conde, ‘From bonding to biting: Conversational joking and identity display’ *Journal of Pragmatics*, 27.3 (1997), 275-94 (p. 283).

³⁹⁸ Hogan, *Understanding Nationalism*, p. 5.

³⁹⁹ Bernard Crick, ‘The English and the British’, in *National Identities: The Constitution of the United Kingdom*, ed. by Bernard Crick (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 90-104 (p. 91).

talks several times about being engaged in a ‘war’ for independence and uses military language;⁴⁰⁰ though, as discussed in the previous section, he usually stops short of actually advocating violence against people. War implies an enemy – in this case England.

Kenneth Burke argued that all communication, particularly speeches directed at a large audience, tends to have the aim of creating group identity and cohesion and one way of doing this was by referring to an enemy common to the group. Drawing on Burke’s work Peter Suwarno claims that “every discourse encompasses at least implicitly, if not directly, the notion of common enemies.”⁴⁰¹ I would argue that consciously or otherwise Webb is setting up England to be a common enemy to all the Welsh – an enemy that they can all unite against, which, following Burke’s theory, will help them to identify themselves as a group. Moreover, in his writings the common enemy is definitely directly rather than implicitly encompassed.

The strongest evidence of this claim is the fact that Webb blamed England for some of the very divisions in Wales that he was trying to heal. Writing about the Labour Party he claimed:

Their Gwynedd supporters would be shocked if they could attend an election campaign in the Glamorgan Valleys and hear the insane hatred and contempt with which Labour speakers assault rural Wales and the Welsh language... they actively ferment division between different parts of our land...⁴⁰²

Webb sees all the English political parties as English tools,⁴⁰³ and therefore when Labour work to divide Wales they are doing so on behalf of England and to benefit England, whether they realise it or not. As long as Wales is divided, there can be no serious challenge for self-government. Thus it is in English interests to keep Wales divided.⁴⁰⁴ By arguing this Webb sets up England as an enemy

⁴⁰⁰ See for example, “...there are men in her ranks who are prepared to strike a blow for the nation...” Webb, ‘The National Will to Live’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 206-9 (p. 208), and, “Wales is a militant, industrial nation...” Webb, ‘The Welsh Establishment’, p. 148.

⁴⁰¹ Peter Suwarno, ‘Depiction of Common Enemies in Religious Speech: The Role of the Rhetoric of Identification and Purification in Indonesian Religious Conflicts’, *Walisono: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 21.1 (2014), 1-18 (p. 1).

⁴⁰² Webb, ‘The Only Way’, in *No Half-way House*, pp.273-9 (p. 278)

⁴⁰³ “There is just one party, when it comes down to essentials, the English party. It calls itself by different names, Conservative, Labour, Liberal, but it stands for the same thing in the end.” Webb, ‘The Future of Wales is in Our Hands’, in *No Half-Way House*, p. 346.

⁴⁰⁴ Interestingly, in *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngũgĩ wa’Thiong’o accused the European colonising powers of operating a “divide-and-rule” policy in Africa. Ngũgĩ wa’Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: J. Currey, 1986), pp. 1, 66. The articles quoted

common to all Welsh people and hopes to inspire the Welsh to unite in defiance of their enemy's attempts to divide them – a kind of reverse psychology. He gives them both an enemy against which to unite and a strong motive for doing so.

The final unifying strategy that I wish to look at is Webb's use of humour. This features primarily in his poetry and is frequently concerned with criticising a common enemy – sometimes England, sometimes the Welsh who collaborate with England. An example of the first is his 'Ode to the Severn Bridge':

Two lands at last connected,

Across the waters wide

And all the tolls collected

On the English side.⁴⁰⁵

This is humorous in various ways. "Ode" suggests a tribute or homage while this is anything but. It parodies the style of the ode and plays with the reader's expectations. The latter half functions almost like a punchline – it is a twist which makes the reader laugh at the change of direction. The tone however is sharply ironic – the poem underlines how this structure that should be uniting two lands is actually highlighting the inequality in their relationship and perhaps increasing divisions between them. It is also worth noting that it would not be at all funny if it were not true.

Boxer and Cortés-Conde argue that certain types of conversational joking or teasing can have a bonding effect, particularly joking that is aimed at an absent other. They claim "that an even more important part of CJ [conversational joking] can be not only the display but also the development of a *relational* identity among participants which leads to a sense of membership in a group..."⁴⁰⁶ I would argue that most types of humour can actually perform this function if it is clearly aimed at an outsider group. In 'Ode to the Severn Bridge,' England cannot be said to be the butt of the joke exactly but it is certainly the focus of the irony. English people of the time would not have laughed at this poem, at least not in the same way. They would have dismissed it as purely a joke but it would have struck a chord with the Welsh people – a sense that they were being cheated. As with Webb's more direct

above pre-date this book so Webb cannot have used it as a direct source but the similarity of the idea links him to other, better known, resistance writers.

⁴⁰⁵ Webb, *Collected Poems*, p. 87.

⁴⁰⁶ Boxer and Cortés-Conde, p. 276.

approaches, this sets up England as a common enemy for all the people of Wales. Moreover, by making the Welsh people react in the same way to it, the humorous poem unites them on another level, creating the ‘bonding’ that Boxer and Cortés-Conde mention.

At other times the butt of the joke or the ‘enemy’ is those Welsh who are so devoted to England that they place its good before that of their own country. An example of this is ‘Walter, Walter Lead us by the Halter’, supposedly narrated by these Anglophilic Welsh. It begins with these voices repeating the opinions that they have absorbed from the English: “In Llangynwyd and Blaengarw we think nationalism narrow/And for Wales we do not give a Fabian damn.”⁴⁰⁷ The extremely Welsh names of the first line provide a sharp, almost poignant, contrast to the sentiment of the second that dismisses the importance of the national tradition that produced these names. The second stanza is even more damning:

In Ewenni and Bridgend we will rally to defend
The red flag and the King upon his throne,
The Republic makes us smile all along the Golden Mile –
We don’t *want* to have a country of our own.⁴⁰⁸

Webb here shows up the lack of national feeling among certain Welshmen and their readiness to fight for what he saw as the alien British Empire and the cause of international labour but not for their own land. Again, the speakers are convicted from their own mouths.

Much of the humour of this poem is related to the form – the jaunty rhythm and repetitive rhyme scheme are humorous, especially when the rhyme scheme requires a slightly ludicrous turn of phrase such as: “In Glamorgan’s lovely vale it makes us turn quite pale/ To think that we should govern our own soil.”⁴⁰⁹ The turn of phrase is also that of upper class England, suggesting the imitation in which these people indulge, and creating an incongruity which is also humorous. Equally humorous are the ingenious contrived lines such as: “And we must be extra nice to the Socialistic Sais.”⁴¹⁰ The irony that these Anglophiles are still using the Welsh word is obvious. It creates a humorous effect but also carries a stark message.

⁴⁰⁷ Webb, ‘Walter, Walter, Lead us by the Halter’, *Collected Poems*, p. 25.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

However, the poem also creates humour by rendering the speakers ridiculous. This begins in the first line where the pompous voice sets the tone for the rest of the poem. Later they are revealed to be childlike: “In Ogmore by the Sea we never will agree/ To be treated as an adult people should,”⁴¹¹; naive: “In Llanharan and Pencoed there will be no unemployed/ And we’ll never be depressed again at all,”⁴¹² and servile: “For they are exploiting us for our own good.”⁴¹³ The poem’s title does not appear as an actual line but emphasises the impression of willing slavery – halter implying a beast of burden.

By mocking the Anglophilic Welsh, Webb again uses humour as a bonding device to unite the rest of Wales against them but there may be a further agenda here. By showing how ridiculous the views these people hold are, he will undermine any faith in their opinions and pronouncements. He may even alter their opinions, though this is unlikely as people who are mocked frequently become defensive and thus more entrenched in their views. It will, however, dissuade others from taking those views.

A further though different and rather more extended example of humour at the expense of both the English and the Anglophilic Welsh, but one that also aims at uniting the Welsh against a common enemy, is Webb’s short verse drama entitled ‘The Babes in Milk Wood,’ originally published in *The Welsh Republican*. The humour of this work, part satire, part allegory, begins with the cast list featuring characters such as: “John Bully (a bankrupt bandit)” “Dai and Blod (two young people whose inheritance he has stolen)” and “Smog Phillips and Cliff Smothero (his hired assassins).”⁴¹⁴ Most of the humour comes from the very obvious representative nature of these caricatures: John Bully being England, Dai and Blod the innocent Welsh, Phillips and Smothero the Welsh who collaborate and so forth. There is no attempt at subtlety here.

The main text of the drama is equally unsubtle. It opens with John Bully bemoaning the fact that that his enemies are taking back their own possessions, but rejoicing that Wales’ wealth is still his:

⁴¹¹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴¹² Ibid., p. 26.

⁴¹³ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴¹⁴ Webb, ‘The Babes in Milk Wood’, in *A Militant Muse*, pp. 15-20 (p. 19).

I've robbed and looted all my days
But now I have to mend my ways.
My victims all hit back at me,
They have no sense of decency!
But though my sun is almost set
The wealth of Wales shall keep me yet.⁴¹⁵

This of course refers to the ending of the British Empire. At the time of publication India had been independent for nearly eight years and in the next decade Britain's African colonies would follow. As in much of Webb's other work this speech compares Wales to other colonies; the major difference here being that Wales does not seem to be agitating for independence. Despite the serious topic, the speech is humorous. John Bully's tone is petulant, almost childish, which is at odds with the serious nature of the imperial politics being discussed. Moreover, like other works, it helps set up England as an outgroup by making the character appear risible as well as a bully. It is easy to laugh at and to feel superior to him. Thus the text asserts Wales' moral superiority to England – though it does bemoan the naivety and lack of awareness of the Welsh; John Bully declares: "I help myself to all they've got/ And they don't seem to care a jot."⁴¹⁶ This reminds the reader that despite the humorous portrayal John Bully (England) is a threat and must be resisted.

Bully makes an agreement with Demon Jim and sends his assassins Phillips and Smothero, off to deal with Dai and Blod. The assassins are portrayed in derogatory terms. The stage directions describing them are vicious: "Their shambling gait and skulking stance betray their antipathy to the light of the day."⁴¹⁷ Their speech is coarse and uneducated; they use words like "yus," "guv," and "bleeders."⁴¹⁸ The assassins' speech makes them figures of fun but could also be read as a result of their degradation; because of their collaboration they are neither one thing nor the other and have become associated with the worst qualities of the English. They can almost be seen as cautionary figures – a warning not to collaborate. Therefore while they are comic characters, they also have a darker purpose.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

Meanwhile, Dai and Blod are wandering lost in the woods. The Fairy Megan (“a good effort”)⁴¹⁹ appears to show them a vision of Wales free but is countered by Demon Jim entering and claiming: “Jon Bully’s claims are paramount/ And British interests only count.”⁴²⁰ This symbolises the failed Parliament for Wales campaign in which Lady Megan Lloyd George played a prominent part, providing another ‘in-joke’ for Welsh readers. King Arthur’s champions turn up to aid the Welsh but are heavily outnumbered by Phillips and Smothero leading an army consisting of “a huge concourse of cosmopolitan degenerates,”⁴²¹ another denunciation of the Anglophilic Welsh. Dai finally saves the day by awakening Y Ddraig Goch (The Red Dragon) which burns its enemies to flame, declaring that it will aid all those who fight for Wales.

The overheavy symbolism is, I believe, intentionally comic, but like most satire it has a serious message and one the Welsh people would appreciate where others, particularly the English, would not. One of the best examples of this is Demon Jim’s claim that he had already killed Y Ddraig Goch:

Myself I killed that useless beast,

She was not modern in the least.

Of course I used a humane killer.⁴²²

The claim that dragons are not modern along with the idea of exterminating one with a humane killer is funny but also hides a serious point. Wales is seen as backward by the English and thus England taking the lead and transforming it is a praiseworthy thing to do. An outsider would probably laugh at the hilarity of the image of humane dragon killing, missing the subtext. But the Welsh would see the symbolism of the act and be bonded by their interpretation of it.

Though humorous the drama ends on a serious note which is perhaps the best example of Webb’s belief in the need for unity. Y Ddraig Goch declares:

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

⁴²¹ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴²² Ibid., p. 19.

I am the symbol of our land.
My scales are bright, my claws are sharp.
Whoever takes the sword in hand
Or strikes a warsong on the harp.
Shall ride in triumph on my wings
And put an end to evil things.⁴²³

The use of ‘whoever’ is important. Y Ddraig Goch provides no qualification of language, faith, or location. ‘Whoever’ is prepared to fight for Wales is its citizen. This is Webb’s message at its simplest. All people of Wales must fight for Wales and all who fight for Wales are her people. No other qualification is necessary. As seen in this section, Webb preached this frequently and attempted to bring about such a union through various strategies. I will now look at another important aspect of Webb’s work – the recovery, or retelling, of history.

Recovering History

The attempt to recover an oppressed nation’s history, a history that has not been taught due to the dominant power’s control of the education system, is an aim that will appear in most of the texts discussed in this thesis. San Juan argues: “It is in this site of how history is conceived and narrated that the conflict between Third World heterogeneity and First World mastery takes place.”⁴²⁴ He quotes Wole Soyinka discussing his project of ‘race retrieval’:

It involves, very simply, the conscious activity of recovering what has been hidden, lost repressed, denigrated, or indeed simply denied by ourselves – yes, by ourselves also – but definitely by the conquerors of our peoples and their Eurocentric bias of thought and relationships... For a people to develop, they must have constant recourse to their own history. Not uncritical recourse but definitely a recourse. To deny them the existence of this therefore has a purpose, for it makes them neutered objects on whose tabula rasa, that clean slate of the mind, the text of the master race – cultural, economic, religious, and so on – can be inscribed. A

⁴²³ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴²⁴ San Juan, *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression*, p. 204.

logical resistance counterstrategy therefore develops; true nationalists find themselves, at one stage or the other and on varying levels, confronted with a need to address the recovery of their history and culture... breeding a newly aware humanity equipped with the strategies of the experience-laden journey from its beginnings to the present.⁴²⁵

By regaining their history, people in colonised countries can become aware of the oppression that they have suffered and begin to fight against it. They will also begin to question the superiority of the colonisers with which they have been hitherto indoctrinated. Consequently, nationalist scholars and activists will devote much time and energy to recovering this history and to disseminating it to the people of the nation.

Webb is especially diligent in this attempt, writing tirelessly about Welsh history and culture in interesting and accessible terms. Ivor Wilks, Webb's predecessor as editor of *The Welsh Republican*, claims that he and Webb were responsible for giving the publication "its strong historical flavour,"⁴²⁶ and that the paper was founded because: "Public education had become an issue. We needed a regular way of reaching out to the masses: in short, a paper of our own."⁴²⁷ Clearly, education was an important part of Webb's and the Movement's agenda. As M. Wynn Thomas puts it "Webb's task was to remind people of what they never knew they never knew."⁴²⁸ However I will argue that Webb is doing more than simply recovering this lost history – he is using it to unify and define the Welsh people. In his histories the Welsh are depicted as proud, culturally and politically aware, and fiercely defensive of their rights and it is clearly his hope that this portrayal will inspire his contemporaries.

One of the best examples of Webb's recovery work is the pamphlet on The Merthyr Rising that he produced in 1956. The pamphlet made an impact in the field - Morris notes that previously few historians had mentioned the Rising; afterwards none dared exclude it.⁴²⁹ According to Morris it is a well-researched and methodical account which has not been greatly altered by later historians.⁴³⁰ In keeping with Webb's project of recovery, however, the tone is highly biased and the rhetorical style overblown. It is dramatic and emotive; there sounds "a deeper note, one that is music to the heart of

⁴²⁵ Soyinka, quoted in San Juan, *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression*, p. 209.

⁴²⁶ Ivor Wilks, 'Harri's Web', *Planet*, 83 (October/November 1990), 13-7 (p. 15).

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴²⁸ M. Wynn Thomas, *Corresponding Cultures*, p. 55.

⁴²⁹ Morris, p.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-3.

every true Welshman – the hymn of battle,⁴³¹ and the ironmasters “looked over the fair land they had looted and raped and defiled...”⁴³² Even more overdone is the final comparison:

Dic Penderyn received Christian burial in the graveyard of St Mary’s Church, and the Mother of God took into her keeping the son of another mother who, like her own, had met his death at the hands of evil men for the great love he bore his people.⁴³³

This comparison is not only overdone, for many it would be blasphemous.⁴³⁴ Taking things to such ridiculous extremes risks devaluing the whole piece and alienating the readership. However Morris cautions:

It is easy to smile, and murmur ‘a touch over the top, perhaps’, but the writing in this pamphlet is remarkably revealing about Harri Webb’s style on political subjects. It is rhetorical, theatrical, highly coloured, and often lurid, but it is self-consciously so... Dic’s death may legitimately be compared to Christ’s, because in Harri Webb’s political pronouncements there is no compromise, everything is jet-black or snow-white. His writing is confrontational, adversarial, and his account of the Merthyr Rising is unashamedly a florid and forensic discourse for the defence, which is engaging and persuasive precisely because it is so close to comic exaggeration.⁴³⁵

This is perhaps debateable but the writing is certainly striking. It is typical of Webb’s style and, as Morris points out, it is a deliberate choice of style. The feeling behind the words may be genuine enough but the words themselves have been carefully selected to provoke a particular reaction. Readers are unlikely to forget its words and in that, at least, it succeeds in its purpose. It will also chime with likeminded Welsh people – those perhaps already feeling indignant at England’s control of Wales. And

⁴³¹ Harri Webb, *Dic Penderyn and the Merthyr Rising of 1831*, (Swansea: Gwasg Penderyn, 1956), p. 3.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴³⁴ There is an interesting similarity here with the language and imagery of a poem by Padraic Pearse written in prison shortly before his execution for his part in the Easter Rising. The poem is entitled ‘A Mother Speaks’ and begins: “Dear Mary, that didst see thy first-born Son/ Go forth to die amid the scorn of men/ For whom he died,/ Receive my first-born son into thy arms,/ Who also hath gone out to die for men...” Padraic Pearse, quoted in Tim Pat Coogan, *1916: The Easter Rising* (London: Phoenix, 2005), p. 163. As already seen, Webb admired the Irish revolutionaries of 1916 and was familiar with Pearse’s doctrine of ‘blood sacrifice’ so this may be a conscious or semi-conscious echoing.

⁴³⁵ Morris, p. 34.

certainly it can be said to present the Welsh side of the Rising, a side that would not have been taught in schools, as Webb himself notes in the pamphlet,⁴³⁶ so in that too it can be said to be successful.

Similar language is used in the column in *The Welsh Republican* entitled ‘Glorious Figures from our Past... or what they don’t allow to be taught in Welsh Schools.’ Meic Stephens notes that it is impossible to tell which ones Webb wrote personally and which were contributed by others,⁴³⁷ but some at least would have come from him and he included the others during his time as editor. Therefore even if they were not actually written by him, they were part of his project to re-educate and inspire the Welsh people.

This column covered a range of figures. Some like the Chartist or Rebeccaite leaders are unsurprising: Lewsyn yr Heliwr, Dai’r Cantwr, John Frost, Shoni ‘Sguborfawr. Others like the bardd Ieuan Gwynedd and the eccentric Dr William Price might not immediately be thought of as heroes, but their articles stake this claim for them. Still others like Zephaniah Williams who led men in the 1839 rising are very little known, even by the standards of Welsh history, as their articles note. Each article provides a small amount of biographical information, then takes the form of a eulogy describing the figure’s deeds in the service of Wales, whether they were leading armed men (Lewsyn yr Heliwr, John Frost and others), writing poems to the glorification of the country and criticising English Imperialism (Ieuan Gwynedd) or campaigning for Home Rule (Emrys ap Iwan). The style is not that of a history textbook, being emotive and clearly biased: “But he loved Wales with such passion,”⁴³⁸ “But even the corrupt government of England knew better than to enforce this hideous fate,”⁴³⁹ “For of this breed were the men who had flung themselves unarmed on the bayonets of the soldiery in the Merthyr Rising...”⁴⁴⁰ It resembles the language of the Merthyr Rising pamphlet and like it is intended to kindle emotion, but also to inform albeit in a one-sided manner. The information given, however, is basically correct.

The articles usually recount their subjects’ ends which were often imprisonment, exile or an early death. This is in some ways a strange thing to mention but the emphasis is that, while the figure’s personal battle may have ended, the struggle of which they were part goes on. They are to act as an inspiration to the Welsh of the future, urging them to take up the fight. This is emphasised by the fact

⁴³⁶ Webb, *Dic Penderyn and the Merthyr Rising of 1831*, p. 3.

⁴³⁷ Stephens, ‘Introduction’, *No Half-way House*, p. 15.

⁴³⁸ Webb, ‘Glorious Figures from our Past – Ieuan Gwynedd’, quoted in *The Young Republicans*, p. 165.

⁴³⁹ Webb, ‘Glorious Figures from our Past – Zephaniah Williams’, quoted in *The Young Republicans*, p. 167.

⁴⁴⁰ Webb, ‘Glorious Figures from our Past – George Shell’, *The Welsh Republican*, February-March 1956, p. 4.

that each article closes with a mention of a continuing struggle or battle followed by the words “You are needed for it!” in block capitals. These people are an example to be cherished and followed. They were agents of change that Webb believed had to come. His words about the Easter Rising quoted earlier can be interpreted as revealing his hopes for Wales.⁴⁴¹

The historical subjects of ‘Glorious Figures’ sought to inspire their compatriots even when the prevailing mood was against them. They often faced oppression from many of their own people as well as the English. But they persisted in their efforts and because of that, Webb believes, they have allowed the struggle to continue – the struggle that will one day bring about the changes they sought. Therefore their ultimate defeat is irrelevant – if anything it increases the impression of their courage, strength and commitment, portraying them as fighting against overwhelming odds. What matters is that they fought and that their actions made it possible for Wales to continue to exist and struggle for nationhood. This view of continuing struggle is compatible with resistance theory. San Juan approvingly quotes the Filipino insurgent Salud Almagre who claimed: “No uprising is ever defeated; each one is a step in the right direction.”⁴⁴²

In an article comparing Webb’s nationalist poetry with that of Meic Stephens, O’Neill has also argued that Webb’s attention to the frailties of his heroes allows him to escape the “persistent weakness,” that affects Stephens’ poetry and other patriotic verse. This weakness is the uncritical acceptance of the heroes produced in one’s own work. This is problematic, O’Neill explains, because “poetry that *teaches* as openly as this does, and all *teaching* of this absolute and mythologizing sort, is a hoodwink promising gods where only opinions exist.”⁴⁴³ Setting national heroes up as supermen or gods is likely to cause disappointment and disillusionment when they fail to achieve their goals, which in the case of Wales they almost inevitably must. Had they not failed, there would be little need for the recovery project of writers like Webb and Stephens as Wales would be independent or at least have sovereignty within the United Kingdom, and the stories of the national heroes that had brought this about would naturally be taught in schools and known by all members of the nation. However, they were unable to achieve this and it is hard to understand and accept the failure of a person depicted as perfect. This irresolvable tension is likely to lead to a complete loss of faith in this figure and potentially in the

⁴⁴¹ “The Easter 1916 Rising failed, and as the leaders were being marched off by the soldiers, the Irish people of Dublin, whose lives had been disrupted by the battle, and who had been put in terror by the firing, spat on Pearse and Connolly and cursed them. But within a year that mood had passed, the true significance of events had sunk in, and the battle of Ireland was as good as won.” Harri Webb, ‘Letter to Gwilym Prys Davies’, pp. 234-5.

⁴⁴² San Juan, *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression*, p. 10.

⁴⁴³ O’Neill, p. 94.

nationalist cause. Webb's figures, however, are human – they possess flaws and frailties and are thus both easier for readers to identify with and less likely to disillusion people when they ultimately fail. For Webb it is the act of resisting and the ongoing struggle that is important, not its immediate success or failure. His heroes may not be perfect but they commit to Wales and fight for their nation, inspiring others to do likewise and ensuring that they have the opportunity to do so. Thus their failure is impermanent and does not contradict to their status as national heroes.

One of Webb's writings that best illustrates both these points is his poem about Owain Glyndŵr, 'By a Mountain Pool'. It depicts Glyndŵr alone, brooding and dejected in his old age having survived the final defeat of his rebellion. He is the picture of defeat: "An old man's face, seen in a mountain pool,/ And every furrow of age and scar of battle."⁴⁴⁴ Wearily he lifts: "The heavy dragon helmet from my shoulders/ For the last time,"⁴⁴⁵ – a deeply symbolic act. There is no hope, no fire left. He can only remember that:

It was not always so....

when I drove the English from the land...

Then was the hour of the dragon, my blazing crest...

The steadfast men who carried in their swords

The soul of Wales kept their eyes on the dragon

And held their heads up proudly as they rode

With Owain into the mist, where now I wander,

An old man, alone by a mountain pool...⁴⁴⁶

Embittered by the contrast between the glory of these images and his present state, he throws his dragon helmet into the pool declaring:

⁴⁴⁴ Harri Webb, 'By a Mountain Pool', *Collected Poems*, p. 68.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

It is best so. All strife, all hope is drowned.

[...]

I quench the heraldry of sovereign Wales

Here in this pool. So. It is gone. It is done.

The dragon's fire is out...⁴⁴⁷

He appears to have completely given up. He is tired, old, defeated; very different from the glorious leader of a national uprising. Physical and mental flaws are in evidence. This is an intimate view of Glyndŵr and a very human one. He is certainly no perfect mythical figure and it is thus easier to accept that he was defeated than it would be if he was depicted as a flawless hero of legend. Though it is possible that depicting a national hero in this way might repel or disillusion readers, it is more likely to allow them to empathise with him.

Moreover, despite the apparent focus on defeat in the first part of the poem, it quickly becomes clear that as with the figures in 'Glorious Figures from our Past', the important thing is not that the resistance was defeated but that it served as an example and an inspiration for future generations and that it ensured that the nation continued. In 'An Old and Haughty Nation Proud in Arms' Webb writes: "For it was the Welsh people who took up the sword of their fallen princes...it was the Welsh people who kept warm and living the songs that have inspired the longest resistance that history knows."⁴⁴⁸ This is enacted in 'By a Mountain Pool'; Glyndŵr hears the voices of nationalists of the future who assure him: "Because you made this death the nation lives."⁴⁴⁹ Though his rising was ultimately unsuccessful, the national self-awareness it created and the inspiration it provided allowed the nation to survive to the present day. Those who would fight today use Glyndŵr as a focus and rallying point. The fact that he was defeated makes them more determined to succeed, not less. The speakers from the future draw Glyndŵr's helmet from the pool, expressing their conviction: "It is a voice that can never be silenced./ It is your voice, Owain..."⁴⁵⁰ Glyndŵr finally responds declaring:

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁴⁸ Webb, 'An Old and Haughty Nation Proud in Arms', in *No Half-way House* pp. 87-9 (p. 88).

⁴⁴⁹ Webb, 'By a Mountain Pool', p. 70.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 72.

I give you my voice again:

Fight on. You have kept faith with me, I will

keep faith with you. Wherever you strike in vengeance

My strength is in your arm.⁴⁵¹

As a result the nationalists of the future, inspired, metaphorically ride off to liberate Wales, carrying Glyndŵr with them in spirit:

Owain, the rivers of Wales are numberless

And every river a battle, and every battle a song.

Our bards shall string their harps with battles and rivers

And you shall ride with us, fording them one by one

As we take them, one by one, back into our keeping.⁴⁵²

Unlike the earlier rising, however, they will succeed. Therefore, Glyndŵr can be seen as an inspirational but flawed figure who can inspire the generations that come after him to fight for Wales as he did. Eventually, those inspired by him will succeed.

In addition to recovering Welsh history for the Welsh people and using it to inspire and indeed empower them, I would argue that Webb uses his historical writings as a way of defining the Welsh people or, perhaps, remaking them in his own image. By writing of the history of Welsh resistance to English oppression, Webb is defining the Welsh people as a people who traditionally are aware of and fight for their rights, nation and nationality. This both gives the Welsh people a defined characteristic as part of their identity (and, following the discussion of Webb's strategies for uniting the Welsh people in the previous section, it is important to note that the ability to resist is one anyone can possess – it is not dependent on race, religion, language, culture or anything else) and encourages them to live up to the defiance of their ancestors and fight their modern-day battles. This is expressed most clearly in the closing sentence of Webb's article commemorating the burning of the bombing school at

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., p. 72.

⁴⁵² Ibid., p. 72.

Penyberth where he declares: “We salute them in confidence and pride that the Welsh of today will not be lesser men than their fathers.”⁴⁵³ By stating this so confidently he makes his audience desire to measure up to his belief.

A similar note is struck in ‘An Old and Haughty Nation Proud in Arms’:

Many shadows have drifted across the hills of Wales and the people that holds them – the eagles of Rome, the ravens of the North, the vultures of London. But always we have stood firm. The Welsh people are, and the Welsh people shall be.⁴⁵⁴

Again, the Welsh are defined as people who have always resisted invasion and oppression and will continue to do so. Once more Webb expresses his convictions firmly, hoping to urge his readers to live up to the example of their ancestors. This can also be seen in his poem ‘The Red, White and Green,’⁴⁵⁵ which celebrates great Welsh figures of the past: St David, Llywelyn, Glyndŵr and others. After each stanza celebrating a figure there is a stanza making a link to the present day Welsh people beginning “Here’s to the sons of...”⁴⁵⁶ followed by the person or people featured in the previous verse. This makes the link between past and present obvious, establishing the Welsh of Webb’s day as descendants of past heroes. The word “heirs” used in the stanza discussing Llywelyn, reinforces this link. The last two lines of each second verse are the same with the one slight exception of the substitution of “When we” for “who’ll” in one case. They read: “Who’ll haul down the red, white and blue, lads,/And hoist up the red, white and green.”⁴⁵⁷ The colours, of course, refer to the Union Jack and the Welsh flag, the latter being substituted for the former. This reflects Webb’s belief in the change that is to come – Wales’ people will succeed in gaining her sovereignty. They will take up the mantle of those who have gone before and they will succeed because the Welsh are a people who resist. This inspires the Welsh of his day to do so because he claims it is in their nature. It also provides them with a way of defining themselves that pays no attention to language, religion, class, location or any of the other criteria that are often attached as conditions for belonging to a group, and thus acts as a unifier. It fits with The Welsh Republicans’ definition of a Welshman as someone who is prepared to work and fight for Wales. Thus Welsh history as Webb presents it both unifies and defines the Welsh people.

⁴⁵³ Harri Webb, ‘The Night of the Fire’, in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 159-60 (p. 160).

⁴⁵⁴ Webb, ‘An Old and Haughty Nation Proud in Arms’, p. 87.

⁴⁵⁵ Webb, ‘The Red, White and Green’, *Collected Poems*, pp. 109-110.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

San Juan writes that:

*...the more decisive moment is the reconstitution of each individual as Filipino. What constitutes a Filipino is itself the project of a dynamic politicization which operating on various levels – educational, organizational, symbolic, etc., - actualizes the realization of hegemony. Essentially this project of constructing the Filipino involves a thoroughgoing moral/ethical transformation, not just intellectual and pragmatic alteration of personality which implicates a whole nexus of beliefs, habits of feeling and thinking, practices, etc.*⁴⁵⁸

I would argue that in writing about Welsh history in the way that he does, Webb is trying to undertake a similar project in Wales. He is attempting to unite the Welsh people, to make them feel Welsh, to make them politically aware of their situation and to encourage them to act against it and move for change. In this way he could be said to be ‘reconstituting’ all who read his work as Welsh men and women, inspiring them to fight for their rights and unifying them so that they can do so, transforming them into citizens of the Wales that will be.

A Popular Poet

Of all the Welsh writers discussed in this thesis, Webb is the one who, during his lifetime, would most qualify as a ‘popular’ author. As already seen, in resistance literature, calling an author ‘popular’ is not the slur that it might be in some other academic disciplines. Being a popular writer, one who speaks for and to the people of the nation, is vital for the cultural struggle.

Webb can be said to have done this in many ways. Morris notes that many of his early poems appeared “almost casually,” in newspapers which meant that they would reach a wide circulation, and that he made little effort to publish in the more exclusive literary magazines; “the poems he wrote for THE WELSH REPUBLICAN, WESTERN MAIL, and WELSH NATION were brief, witty, political, occasional, ephemeral and designed for the particular readership. It was popular, coterie verse.”⁴⁵⁹ Popular, coterie verse, however, reaches people and, while it may seem ephemeral, it is often highly memorable and quotable.

⁴⁵⁸ San Juan, *Allegories of Resistance*, p. 81.

⁴⁵⁹ Morris, p. 48.

Morris, Roberts Jones and Simpson also note that Webb has much in common with the Welsh tradition of the *bardd gwlad*.⁴⁶⁰ Morris defines this tradition as “a term sometimes applied to a poet without much formal education, whose poems praise his particular locality, and the events, the births, marriages, deaths, scandals, achievements, which take place there,”⁴⁶¹ and who is thus a ‘poet of the people’ – a term applied to Webb by Stephens and by Mario Basini.⁴⁶² Morris and Simpson point out that Webb would have been aware of this tradition, as in ‘Webb’s Progress’ he describes Cyril Gwynne, a *bardd gwlad* who was a relative of his mother’s.⁴⁶³ Morris notes that while Webb differed from the traditional *bardd gwlad* in being highly educated and well read he too celebrates local figures in poems like ‘Not to be Used for Babies.’⁴⁶⁴ Simpson meanwhile, claims that Webb would have recognised the benefits of simplicity in Gwynne’s work and imitated this in his own “to aim for simplicity of style (easily memorised, like Gwynne)... would make poetry an effective medium for a political message...”⁴⁶⁵ Perhaps the most important characteristic of the *bardd gwlad* for Webb though is that he is part of the community rather than a figure apart in the English Romantic tradition of the poet. He has a role within the community. Webb notes “...he [Gwynne] established in my mind the image of the poet as essentially a social rather than a solitary character... fortunate in his gifts, however humble, and under something of an obligation to spread them around for the pleasure of the people he belongs to...”⁴⁶⁶ Webb certainly followed Gwynne’s example; his poems were readily available and written for the pleasure, education and inspiration of the people he belonged to, which for him was the whole Welsh people. Many are occasional such as his ballad ‘When Gwynfor got in for Carmarthen’ – a celebration of the election of the first Plaid Cymru MP. Rather than writing for literary journals, Webb wrote on behalf and to his community, discussing the issues they considered important.

Later in his life Webb contributed to the 1972-78 BBC series *Poems and Pints*, a show featuring poems often broadcast from pubs – a trait that surely helped demystify poetry and made it seem less elitist and a more natural part of popular culture. During the 1970s he wrote many scripts for television and radio and was moderately successful. As a result Morris calls him a “*bardd teledu*, a television poet,”⁴⁶⁷ and

⁴⁶⁰ Morris, p. 57; Roberts Jones, p. 28; Simpson, p. 37.

⁴⁶¹ Morris, p. 57.

⁴⁶² Meic Stephens, ‘The Garth Newydd Years’, *Planet*, 83 (October/November 1990), 18-23 (23); Mario Basini, *Real Merthyr* (Bridgend: Seren, 2008), p. 147. Technically Basini calls him, “a people’s poet,” as well as, “the people’s bard,” but the meaning in all three cases is the same.

⁴⁶³ Morris, p. 57; Simpson, p. 37.

⁴⁶⁴ Morris, p. 58.

⁴⁶⁵ Simpson, p. 37.

⁴⁶⁶ Harri Webb, ‘Webb’s Progress (*I*)’, in *A Militant Muse*, pp. 162-71 (p. 165).

⁴⁶⁷ Morris, p. 90.

claims "...he developed a very recognizable style which was popular in Wales and beyond."⁴⁶⁸ All this added to his public image and spread his ideas to the general public, making him recognisable.

As well as writing to the Welsh people Webb claims to speak for them. In his letter to Gwilym Prys Davies discussed earlier he criticises Plaid for being out of touch with the emotions of the Welsh people, taking on the role of their spokesperson:

I claim that my point of view has validity not despite the limitations of my temperament but because of them. That is how a lot of the Welsh people think and feel, and I am merely making articulate what thousands have left unexpressed... That, incidentally, is one of the things that has been and is wrong with the Blaid – they are cold-blooded, or at least the people who have set the tone in the Blaid do not seem to possess any capacity for judging the emotional reactions of people.⁴⁶⁹

He clearly feels that Plaid Cymru has lost touch with the common people. In earlier years, the Welsh Republican Movement frequently criticized Plaid Cymru for being elitist and out-of-touch, but by the time Webb joined Plaid for the second time in 1960 he felt it had generally improved. Three years later in this letter, however, he seems to feel the Blaid, or at least its leadership, is relapsing. It may be more left-wing and focused on economic issues than the party the Republicans criticised, but it is still not fully in touch with how the people of Wales, the people it supposedly represents, feel. Webb however feels that he is and that coming from the people as he does, he is a good spokesperson for them. This is his duty as a people's writer.

A comparison with the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid may be enlightening at this point.⁴⁷⁰ In both *Allegories of Resistance* and *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression* San Juan devotes a whole chapter to MacDiarmid's works, seeing much of his poetry as an embodiment of Marxist dialectics. San Juan admires MacDiarmid who was both a fervent Scottish nationalist and a Marxist and

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 90.

⁴⁶⁹ Webb, 'Letter to Gwilym Prys Davies', p. 227. There is an echo here of Fanon's statement that "in an under-developed country... the [nationalist] party should be the direct expression of the masses." Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 151. Webb clearly feels Plaid Cymru should similarly reflect the wishes of the Welsh people and, equally clearly, feels that it is failing to do so.

⁴⁷⁰ Elidir Jones compares Webb and MacDiarmid in the third chapter of his PhD, *Nationalism and Welsh Writing in Comparative Contexts, 1925-1966*. While his focus is on how they combine their apparently contradictory nationalist and socialist ideals in their writing as opposed to their popular appeal, some of his points will be touched upon here as they are relevant to the discussion. Elidir Jones, *Nationalism and Welsh Writing in Comparative Contexts, 1925-1966* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Cardiff University, 2011), p. 110-44.

internationalist, though orthodox in neither approach. He praises him for his “singular achievement in constructing a national-popular speech (both in Scots Lallans and English) with a radical democratic content [which] cannot be facilely dismissed...”⁴⁷¹ and argues that MacDiarmid,

...situates his own art concretely within the cultural heritage of Scotland. He disavows any tendency toward “purely hothouse proletarian literature” by addressing what Gramsci calls the national-popular needs of the masses in Scotland, needs that provide the energies for a socialist project of winning hegemony.⁴⁷²

This is of course close to San Juan’s ideal of resistance – all struggles are linked, the fight against capitalism and the fight for national determination are merely different dimensions of the ongoing struggle against oppression. He sees MacDiarmid as articulating this in his work. He also sees him as writing for the working class in a way similar to many left-wing resistance writers: “Like Bertolt Brecht or Ernesto Cardenal, he wanted to communicate to the masses and in the process educate (both teach and learn from) them.”⁴⁷³ Much the same could be said for Webb; this chapter has already discussed how he sought to recover Welsh history and disseminate it among the Welsh and how he believed fervently the Welsh common people to be the bedrock of the nation. Critics have noted Webb’s admiration for MacDiarmid and his adoption of him as a model, so similarities in their work, attitudes and aims are unsurprising.⁴⁷⁴ However, I would like to claim that in fact Webb is far more of a ‘popular’ or ‘of the people’ poet than MacDiarmid.

There are two parts to this claim. The first part is based on the fact that Webb’s poetry is far more accessible and therefore likely to be read by the people he supposedly wrote it for than MacDiarmid’s. Much of MacDiarmid’s work contains words from a multitude of registers including literary and scientific, words that would not be known by the general public. MacDiarmid himself was aware of the difficulties of reaching his audience as Scott Lyall notes quoting the poet himself:

⁴⁷¹ San Juan, *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression*, p. 132.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁴⁷⁴ Morris, p. 14; Stephens, ‘Introduction’, *No Half-way House*, p. 11. See also Elidir Jones where he discusses MacDiarmid’s influences on Webb at some length, arguing that MacDiarmid affected the Welsh writer’s style and ideology and that Webb made use of MacDiarmid’s work, adapting it to his Welsh context, rather than drawing on previous Welsh attempts to combine Welsh nationalism and Socialism, such as the Welsh-language periodical *Tir Newydd*. Elidir Jones, pp. 111-9.

Are my poems spoken in the factories and fields,

In the streets o' the toon?

Gin they're no' I'm failin' to dae

What I ocht to ha' dune.

Gin I canna win through to the man in the street,

The wife by the hearth,

A' the cleverness on earth'll no' mak' up

For the damnable dearth.⁴⁷⁵

MacDiarmid acknowledges that if his poetry cannot reach and move its intended audience, then, however intelligent its content and skilful its construction, it is failing in its purpose, and he feared this was the case. It is true that the poet undercuts himself to a certain extent in the next stanza, reassuring himself, somewhat pompously, that no great poet – not Shakespeare, Dante, Milton, Goethe or Burns – is read in such conditions, and that he is therefore not alone in being ignored.⁴⁷⁶ While this may assuage the poet's sense of failure, it in no way makes his poetry more relevant to the working classes – the people he purports to speak to and for. Webb's poems, on the other hand do speak to those people. They may or may not have been discussed in the factories and fields but they were certainly recited in the pub, the home and the rugby stadium. Those broadcast would have reached: "The wife by the hearth." MacDiarmid's work is certainly political and his commitment to his ideals did change his poetry; he notes that: "Fools regret my poetic change – from my "enchanting early lyrics" - / But I have found in Marxism all that I need".⁴⁷⁷ However, even his 'Communist' poetry is far more elaborate in form and vocabulary than Webb's. A good example of this is the selected lines from 'On a Raised Beach' that San Juan quotes when discussing the poet's success in creating a materialist poetics: "All is

⁴⁷⁵ Hugh MacDiarmid quoted in Scott Lyall, 'MacDiarmid, Communism and the Poetry of Commitment', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Scott Lyall and Margery Palmer McCulloch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 68-81 (p.71).

⁴⁷⁶"Haud on, haud on; what poet's dune that?/ Is Shakespeare read,/ Or Dante or Milton or Goethe or Burns?/ You heard what I said." Hugh MacDiarmid quoted in Elidir Jones, p. 126.

⁴⁷⁷ MacDiarmid, quoted in San Juan, *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression*, p. 122.

lithogenesis – or lochia”; “But where is the Christophanic rock that moved?”⁴⁷⁸ This poem may be an example of materialist poetics, but it is not one that would speak to the working-class or to the majority of the Scottish people; many educated people might not know the meaning of “lithogenesis” and “lochial” without resorting to a dictionary. San Juan translates: “But where is the Christophanic rock that moved?” as: “Where is the achieved form that renewed life?”⁴⁷⁹ but this is hardly an obvious conclusion to draw, even within the context of the rest of the poem. Such poetry is likely to confirm prejudices already held against the genre of poetry and alienate rather than speak to and inspire the ‘masses’.

David Goldie expresses it thus: “If he [MacDiarmid] really wanted to be the saviour of his national culture he might have tried a little harder to get his readers to nod their heads rather than scratch them.”⁴⁸⁰ Despite his pride in being from the working-class MacDiarmid was either not intending to write for them or, as suggested by his comments, was attempting to but failed. Webb however succeeded; indeed O’Neill claims that in the 1970s Webb was “...a poet who since that date [1972] has established himself as a piece of national culture in a fashion more usually monopolized by rugby stars, comedians or newscasters,”⁴⁸¹ and adds: “For many of that section of English-speaking Welshmen whose cultural illiteracy Mr Mathias periodically bewails Mr Webb must seem to be the only living Anglo-Welsh poet.”⁴⁸² The English-speaking element is particularly important. While the tradition of the *bardd gwlad* meant that the Welsh-speaking working class had access to poetry that spoke to them, there was far less in the way of a parallel tradition in English. English-language Welsh writers like R. S. Thomas and Dylan Thomas, while exceptionally gifted poets, were not writing for a working-class audience and generally did not touch on the issues that would affect them. Webb however came from English-speaking Wales and, while he learned Welsh as an adult, he never forgot this, nor did he see non-Welsh-speakers as less Welsh.⁴⁸³ He wrote primarily for these non-Welsh-speakers (an increasingly large percentage of the population of Wales in his day), making them feel part of Wales. Jenkins claimed in 1990 that Webb was “arguably the most popular living poet in

⁴⁷⁸ MacDiarmid, quoted in San Juan, *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression*, p. 133.

⁴⁷⁹ San Juan, *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression*, p. 133.

⁴⁸⁰ David Goldie, ‘Hugh MacDiarmid: The Impossible Persona’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Scott Lyall and Margery Palmer McCulloch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 125-35 (p. 135).

⁴⁸¹ O’Neill, p. 91.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁴⁸³ As we have seen in his interview with Basini, he appeared to have become disillusioned with the Welsh cause later in life and this manifested itself in a rejection of the English language. This does not alter the fact that for the majority of his working life he wrote enthusiastically in English for the people of Wales.

Wales,⁴⁸⁴ and added that he appealed to “the kind of audience that otherwise gives poetry a wide berth.”⁴⁸⁵ He was a poet who became truly popular, who reached the people for whom he wrote, brought poetry into the lives of many who might otherwise not have experienced it and made them feel a part of their nation. In this he was a poet of the people.

The other part to the claim that Webb is closer to the model of a popular poet than MacDiarmid is rooted in their respective attitudes towards the working classes, the people they came from and wanted to represent. Goldie notes that: “MacDiarmid had always been a somewhat authoritarian socialist and nationalist, one who argued for the necessity of an elite to guide the intellectual and political development of the masses...”⁴⁸⁶ whereas Webb, particularly in his early years of writing, continually proclaimed his belief in the common people of Wales.⁴⁸⁷ He was also suspicious of elites and indeed frequently criticised Plaid Cymru and ‘the Welsh Establishment’ for being elitist.⁴⁸⁸ Goldie adds of MacDiarmid:

In *Lucky Poet* such elitism at times shades into what looks like a more open hostility to his compatriots. In spite of his insistence at various points that it is with a middle class perverted by English values that his quarrel lies, and that the only thing he cares about ‘is what the masses of people think and believe and like and dislike’ (LP, p. 97) it is sometimes difficult from the way he hectors and ridicules those masses to distinguish political argument from more straightforward misanthropy and disdain.⁴⁸⁹

Goldie also notes that MacDiarmid “would denigrate traditional Scottish folk poetry as ‘songs which reflect the educational limitations, the narrow lives, the poor literary abilities, of a peasantry we have happily outgrown.’”⁴⁹⁰ Webb, however, praised the Welsh cultural tradition, celebrating figures like the bardd gwlad. He also celebrated less literary public culture, writing poems about the pub and the rugby field. Though convinced of Wales’ superiority to England and the superiority of the parties to which he

⁴⁸⁴ Jenkins, p. 24.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

⁴⁸⁶ Goldie, p. 131.

⁴⁸⁷ See the earlier section of this chapter entitled Resistance.

⁴⁸⁸ See for example his article entitled ‘The Welsh Establishment’ quoted above.

⁴⁸⁹ Goldie, p. 126.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 131.

belonged over their alternatives, Webb very rarely displayed snobbery when it came to culture of any kind.⁴⁹¹

Moreover he consistently praises the democratic tradition of Wales, in contrast to MacDiarmid in whom Scott Lyall detects an “anti-democratic tenor.”⁴⁹² Lyall argues that: “‘First Hymn [to Lenin]’ reveals that the ‘secret’ of Lenin’s authority is to be found in the revolutionary’s (Nietzschean) will-to-power rather than in adherence to ‘the majority will,’”⁴⁹³ something with which the early Webb at least, would not have concurred. He persistently argued that the duty of the Welsh Republican Movement was to carry out the will of the Welsh people. It is true that later he became disillusioned. In his letter to Gwilym Prys Davies he disparages the *gwerin*, seeing them as having failed Wales: “We saw then the *gwerin*’s final rejection of Wales,”⁴⁹⁴ “the rural *gwerin* are in full flight from their heritage and responsibility just as much the people of the Valleys... a panicking rabble...”.⁴⁹⁵ He also expresses a view more akin to MacDiarmid’s political philosophy saying: “Human progress has always depended on a minority of intelligent and sensitive people, and to think otherwise is mere sentimentality or political cant.”⁴⁹⁶ However this can be read in the light of his disillusionment with support for the nationalist cause and it is certainly a contrast to his earlier writing. Generally, therefore, I consider it

⁴⁹¹ An apparent exception to this, as Elidir Jones points out, is Webb’s poem ‘Salm y Werin.’ (Elidir Jones, p. 127.) This poem appears to mock the Welsh proletarian culture by means of a speaker from their midst revealing his ignorance and lack of care for tradition and Wales with lines such as “We are clean shaven and eat mutton from Australia,” “Our fathers before us were poor fish altogether/ Of course they produced *us* but they didn’t have education/ We have got so much of it we don’t know what to do with it, There’s wonderful we are isn’t it?” Webb, *Collected Poems*, p. 24. The culture appears cheap and tacky compared with that of the speaker’s ancestors and Webb does appear contemptuous of it. Jones suggests that it is possible that Webb as a member of Plaid Cymru was attempting to negatively stereotype typical lower class Labour voters. (Elidir Jones, p. 127.) I would add that I believe Webb is not denigrating the proletarian culture so much as the abandonment of Wales and Welsh traditions by many who were part of that culture. The speaker is criticised as the representative of a people ignoring its heritage. This is borne out by the quotations from the letter to Gwilym Prys Davies; “We saw then the *gwerin*’s final rejection of Wales,” “the rural *gwerin* are in full flight from their heritage and responsibility just as much the people of the Valleys...” (Webb, ‘Letter to Gwilym Prys Davies’, *No Halfway House*, p. 228.) Abandonment of Wales is the one thing that Webb cannot forgive and it is this rather than proletarian culture that is being satirised in ‘Salm Y Werin’.

⁴⁹² Lyall, p. 70.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 70. Elidir Jones does suggest that MacDiarmid’s adoption of a *gwerin*-like concept of the Scottish people contradicts to some extent the claim that he was elitist but concedes that elsewhere in his work MacDiarmid can appear to be both elitist and contemptuous of popular culture. (Elidir Jones, p. 123-6.)

⁴⁹⁴ Webb, ‘Letter to Gwilym Prys Davies’, *No Halfway House*, p. 228.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 229-30.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

fair to say that Webb's attitude towards the 'masses' of his compatriots was positive and certainly far more than so MacDiarmid's appeared to be.

None of this is intended as criticism, much less denigration, of MacDiarmid who was a fine poet and a dedicated, if unorthodox, Scottish nationalist and internationalist. The comparison is simply to stress that if MacDiarmid can be regarded as a resistance writer and a 'poet of the people,' surely Webb can too. He wrote for the common people of Wales, carrying poetry to a new audience, he appealed to them on nationalist issues and, believing in their power to effect change, incited them to do so. His inclusion of the non-Welsh-speaking Welsh was particularly important as it helped them to feel part of the nation, and so motivated them to fight for Welsh issues. In this he comes very close to San Juan's idea of the resistance and national-popular writer, one who comes from the masses, writes for them and inspires them to action.

Conclusion

To conclude, many aspects of resistance literature can be seen in Webb's work. He wrote tirelessly for his nation, calling for resistance even if he was sometimes vague about the form that resistance should take. He attempted to unite his people as a nation and to educate and inspire them by recovering their history and presenting them as a people who had always resisted. Moreover, he was accessible and popular and thus able to communicate his ideas and passion on a wide scale. His resistance was open – any who were prepared to work for the good of Wales were welcome. In many ways he is the ideal resistance writer. Many of these attributes will be seen in Albert Sánchez Piñol's work considered in the next chapter.

Chapter 2 – “The darker our twilight hours, the more blessed will be the dawn of those who will come after us”: Catalonia – the Nation that was and the State that will be

Introduction

The next author to be considered is one that has already been discussed in the introduction and one whose view of Catalan culture and the ideal Catalonia are central to this thesis – Albert Sánchez Piñol. As already mentioned, Sánchez Piñol sees Catalonia as an open multicultural society. He praises the way that Catalonia has traditionally succeeded in welcoming and integrating immigrants, and, as already illustrated, this view, combined with the work of Daniel Williams, forms the basis for the kind of inclusive national resistance that this thesis sees as the most constructive, and that finds its fullest Welsh exemplar in the work of Harri Webb. Indeed there are many similarities between Webb’s work and Sánchez Piñol’s novel *Victus* which is the subject of this chapter.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁷ As *Victus* is the only twenty-first century text studied and as it deals with issues of the nation, it may be worth considering briefly as to whether it is influenced by recent ideas of the postnational and postnationalism. To differentiate between these two terms is important. Keith Breen and Shane O’Neill write: “The term ‘postnational’ may be taken to suggest that the nation-state and national identities no longer matter, that they have no political significance. This is a very strong view to which few subscribe. By contrast, the term ‘postnationalist’, which best captures the nature of the debate, does not imply a denial of national identity or its endurance. Rather, the suggestion is that the nation-state and the forms of nationalism that underpinned it, while they have not been dissolved, are being empirically and normatively superseded. This claim of supersession rests on two key arguments which typify the postnationalist perspective: that the nation-state is being relegated as an effective political institution by processes of globalization, and that national identity is being outstripped and displaced by the rise of alternative forms of identity.” (Keith Breen and Shane O’Neil, ‘Introduction’, in *After the Nation?: Critical Reflections on Nationalism and Postnationalism*, ed. by Keith Breen and Shane O’Neil (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 1-18 (pp. 2-3).) *Victus* is certainly not postnational by this definition – as will be shown, national identity is extremely important in the text. Likewise, though it is more complex, I will argue that there is little in *Victus* to support a postnationalist reading.

It could be argued that *Victus* is a postnationalist novel in the sense that it is arguing subtly for Catalan independence and therefore wishes to break up the Spanish nation-state. As seen, postnationalism argues that the nation-state is being superseded. However I would argue that what *Victus* is trying to do is suggest the possibility of establishing an independent Catalan state. Therefore it is merely the Spanish nation-state that is being superseded rather than the idea of nation-states per se. Sánchez Piñol does not want to break the system, just adapt it.

With *Victus*, Sánchez Piñol also provides an interesting case study with regards to the language issues of Catalonia. He had already produced several successful novels in Catalan, when, in 2012, he published *Victus*, a novel about the fall of Barcelona and the subsequent oppression of the Catalans and their national identity at the end of the War of Spanish Succession in 1714. *Victus* is a historical novel which tells these events from a distinctly pro-Catalan point of view. However, it is written not in Catalan – the language of the nation that it celebrates – but in Spanish – the language of the nation, indeed empire, that it frequently denounces. This point is worth reiterating – a successful Catalan-language novelist switched to writing in Spanish to produce a novel about possibly the most evocative moment in Catalan history – a moment that is still commemorated today in Catalonia’s national day.⁴⁹⁸

Writers who change their writing language from Catalan to Spanish are usually heavily criticised, and frequently shunned, by the Catalan literary establishment and media. They are accused of treachery and of mercenary behaviour – there is of course a much wider readership for Spanish books than Catalan texts. Thus any Catalan writer switching to Spanish is likely to be accused of betraying the Catalan tradition for selfish gains. They cannot even argue, as some of those who have always written in Spanish have, that they do not possess sufficient command of the language to write in it,⁴⁹⁹ as their earlier work disproves this.

A similar thing is true in the case of national identity. While Catalan society in the novel is multicultural, inhabitants of Catalonia, no matter what their roots, identify and are identified as Catalan. Their heritage, culture and even language may differ but their chosen identity is Catalan and they are accepted as such (as will be seen, choosing to be Catalan is extremely important in the novel). Moreover, even if they did possess plural identities, this does not undermine the importance of their Catalan identity. As Breen and O’Neill explain “...the pluralization of identity... need not be at the expense of national identity per se. Indeed, it is notable that many of those who stress plural group identities, with the exception of strong cosmopolitans, stop short of rejecting national identity, the nation-state, or even nationalism, properly conceived. Instead, they typically call for the internal transformation of nation-states and a reconceptualization of nationalism along lines that are more inclusive and hospitable to cultural difference.” (Breen and O’Neil, p. 5.) This, I would argue, is the project that *Victus* is promoting – a distinctly Catalan state that is multicultural and inclusive but still a nation-state in its own right. Therefore, I would conclude that *Victus* is not a postnationalist novel.

⁴⁹⁸ The Catalan national day (September 11th) is the anniversary of the fall of Barcelona at the end of the War of Spanish Succession.

⁴⁹⁹ See, for example, the case of Eduardo Mendoza who will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

Kathryn Crameri notes that, compared to many other writers who have made this switch “Sánchez Piñol seems to have got away remarkably unscathed.”⁵⁰⁰ However, an interview with the book’s editor, Isabel Martí, where she defends Sánchez Piñol’s choice, suggests that these issues were raised. The introduction to the article notes that: “El fet d’haver-la escrit en espanyol ha mogut rebombori,”⁵⁰¹ explaining that this is why they are talking to the editor. In the interview Martí fervently defends her author. While admitting that she was extremely surprised when he informed her that he was writing in Spanish and claiming that she does not entirely understand his reasons, she asserts that they will not be those of personal gain: “...si l’Albert ha escrit un llibre sobre el 1714 en castellà, és que les raons no són ni en l’arribisme ni en els interessos. Pot agradar o no, però és equivocacat i injust de buscar raons en la conveniència o en els interessos personals.”⁵⁰² The fact that she felt the need to say this suggests that accusations of self-interest were being made. Sánchez Piñol may not have remained as “unscathed” as first appeared. However it is certainly true that he does not seem to have been vilified in the same way writers like Terenci Moix (who also switched from Catalan to Spanish) were. In Inge Heeringa’s study of the press coverage surrounding the release of *Victus* she finds several articles where the language choice is mentioned and some where it is puzzled over but none that are really condemnatory.⁵⁰³ Crameri suggests:

This could be partly because, as the author himself puts it, ‘It’s not about preaching to the converted: this novel might make Spain aware of facts of which it is ignorant’... Since translations from Catalan to Spanish often fare poorly... writing the novel directly in Spanish might be seen as a legitimate way of reaching a broader audience.⁵⁰⁴

By revealing a Catalan perspective to modern-day Spaniards, *Victus* as a Spanish-language text can be said to be performing something of an ambassadorial role for Catalonia and thus to justify the language of its writing.

⁵⁰⁰ Kathryn Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?* p. 83.

⁵⁰¹ Isabel Martí quoted in Montserrat Serra, ‘Amb “Victus” l’Albert Sánchez Piñol ens ha incomodat’, *Vilaweb*, 25 September 2012 < <https://www.vilaweb.cat/noticia/4042483/20120925/victus-lalbert-sanchez-pinol-ens-incomodat.html>> [Accessed 28 December 2019]. “The fact that it has been written in Spanish has created a fuss.”

⁵⁰² *Ibid.* “...if Albert has written a book about 1714 in Spanish then it is not for reasons of advancement or financial gain. One can like it or not, but to look for reasons of personal interest or gain is wrong and unjust.”

⁵⁰³ Inge Heeringa, *Política, Prensa, Piñol: Un Análisis Discursivo del Catalanismo en el Lanzamiento y la Recepción de Victus*, Unpublished Bachelor thesis, Radboud University, 2015-6.

⁵⁰⁴ Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?* p. 83.

Of course this broader audience need not be limited to Spain. *Victus* could be seen as presenting Catalonia's historic struggles to the wider world. The author stated that international readers would read the novel "desde la perspectiva histórica del bando catalán."⁵⁰⁵ Thus *Victus* can be seen as addressing a global audience and trying to counter the more dominant Spanish perspective by establishing the Catalans as a distinct people, separate from the rest of Spain and even, perhaps, a people who deserve a state of their own where they can be free from the oppression they have suffered in the past.⁵⁰⁶ *Victus* may be a historical novel but it can also be seen as highly relevant to the current day political situation. While admitting that both Catalan and Spanish nationalists have created 'lies,' Sánchez Piñol argues that the Spanish ones are very large and that consequently they should be refuted.⁵⁰⁷ *Victus* could be considered also then as an attempt to perform the function that San Juan describes as 'speaking truth to power' – that is recounting the sufferings of the oppressed to their oppressor, and a wider audience, in a search for justice and/or dialogue. This concept will be explored further in the next chapter focusing on the work of R. S. Thomas. I will argue though that Sánchez Piñol's primary audience is Catalan, although not necessarily Catalan-speaking.

While Catalan is widely spoken in Catalonia, it is not universal. At the same time as "making Spain aware,"⁵⁰⁸ of certain facts therefore, *Victus* brings the heroism of the 1714 resistance to non-Catalan-speaking Catalans. In an interview given just after the publication of the book, Sánchez Piñol pointed out that: "La manifestació de l'11 de setembre estava plena de gent que parlava castellà."⁵⁰⁹ This tallies with his work for Súmate – the organisation that campaigns for Catalan independence through the medium of Spanish. He would thus seem to be committed to spreading Catalan ideals in Spanish as well as Catalan.

Despite these possibilities, Sánchez Piñol himself seems somewhat uncertain as to why he wrote *Victus* in Spanish, saying: "I don't have an answer as to why I wrote it in Spanish, the creative process can involve irrational factors [...]. I wrote a hundred pages in Catalan but it wasn't working; when I came

⁵⁰⁵ Albert Sánchez Piñol quoted in Heeringa, p. 19. "...from the historical perspective of the Catalan side."

⁵⁰⁶ If this is the case then *Victus* earned at least one convert as one of the book's early readers, French editor Alzira Martins claimed that it had completely changed her view of Barcelona. Heeringa, p. 17.

⁵⁰⁷ Sánchez Piñol quoted in Heeringa, p. 22.

⁵⁰⁸ Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?* p. 83.

⁵⁰⁹ Sánchez Piñol in Valèria Gaillard, 'Estic molt fart del conflicte amb Espanya', *El Punt Avui*, 10 October 2012 <<http://www.elpuntavui.cat/article/5-cultura/19-cultura/583101-estic-molt-fart-del-conflicte-amb-espanya.html>> [Accessed 25 January 2020]. "The demonstration on September 11th was full of Spanish speakers." Sánchez Piñol is presumably speaking about the demonstration that year (2012) though this is not made clear.

back to it in Spanish, the story flowed.”⁵¹⁰ Clearly, there is more to it than simply a desire to inform the Spanish of historical atrocities committed by their ancestors, or to inform Spanish-speaking Catalans, even if the author cannot say exactly what. However, as with other works discussed in this thesis, I will argue that *Victus* can still be seen as a highly effective resistance text, despite being written in Spanish.

The areas of resistance literature that will be discussed in this chapter are: the recovery of a lost past and with it the production of an alternative history, focus on the common people as the agents of resistance, the valuing of national customs, the use of binarism in defining Catalonia and Castille and the speaking of truth to power. I will also seek to read the text in its material and historical circumstances of production, as advocated by resistance theorists. Written in 2012 when the independence movement in Catalonia was gathering force and two years before the first attempted referendum in the tricentennial year of the fall of Barcelona in 2014, *Victus*, I will argue, was created not just in the context of that independence movement, but as a part of it. It seeks to mobilise the Catalan people to work for independence and is consequently a resistance text in Harlow’s original sense. It therefore has two aims: to recover the Catalan side of a history told normally by Spain and to inspire support for independence.

If, as has already been discussed, Sánchez Piñol is writing to educate – to inform the Catalan people of their heroic past and the Spanish people of past injustices and atrocities committed by their state - then *Victus* is clearly an alternative history, one that resists the established Castilian Spanish order by showing all of Spain’s inhabitants a different version of historical events. As we have seen in the previous chapter, recovering the lost history of a people and producing an alternative narrative to that of the dominant culture is a vital part of resistance to hegemony. Due to the varying possibilities and limitations inherent in the different forms, a novel will do this in different ways to Webb’s articles and poems. However, many similarities with Webb’s work can be found in *Victus*, with Sánchez Piñol hinting at or illustrating the claims that Webb makes outright.

A historical novel would seem to be an ideal way of producing an alternative history. Firstly, the novel is a popular form and is likely to be widely read. In addition to its other features, *Victus* is a very readable text with an engrossing narrative and interesting characters. The fact that it has been translated into thirty seven different languages and has sold millions of copies worldwide reveals its popularity. Secondly, a well-written novel does not appear didactic in the way that polemical journalism can and so is more likely to find a receptive audience. Thirdly, an extended novel like *Victus* provides ample

⁵¹⁰ Sánchez Piñol quoted in Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?* p. 83.

space for examining and deconstructing official historical narratives. Considering the difference between resistance poetry and resistance narratives, Harlow explains:

Narrative... provides a more developed historical analysis of the circumstances of economic, political, and cultural domination and repression and through that analysis raises a systematic and concerted challenge to the imposed chronology of what Frederic Jameson has called “master narratives,” ideological paradigms which contain within their plots a pre-determined ending....⁵¹¹

In telling the Catalan side of the struggle and highlighting the oppression visited upon Catalonia, *Victus* begins the process of examining and challenging the uneven power relationships between the two nations. Sánchez Piñol showed himself to be aware of the imbalances and the variety of ways in which they may appear when he commented “[e]n el 1714 nos machacaron físicamente. En el 2014, simbólicamente. Pero en el fondo es lo mismo. Lo que quiero decir es que hoy en día, y en la Europa occidental, la violencia del poder se ejerce por otros medios, pero en última instancia el objetivo es el mismo.”⁵¹² *Victus* provides an alternative Catalan history to the dominant narrative, recounting a fierce and proud resistance against overwhelming odds – one that has inspired the Catalan people ever since. Sánchez Piñol himself stresses the importance of that moment in history to the survival of Catalan identity: “What is clear about the book is that we Catalans have survived until today thanks to the symbolic value of the resistance to the siege of 1714, because it involved a behaviour that brought out all the *rauxa* of the people.”⁵¹³ Alternative histories by their very nature resist the taught and established historical tradition and give very different versions of events. By producing a Catalan version of the events of 1714, Sánchez Piñol resists the Spanish hegemony that seeks to control the official narratives of history and attempts to educate others in what he sees as the reality of the historical events.

Harlow also argues that resistance narratives are capable of “exposing these structures, even, eventually, of realigning them, of redressing the imbalance,”⁵¹⁴ and that they “seek different historical

⁵¹¹ Harlow, pp. 78-9.

⁵¹² Sánchez Piñol, quoted in Heeringe, p. 17. “...in 1714 they crushed us physically. In 2014, symbolically. But in the end it’s the same. What I mean is that today, in Western Europe, the violence of power can be exercised through other means, but in the end the objective is the same.”

⁵¹³ Sánchez Piñol, quoted in Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?*, p. 87. *Rauxa* is one of the two opposing characteristics believed to be part of the Catalan make-up, the other being *seny* – common sense. Crameri defines *rauxa* as, “impulsive behaviour,” and notes that it is linked with the more creative part of the Catalan character. Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?*, p. 82.

⁵¹⁴ Harlow, p. 85.

endings.”⁵¹⁵ These ideas fit well with Kathryn Crameri’s argument that *Victus* is an attempt to speak, subtly, of a Catalan state to its twenty-first century audience. Crameri summarises the argument in this way, quoting Jaume Vicens Vives who has suggested that Catalans are reluctant to claim a state because, never having had one, they have never learned how to handle the power that comes with a state and thus consider it an “alien phenomenon.”⁵¹⁶ Indeed, not having a state with all the power that entails is one of the ways they have differentiated themselves from the Spanish.⁵¹⁷ For Crameri one of the biggest questions regarding the growing support for independence is: have Catalans now accepted the idea of a Catalan state rather than simply supporting independence to oppose the Spanish state? Or, as she puts it, “does the rhetoric of the ‘right to decide’ actually conceal the same lack of commitment to the idea of the state that Vicens Vives identified as a constant characteristic of the Catalan nation?”⁵¹⁸ Crameri claims that, while the Catalans did not participate in the War of Spanish Succession in order to obtain a state, *Victus* is nevertheless hinting at the possibility of a Catalan state. Using Max Weber’s definition of the state as the sole legitimate wielder of force, she claims that the gradual channelling of the violent actions of individuals like the protagonist Martí Zuviría and the bandit-like guerrilla Miquelets into the service of a collective suggests preparation for the formation of a state: “Both novels [she discusses *Victus* alongside the Catalan-language text *Lliures o morts* published just a few weeks before Sánchez Piñol’s novel] narrate a process by which individual violence becomes channelled into the service of society, as if in preparation for creating the state that never was.”⁵¹⁹ Crameri also argues that General Villarroel’s last command to the protagonist, “Dese,”⁵²⁰ “...suggests a subjugation of the individual to the greater good, giving Martí’s eventual willing sacrifice the necessary hallmarks of heroism in the service of both the nation that must die and the nation-state to come.”⁵²¹ If *Victus* can be seen as speaking, however subtly, of a Catalan state then it is certainly seeking a “different historical ending,”⁵²² and one that has crucial overtones for the present day. Rather than continue to be subjugated by Castile/Spain, the Catalans can win independence and form their own state. The chance that was lost with the defeat of 1714 has returned and can now be taken. In an interview Sánchez Piñol appeared to support this interpretation saying: “1714 is the great

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., p. 85.

⁵¹⁶ Jaume Vicens Vives quoted in Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?*, p. 89.

⁵¹⁷ Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?*, p. 89.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., p. 89.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., p. 90.

⁵²⁰ Albert Sánchez Piñol, *Victus* (Barcelona: Ediciones La Campana, 2012) p. 589. “You must give your whole self.” Albert Sánchez Piñol, *Victus*, trans. by Thomas Bunstead and Daniel Hahn, (New York: HarperCollins, 2014) p. 530. All translations are from this version.

⁵²¹ Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?*, p. 90.

⁵²² Harlow, p. 85.

turning point in the narrative of the history of Catalonia... now, precisely, we are about to arrive at the second turning point in the narrative [...] and I hope it turns out well this time.”⁵²³ Consequently, *Victus* can be seen as a subtle but highly radical resistance text. By speaking of a Catalan state, however indirectly, it is aligning itself with the independence movement and committing what many Spaniards would see as treason. It is thus a text of the independence movement – one that seeks to encourage its Catalan readers to join that movement.

Before beginning a closer examination of the text, I will summarise the plot. *Victus*' protagonist is the young Catalan Martí Zuviría, the son of a wealthy citizen of Barcelona. Zuviría was a real historical character about whom little is known. In accounts of the war he is described as an aide-de-campe to the leader of the Catalan forces defending Barcelona, Antonio de Villarroel, and he escaped to Vienna after the fall of Barcelona.⁵²⁴ The novel is formed by the elderly Zuviría dictating his memories of the War of Spanish Succession to a local scribe.

The young Zuviría is sent by his father to study in France. Having been expelled from school he does not dare return to his father, instead making his way to Bazoches to study military engineering under the French royal engineer, Vauban. Despite a shaky start he becomes a talented pupil and adores Vauban. He is devastated when his master sickens and on his deathbed sets Martí a final test – asking him to sum up the optimum defence of a fortress in one word – which he is unable to pass. Martí spends the rest of the novel searching for this word.

A friend of the Vauban family offers him a commission in the French king's army and this leads him to fight in support of the French Philip's claim to the throne, against the majority of his fellow Catalans. He is disturbed by the effects the horrors of the war have on the Catalan countryside and people but continues to regard his role as that of a paid professional. He does do an occasional good deed – sheltering a girl named Amelis from rape and attempting to protect Anfán and Nan – the strange pair of orphaned child and dwarf who run wild in his trench. He finally leaves the army and returns to Barcelona to discover that his father has died and relatives have taken over his house. He is forced to live with Peret his father's old servant and is soon joined there by Anfán, Nan and Amelis. Gradually the unlikely group becomes a family.

⁵²³ Sánchez Piñol, quoted in Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?*, p. 90.

⁵²⁴ Sánchez Piñol gives this information in the Historical Notes provided at the back of *Victus*. *Victus*, p. 605.

Martí leaves Barcelona briefly to fight, now on the side of the Austrian Charles (the other contender for the Spanish throne). He enters Madrid with the Austrian army where he encounters General Antonio de Villarroel, the Castilian who is to become his mentor and who will later lead the forces defending Barcelona. Though unimpressed with Martí's cowardice and self-interest, Villarroel in a way adopts him, pushing and challenging him in order to develop his character. Martí comes to see Villarroel as almost a replacement for Vauban and hopes Villarroel may be able to teach him the answer he so desperately seeks. On the way back to Barcelona, Villarroel is captured when he refuses to leave his injured men but, seeing Martí's fear gives him an honourable way out, by sending him ahead with a message. Later Villarroel is released and arrives in Barcelona where he is employed by the Generalitat to lead the defence of the city. Martí offers his services which Villarroel initially turns down, but Martí insists on being allowed to defend his home and seeing this change of attitude Villarroel relents. The rest of the novel recounts the preparations for the siege and the siege itself, focusing on the collective heroism and resistance of the people of Barcelona and Martí's growing understanding of why people are fighting, as his bond with his adopted family deepens. The novel ends on September 11th, the day of the fall of Barcelona, when Martí loses his entire adopted family and is gravely injured in the last assault, but finally realises what the word is and what he has to do in defence of his city – "dese."⁵²⁵ The closing sentence is one of hope and defiance "...que cuanto más oscuro sea nuestro crepúsculo más dichoso sera el amanecer de los que están por venir."⁵²⁶ The significance of this will be discussed in more detail shortly.

As may be gleaned from the above summary, Martí is something of an antihero. He is far removed from the archetypal image of the hero, being self-interested and cowardly. He appears to have little feeling for either Barcelona his home city or Catalonia his nation. Although he always refers to himself as a Catalan, he is ready to make jokes and disparaging remarks about his countrymen. After the death of his mentor Vauban he enlists in the Bourbon army and fights against his fellow Catalans. He is distressed by the ravages of war he sees in parts of the country but has no desire to switch sides; indeed as Crameri points out: "Martí spends most of his time trying to avoid the fighting and have an easy life..."⁵²⁷ though of course he does not succeed. He seems happy to place his own good above that of others and of his nation. He does do a few good deeds and thus is not completely immoral. But even by ordinary standards he could not be regarded as a particularly moral person and certainly he is no great

⁵²⁵ Sánchez Piñol, p. 589. "You must give your whole self." p. 530.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., p. 591. "...the darker our twilight hours, the more blessed will be the dawn of those who will come after us." p. 532

⁵²⁷ Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?* pp. 84-5.

and noble hero. So why does *Victus*, an apparently revolutionary pro-Catalan text, have such a figure as its protagonist? Surely it would be more appropriate to have a noble figure to represent the nation?

I would argue however that the nature of the protagonist is an effective choice by Sánchez Piñol; one that, far from adversely effecting *Victus*' project as a text of Catalan resistance, actually enhances it. Martí is an everyman character, far easier for the majority of readers to identify with than an archetypal hero. Martí's development, from self-interested coward to reluctant but still valiant defender of Barcelona, will resonate far more easily in their hearts than the heroic actions of some remote, noble knight errant figure who has never been anything other than perfect. In addition to the normal literary benefits of having an identifiable protagonist, this inspires the book's Catalan readers, who might otherwise not have believed it possible that they too, if called upon, could rise to the occasion and fight for their nation. *Victus* is in many ways the story of how ordinary people are inspired and driven to do such things. In this way it suggests that most people in their circumstances could and would do such things if forced to. Anyone can and will sacrifice for their country. Special qualities are not required – merely a love of one's country, family and home.

Martí's development also shows how such sentiments are formed (in addition to being an historical novel, there is a strong element of bildungsroman in *Victus*). Rather than always being a devoted patriot, Martí's feelings grow slowly and develop largely through personal experience, as he comes to realise what his nation and people mean to him. These feelings are mediated, to a great extent, through his adopted family. This undermines the idea of a blind or irrational devotion, showing it rather to be a natural and understandable emotion – one that most people feel even if they do not realise it except in times of great stress. This in turn refutes the claims that Catalan nationalism is irrational or extreme, showing it rather to be both natural and reasonable.

Moreover, even when Martí seems careless of his home in the early part of the novel, there are hints that this is not completely the case. When he discovers a model of Barcelona among Vauban's collection of model cities he gets an unpleasant sensation:

Me detuve en seco. Un escalofrío. Tragué saliva: yo conocía esos perfiles.

Por primera vez desde que había ingresado en Bazoches tuve un presentimiento funesto. Porque en Bazoches todo se regía por la utilidad, y si esos diseños estaban ahí era porque quizás, algún

día, podrían emplearse para concebir un asalto. Abrí los ojos, mire aquella última *maquette*. Era Barcelona.⁵²⁸

This passage acts both as a foreshadowing – in a few short years Barcelona will be besieged – and to show that Martí is not as emotionally removed from the city of his birth as he would like to think. It is perhaps the first time that he realises that his work at Bazoches is not purely academic – it will have practical and potentially devastating consequences for people, and that his beloved mentor Vauban would not hesitate to lay siege to Barcelona if his king ordered it. Seeing his home as a potential target profoundly affects Martí, if only for a moment.

Later in the novel, when Martí returns to Barcelona, he appears, although pleased to be home, to be fairly neutral in his attitude towards the city, describing both its good and bad aspects, although he does compare it favourably with Castile. However he is profoundly affected by an encounter with a procession carrying the flag of Santa Eulalia, the most precious and sacred relic of Barcelona:

...y cuando se cruzó conmigo fue como si me preguntara algo con los ojos.

Martí Zuviría no hablaba con banderas, por supuesto, pero la sensación de encontrarme con una criatura de otro mundo, aunque tan real como un viejo amigo, fue tan vívida que me quedé allí, de pie y con la boca abierta. Y bueno, supongo que ahora se estarán preguntando lo mismo que mi pesada y horrenda Waltraud: <<¿Y qué te preguntó la chica violeta?>>. Pues se lo diré: no empleó palabras, del mismo modo que una doncella no las necesita para pedir que la protejan.⁵²⁹

This passage reveals a hitherto mostly hidden side of Martí – a latent sense of chivalry and an attachment to the symbols of his city. Even at this point, when much of his growth as a character lies ahead, he cannot deny his feelings for his city and, by extension, his nation. Later these growing

⁵²⁸ Sánchez Piñol, *Victus*. pp. 79-80. "I pulled up. A shudder. I gulped. I knew those outlines. For the first time in Bazoches, I was touched by a baleful presentiment. For every single thing at Bazoches was dictated by its usefulness, and if these designs were there, it was because one day, perhaps, they could be used to plan an assault. Opening my eyes, I looked upon this last *maquette*. It was Barcelona." p. 61.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 204. "...and when it passed, those saintly eyes seemed to be asking me something. Martí Zuviría did not talk to flags, of course, but the sensation of an encounter with a creature from another world, albeit as real as an old friend, was so vivid that I simply stood there, agog. And, well, I suppose you must now be asking the same question as my heavy, vile Waltraud: "So what did the violet girl ask you?" I'll tell you, then: She didn't use words; a damsel, when asking your protection, has no need of words." p. 174.

feelings will culminate in his desperate defence of the city and the people he loves. These feelings may strike a chord with Catalan readers and lead them to consider what their nation means to them.

Therefore I would argue that the use of Martí as the protagonist of *Victus* is in fact extremely effective as regards the text's role as a work of resistance. He stands for the ordinary people of Catalonia showing how each of them, however flawed, can be inspired to fight and die for the common good of the nation. This is of great relevance today with the independence movement needing to mobilise the Catalan people. They may not have to physically fight to keep the enemy out, but the independence movement is still a struggle and requires people to support it and work for it, even to suffer for it. At the time of writing (seven years after the publication of the novel) some Catalans have been imprisoned for organising demonstrations in favour of independence. Several were injured on the day of the referendum as they fought their way to the polling stations, insisting on their right to vote. Martí's story is an inspiration to modern day Catalans, showing that even those who believe themselves to be cowardly can find it in themselves to fight.

Another aspect of the novel that might seem curious in a resistance text is its focus on defeat; indeed it seems almost to celebrate defeat. It recounts the tale of a great military loss. Though the final defeat happens only at the end of the novel, much of what goes before foreshadows or even openly refers to it. Moreover, as it describes a real historical event, readers know how this story must end for the Catalans; that their heroic resistance must prove ultimately futile. The very title of the book, 'Victus,' means defeated or vanquished in Latin. This focus on defeat seems a strange choice for a resistance text.

Sánchez Piñol himself acknowledged this in an interview but explained: "Molt sovint entre els catalans ens recriminem que la nostra Diada Nacional sigui una derrota, però en realitat commemorem que un poble en armes es va alçar contra un tirà que volia exterminar les seves llibertats. No es van rendir, podrien haver-ho fet."⁵³⁰ As with Webb's historic figures examined in the previous chapter, the important thing about the resistance in *Victus* is not that it was defeated but that it existed in the first place. Through their heroic struggles the Catalan people of 1714 have inspired their descendants and made it possible for Catalan resistance to continue to the present day, albeit in different forms. In the same interview Sánchez Piñol stated that "si avui dia existeix alguna cosa semblant a la catalanitat, és

⁵³⁰ Sánchez Piñol quoted in Gaillard. "We Catalans often rebuke each other because our national day celebrates a defeat, but really we are commemorating that a people took arms and rose up against a tyrant that wanted to eradicate their freedoms. They did not surrender although they could have done so."

pel sacrifici d'aquella gent,"⁵³¹ while elsewhere he claimed "sense la resistència al setge de 1714 els catalans no existiríem."⁵³² This belief is clearly demonstrated in the novel's closing words that have already been quoted. Though the current resistance has failed and dark times are coming upon the nation, brighter times will come as a result of those sufferings. The spirit of this line carries echoes of Webb's declaration: "You are needed for it [the struggle for Welsh independence]!" though Sánchez Piñol's words are a less active and more metaphorical call to arms. The brighter dawn is written as merely happening rather than being brought about by the Catalan people but if *Victus* is read as a nationalist text, the implicit 'call to arms' is clear. The means of fighting may have changed but not the need for every citizen to act on behalf of Catalonia. Defeat, therefore, is unimportant, what matters, as in Webb's work, is the fact that resistance took place.

I will now go on to discuss other elements of the novel that highlight its status as a resistance text. The first section will focus on how the author presents Catalonia as a separate nation and the use it makes of traditional Catalan customs. The next will show how Catalonia is not merely different but opposed to Castille – the author portrays the type of binarism that During noted was rejected by orthodox postcolonial studies.⁵³³ It will also argue that the text is attempting to present eighteenth-century Catalonia as an open and accepting society with a civic rather than ethnic based nationalism which has important connotations for modern-day Catalonia. I will then move on to discuss the text's portrayal of the oppression the Catalan people suffered and argue that this is part of Sánchez Piñol's attempts both to produce an alternative history and to speak truth to power. The final section will focus on the popular nature of the Catalan resistance.

⁵³¹ Ibid. "If there exists today anything that resembles a Catalan identity then it is because of the sacrifice those people made."

⁵³² Sánchez Piñol quoted in Heeringe, p. 16. "...without the resistance of the siege of 1714 we Catalans would not exist."

⁵³³ During, quoted in Parry, 'The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies', p. 76. See the thesis introduction for the full quotation.

Catalonia as a separate nation

At the time of the War of Spanish Succession the crowns of Castile and Aragon (which included Catalonia) had been united for over two hundred years, though they continued to operate independently, pursuing their own policies and maintaining their own economies, until the end of the sixteenth century. Thus, during the period depicted in *Victus* the majority of people inside and outside of Spain would have considered Catalonia as part of Spain, and, consequently, Catalans fighting against the Castilian-backed candidate to the throne, particularly after the Treaty of Utrecht had supposedly ended the war and placed Philip on the throne, would be seen as rebels. Indeed, at one point reference is made to a Castilian document that describes the Catalans as “rebels”.⁵³⁴ However, *Victus* represents them as fighting in defence of their nation and their traditional rights and freedoms, as opposed to rebels against their rightful ruler, and one of the ways in which it does this is by inserting particular Catalan customs into the text and showing their importance to the Catalan people. Traditional customs are important to resistance theorists, in particular because they emphasise united national resistance by focusing on the nation people, an aspect of *Victus* that will be discussed later. Moreover, Harlow when discussing the work of a Kenyan historian who edited and translated a collection of songs from the Mau Mau movement, claimed that the aim of the work was “...to let them answer the anti-Mau Mau Kenyan intellectuals and their imperialist masters who, until now, continue to deny the Movement’s national character.”⁵³⁵ It could be argued that Sánchez Piñol is doing the same thing here – using Catalonia’s customs to validate the national character of the region to those who would deny it. In doing so it defies Spanish hegemony and attempts to speak truth to power.

One of the most important of the Catalan traditions mentioned in the novel is its Parliament. This comes to prominence in the scenes dealing with the debate surrounding the decision as to whether to surrender or to continue to resist. These debates are held in front of spectators watching and heckling, though only actual members of the Parliament can vote. However, the spectators can sway the actions of the Parliament, as in the scene where Martí has an accidental role in tipping the balance towards resistance. His demands for personal justice are interpreted as demands for justice for Catalonia. The spectators rise up in support of him, demanding that Parliament publish the *Crida* – the Catalan call to arms – and ultimately Parliament is forced to accede to their request. This is an example of democracy in action – the government being swayed by the will of the people, and democracy is very important to

⁵³⁴ Ibid., p. 257.

⁵³⁵ Harlow, pp. 34-5.

Catalan ideas about their nation. It is important to note that the Parliament is not idealised in *Victus*. There is corruption within its ranks – Peret is paid by one member to support his opinions from the floor. But it is at least a fledgling democracy – representatives of the people decide together what should be done rather than follow the orders of a king. Thus, Catalonia is established as a traditionally democratic nation; this both differentiates it from Castile and suggests the possibility of a modern day Catalan state that would be equally democratic.

Many of the Catalan traditions described in *Victus* are in some way related to the military and defence. Even those that were not so originally like the *masía* – the traditional Catalan farm house – have become so. Martí's explains that these houses "...eran fortalezas en miniatura que cuidaban, y mucho, el aspecto defensivo."⁵³⁶ This suggests a people frequently under attack, but also capable of defending itself and fighting back.⁵³⁷ Indeed Martí and his companions do set up to defend themselves against a band of the guerrilla Miquelet fighters, though in the end they are not attacked. This seemingly trivial description of the farm houses can be seen to reveal quite a lot about Catalonia and the Catalans of the time. They also carry an echo of Webb's depictions of the Welsh constantly resisting English dominance. Here is one example of the Catalan novelist illustrating what the Welsh journalist states – Catalonia and Wales have had to struggle constantly for their existence.

More central to the novel and more definitely martial however is the *Crida*. The *Crida* is, as Martí explains,

...la llamada legal a las armas. Solo la *Crida* tenía el sacrosanto poder de convocar a los catalanes adultos para la defensa de la patria, y al mismo tiempo quien se alzara sin su sostén se veía reducido a la condición de miquelete; es decir, un fuera de la ley, por muy patrióticas que fueran sus intenciones.⁵³⁸

Interestingly this can be linked to Weber's definition of the state as the sole legitimate wielder of violence. Here, the Catalan Parliament must publish the *Crida* in order for violence to be legal – the

⁵³⁶ Ibid., p. 223. "...were miniature fortresses that took care – great care – of an area's defences." p. 191.

⁵³⁷ J. H. Elliott notes that, "...the *masía* is the 'typical' Catalan house, the one that has most helped to shape the pattern of Catalan life over the centuries," and that: "Built of stone, it served originally as a stronghold as well as a farmstead." John Huxtable Elliot, *The Revolt of the Catalans: A Study in the Decline of Spain, 1598-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 30.

⁵³⁸ Sánchez Piñol, *Victus*, p. 314. "...the legal call to arms. Only the *Crida* had the sacrosanct power to call up Catalan adults in defense of the country, and anyone who rose up without its support found himself reduced to a Miquelet – that is, an outlaw, however patriotic his intentions may have been." p. 276.

control of legitimised violence is in the hands of the Generalitat. Following Weber's theory this would suggest that they were the government of a state not just a province and so this can be seen as another of Sánchez Piñol's attempts to speak subtly of a Catalan state.

The Crida is crucial in other ways. The debates in Parliament about whether to submit or resist focus on its publishing or otherwise. People waiting outside the Parliament call for it. And when the Parliament tips in favour of resisting, a nobleman demands that the Crida is written out and published on the spot. The Crida is clearly important as a Catalan right and this parallels Webb's argument, discussed in the previous chapter, that a nation must have the right to defend itself. However it seems to go beyond that – it becomes an almost sacred object. The man who carries the paper on which it is written is borne out shoulder high into the street and cheered. Even the cowardly and cynical Martí is moved by the language of the Crida:

De la *Crida* recuerdo que solo contenía dos frases. La primera de ellas, a mi entender, la más pulcra, límpida y hermosa jamás escrita en lengua catalana.

*Havent los Braços Generals, lo die 6 del corrent mes aconsellat a est consistori resolués defensar les Llibertats, Privilegis y Prerogativas dels Catalans, que nostres Antecessors à costa de sa sanch gloriosament alcansaren, lo die 9 del corrent manarem fer la Crida pública per nostra defensa.*⁵³⁹

Through its links to the past, to the rights of the Catalan people and through the very language in which it is written, this short act expresses the will of a nation to fight and to continue as a nation.

The Catalan language itself is probably the most important Catalan tradition and this makes repeated appearances in the book. At one point Martí is reading a book in order to fill in the gaps in his Spanish.⁵⁴⁰ This is a stark reminder that despite the fact that the text recounts his words in Spanish, that is not his native language. Despite speaking French, Latin and possibly other languages in addition to his native Catalan, Martí does not have complete command of the language of the kingdom in which he supposedly lives. To some Spaniards this might seem both inconceivable and disgraceful. This fact

⁵³⁹ Ibid., p. 324. "I remember there were just two sentences. The first of them, to my mind, being the most exquisite, limpid, and beautiful yet written in the Catalan language. Having on this sixth day of the present month advised this city council to resolve to defend the Liberties, Privileges and Prerogatives of the Catalan people, which our ancestors gloriously achieved at the cost of their own blood, we shall on the ninth day of the present month make order of the public proclamation for our defence." pp. 286-7.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 238.

establishes Catalonia as a nation in its own right that has its own language – a nation where knowledge of Spanish is secondary and, for many people, unnecessary.

The language can also be used to mark Catalonia's difference in the presence of representatives of other nations, and even allow for subterfuge, which gives the language and nation a sense of not being easily penetrated or understood. When the Bourbon forces take the village of Beceite they need Martí to translate for the captured prisoner they want to interrogate, which allows Martí to try to help the prisoner, suggesting he give false information in order to prolong his life. The language is a barrier that the foreigners cannot cross and thus both marks Catalan difference and provides them with a means to resist the dominant power.

So, *Victus* constructs Catalonia as a nation in its own right by introducing certain traditions that make it different and that affirm Catalan national identity. In this way Castilian violence in Catalonia is shown as that of one country upon another rather than that of a government justly putting down a rebellion. It affirms the national character of the resistance it recounts and subtly argues in favour of a Catalan state.

Catalonia versus Castile

Catalonia is not constructed merely as a separate nation to Castile however. From near the beginning of the novel, Catalonia and Castile are set up as complete opposites, both very different to one another, and frequently clashing and confronting one another. In doing this, Sánchez Piñol is displaying the “binarism,” that Daring claimed was rejected by orthodox postcolonial theory, and revealing that encounters between the two nations were very much ‘antagonistic’ rather than ‘agonistic’.⁵⁴¹ This is not uncommon in Catalan writing. Crameri notes that while historical preoccupation is current in much of Spain, there is another dimension to it within Catalonia – the “attempts to demonstrate Catalonia's historical differences from the rest of Spain, to protest against historical injustices and the way in which these have been glossed over, and to legitimise discourses of sovereignty and/or secession.”⁵⁴² This is certainly the case in *Victus* where Catalonia is depicted as a nation in its own right, with laws, rights and traditions of its own. Castile is seen as a foreign land, as demonstrated by a reference to the survivors of a defeated town being “deportados a Castilla.”⁵⁴³ The word deported definitely implies

⁵⁴¹ See the discussion of Daring's claims and Benita Parry's work in the thesis introduction.

⁵⁴² Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?*, p. 73.

⁵⁴³ Sánchez Piñol, *Victus*, p. 146. “deported to Castile.” p. 120.

removal to a foreign land, one alien to the deportee, rather than movement within the same land. Thus, this short phrase reveals that the narrator thinks of Castile as another country. Castile and Aragon (including Catalonia) may have been officially united for over two hundred years but it is clear that many in Catalonia do not feel part of the same land as Castile.

This is stated outright during Martí's summary of the war: "Cataluña y Castilla eran dos mentalidades opuestas."⁵⁴⁴ Consequently they are not merely separate and different, but at war.⁵⁴⁵ This reality, though, is not understood by outsiders:

Siempre igual, los generales extranjeros parecían incapaces de entender nada de nada. No querían darse cuenta de que Castilla y Cataluña estaban en guerra exactamente del mismo modo que Francia e Inglaterra; que España era un nombre bajo [sic] el que se ocultaba una realidad que se apoderaba de la política, el comercio y, si me lo permiten, hasta del sentido común. Un campo de batalla entre dos formas opuestas de entender el mundo, la vida, el todo...

Los ingleses podrían llegar a admitir a una dinastía francesa reinando en Londres, o los franceses a una dinastía inglesa en París. Pero los madrileños jamás tolerarían al Karlangas como rey, jamás, y no porque fuera un rey austriaco, sino porque era el rey de los catalanes.⁵⁴⁶

This passage does several things. Firstly, by comparing the situation between Catalonia and Castile to that between England and France, the narrator is placing all the nations mentioned on the same level,

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 126. "Catalonia and Castille had opposed mentalities." p. 101.

⁵⁴⁵ Interestingly Heeringa has noted in her study of the articles about *Victus* in the Catalan newspapers, that many of these articles also present the Catalan dimension of the War of Succession as a battle between Castile/Spain and Catalonia. This includes articles that followed the announcement of the book but preceded publication, so it suggests that Sánchez Piñol is reflecting common feeling within Catalonia in his presentation of Castile and Catalonia as being at loggerheads. He underlined his personal view in an interview, stating that in the War of Succession, "...que enfrontava dos bàndols totalment irreconciliables: el dels castellans, que tenien una visió del rei gairebé divina, i la dels catalans, que tenien un estil anglès parlamentari." Sánchez Piñol, quoted in Gaillard. "...two completely irreconcilable groups confronted each other: the Castilians who had an idea of the king as almost divine, and the Catalans, who had an English parliamentary style."

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 255-6. "They're all the same, these foreign generals, they never get it. They didn't want to acknowledge that Castile and Catalonia were at war in just the same way as France and England; that Spain was a name that hid a reality more powerful than politics, trade, and even, if I may say so, common sense. A pitched battle between two opposing ways of understanding the world, life, everything.... The English might come to accept a French dynasty reigning in London, or the French an English dynasty in Paris. The Madrileños would never put up with Charles as their king, never, and not because he was Austrian but because he was king of the Catalans." p. 222.

implying Catalonia and Castile are separate nations in the same way that England and France are. However, as he goes on to explain, they are grouped together in the minds of foreigners under the heading of the umbrella term ‘Spain’. This could perhaps be directed not just at eighteenth-century foreigners but also at certain inhabitants of twenty-first century Spain who consider Castilian/Spanish the country’s sole and natural culture and mode of expression, and are either unaware of or choose to ignore the existence of different nationalities and cultures within the borders of the state.

Secondly, the passage shows that the war between Catalonia and Castile is more than just a matter of supporting rival candidates for the throne. The two peoples look at everything very differently even though it may at times seem illogical. Some of these differences as represented in the novel will be discussed shortly.

Finally, the passage stresses the depth of feeling surrounding these differences and their apparently irreconcilable nature. By saying that the English were more likely to accept French rulers and vice versa, which though it had happened in the past would have been unpopular at the time, it shows just how fierce the mutual hatred of Catalonia and Castile was. This is also emphasised by the repetition of “jamás,” (never) reinforcing not just the strength of the feeling but the unlikelihood of it ending. Catalonia and Castile are two different kingdoms and two different ways of life and therefore it is not surprising that they support different candidates to the throne of Spain.

I now want to examine how the novel presents some aspects of these different ways of life. At the beginning of the second part of the novel the protagonist returns to Barcelona and describes it, ostensibly for the benefit of readers who do not know the city. This description however is full of comparisons with Castile. Firstly, the narrator comments on the number of families of foreign origin in Barcelona:

Venían, se quedaban y sus orígenes se fundían en la multitud. El día que decidían instalarse catalanizaban sus apellidos, para disumular, así que uno no podía saber si su cuna estaba en Italia, Francia, Castilla u otros sitios mucho más exóticos. Por lo demás, y a diferencia de la obsesión castellana por la sangre limpia de morerías y judeidades, a los catalanes les importa un rábano el origen de sus vecinos. Si tenían dinero para gastar, eran más o menos simpáticos y

no jodían con tonterías religiosas, nadie importunaba a los recién llegados. Ese ambiente, tan pasivamente receptivo, hacía que las gentes se metamorfosearan en menos de una generación.⁵⁴⁷

This is an important passage, particularly in the light of Crameri's claims that the novel speaks indirectly of a Catalan state – one that would be inclusive and based on a civic not an ethnic nationalism. Here the Catalans are shown as being receptive to newcomers as long as they contribute to society and are prepared to assimilate – even Castilians are welcome under these conditions. It suggests an early form of a civic nationalism, based on common purpose rather than blood ties. Castilians, on the other hand, are 'obsessed' with blood purity – a common characteristic of certain ethnic nationalisms. Catalonia's 'proto-state' is thus depicted as very different to the Castile of the time.

This is extremely relevant today with Catalonia receiving immigrants from all over the world. This passage speaks to immigrants' fears about not being accepted, reassuring them. It also cautions those who would bar or discriminate against these immigrants, by showing Catalonia as a welcoming society, founded on a civic model of acceptance and choice of identity rather than on ethnic lines of race or descent. In his prologue for Sumáte's book, Sánchez Piñol stresses that Catalonia has always been a nation of immigrants and has responded by welcoming them and making Catalan culture accessible to them. While admitting that Catalan society is not perfect, and that there are issues, he argues that Catalans can be justly proud of the inclusive society they have created.⁵⁴⁸ This both distinguishes it from Castile as it is portrayed in *Victus*, and celebrates what the author feels is a strength of Catalonia. By showing Catalonia as inclusive, Sánchez Piñol could also be seen to be promoting the possibility of a Catalan state that includes everyone – immigrants and native-born – and one that is thus different to the traditional models of the state that Catalans seem to be so reluctant to adopt.

This image of an accepting society, based on civic not ethnic lines is also important for explaining two apparent oddities in a pro-Catalan text: the use of a Castilian hero and the negative portrayal of many of the Catalan officials, especially the Generalitat. I will examine each of these in turn beginning with the Castilian hero.

⁵⁴⁷ Sánchez Piñol, p. 201. "They came, they settled, and their origins melted into the crowd. The day they decided to stay, they'd Catalanize their family names as a disguise, so nobody might know whether their birthplace had been in Italy, France, Castile, or somewhere more exotic still. As for the rest, and in contrast to the Castilian obsession with keeping the blood pure of Moors or Jews, the Catalans didn't care a fig for their neighbours' origins. If they had money to spend, if they were pleasant enough, and if they didn't try and impose religious ideas, new arrivals were left to get on with it. This atmosphere, so passive and receptive, meant that the people would be transformed in less than a generation." p. 170.

⁵⁴⁸ Sánchez Piñol, 'Prólogo', Kindle Location 54-8.

Although, as already discussed, Martí is not a typical hero, this does not mean that *Victus* lacks such a figure. As Crameri points out, the truly heroic figure in the novel is Villarroel.⁵⁴⁹ Although certain Catalan figures are briefly singled out for their courage and commitment, Villarroel is the only main character whose conduct is consistently drawn as noble and heroic. He refuses to abandon his injured men despite the risk of captivity and even death. He throws his whole heart into the defence of Barcelona, leading charges from the front, continually putting himself at risk, and even after being dismissed by the Generalitat returns to fight alongside the people he has commanded in the final battle. He is presented as brave, noble, loyal and almost entirely selfless.

However, Villarroel is a Castilian and *Victus* makes no attempt to hide this, indeed it is constantly emphasised. Villarroel's nationality is frequently referred to "...su vozarrón castellano,"⁵⁵⁰ "...un hijo de Castilla..."⁵⁵¹ This is somewhat surprising in a novel that has from the start set up Catalonia and Castile as oppositional, warring entities. Can a text of Catalan resistance legitimately have a Castilian hero?

To some the answer to the above question might be no, but I wish to argue to the contrary. The case of Villarroel in fact exemplifies Sánchez Piñol's attempt to present Catalan society as open and accepting and its nationalism as civic. Indeed for Crameri Villarroel's status as hero is "the ultimate endorsement of civic nationalism."⁵⁵² Ethnicity and blood descent are not important – what matters is voluntary and whole-hearted identification with the nation. In Sumáte, Sánchez Piñol wrote: "Nos interesa menos el origen de la gente que su destino"⁵⁵³ and I would argue that Villarroel personifies this. Despite his Castilian origin, he commits wholly to the defence of Barcelona and the Catalan people, and thus his status as a Catalan hero is legitimate and assured. As already seen, the narrator of *Victus* stresses that the citizens of Catalonia come from various lands but that if they integrate they are held to be no different to those born there. Destination not origin is what matters. Martí stresses the number of people born outside Barcelona and indeed Catalonia who fought so bravely in its defence.⁵⁵⁴ Through their courage and sacrifice they become part of the Catalan nation. Villarroel is simply the most prominent of these people in the novel.

⁵⁴⁹ Crameri, *Goodbye, Spain?*, p. 86.

⁵⁵⁰ Sánchez Piñol, *Victus*, p. 285. "...his booming Castilian voice." p. 250.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 587. "...a son of Castile..." p. 527.

⁵⁵² Crameri, *Goodbye, Spain?*, p. 93.

⁵⁵³ Sánchez Piñol, 'Prólogo', Kindle Location 64."We are interested less in people's origins than in their destination."

⁵⁵⁴ Sánchez Piñol, *Victus*, p. 325.

Again there is a modern-day dimension to this symbolism. The message is that people of all origins are welcome in Catalonia if they are prepared to work for the benefit of the nation, particularly during the time of the independence movement. As Crameri explains “his [Villarroel’s] ethnic origins are wholly irrelevant to the kind of nation-state envisaged for a future Catalonia.”⁵⁵⁵ The modern day Catalan nation, and the Catalan state that will be created if the independence movement succeeds, will be based on civic not ethnic grounds and all who wish to be part of it will be included. In an interview Sánchez Piñol emphasised this, explaining that one of the reasons that he may have written in Spanish “...potser sí que hi ha la idea subterrània en el llibre que el 1714 és patrimoni de tots, i que un dels grans herois era el general Villarroel, un militar de cultura castellana que va lluitar i morir per les llibertats catalanes i defensant la seva capital.”⁵⁵⁶ Both through his use of Spanish and his elevating of a Castilian to the supreme status of hero, the author is assuring Spanish speakers and indeed immigrants from everywhere that they can be part of Catalonia. *Victus* can thus be seen as espousing the same kind of open and inclusive resistance that the majority of Webb’s work does. So, despite initial appearances, the presence of a hero of Castilian origin does not detract from *Victus*’ status as a resistance text. Rather it enhances its message which is an important one for the Catalan people of today.

In the case of the Catalan officials, the same is true but in reverse. Certain Generalitat officials are presented as, at best, cowardly and incompetent, and, at worst, bordering on treasonous. This includes Rafael Casanova who has traditionally been the heroic representative of 1714 and the focus of its commemoration for over a century. In *Victus* however, he is depicted as cowardly and incompetent, particularly when compared with Villarroel.

His colleagues are, if anything, even worse. From their first appearance in the novel, the bulk of the Generalitat officials are presented negatively. During the siege they consistently obstruct Villarroel and refuse to listen to his expertise: “Cómo jodieron al general Villarroel, cómo derrotaron nuestras victorias.”⁵⁵⁷ Martí argues that they do not truly care for Catalan freedom: “En el fondo no creían en las Libertades y Constituciones catalanas. Al final se encontraron con una campaña de exterminio, algo tan inaudito y feroz que simplemente no les quedó más remedio que seguir luchando.”⁵⁵⁸ They attach

⁵⁵⁵ Crameri, *Goodbye, Spain?*, p. 93.

⁵⁵⁶ Sánchez Piñol quoted in Gaillard. “Possibly there was the underlying idea in the book that 1714 is everyone’s inheritance, and that one of the great heroes was General Villarroel, a Castilian soldier who fought and died to protect Catalan liberties and to defend their capital.”

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 381. “How they hindered General Villarroel, how they managed to make defeat out of our victories.” p. 342.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 381. “Deep down they didn’t believe in Catalan liberties, or in our constitutions...they did carry on fighting, but only because there was no choice.” p. 341.

more value to the lives of well-born Catalans who support the enemy and have fled the city than to those of the common people who support the city's resistance. On one notable occasion they refuse to allow a strategically valuable attack on a French army outpost in the town of Mataró because they fear harm may come to the many Catalans from good families sheltering there. They are hidebound and inflexible to the point of outright idiocy – they send an elderly unwell deputy to lead an important recruiting mission because he is the only person allowed to bear the sacred Catalan mace. This deputy refuses to allow the attack on Mataró mentioned above and, more treacherously still, gives the order to abandon the people that have agreed to follow them, sailing back to Barcelona leaving the recruits watching on the shore. There are parallels here with Fanon's native bourgeoisie.

This criticism in a clearly pro-Catalan book is surprising. Sánchez Piñol claims that he was trying to challenge certain of the myths surrounding the siege of 1714 and that the role of the Catalan ruling classes in these events “was very unfortunate, including actions that might almost be seen as treason.”⁵⁵⁹ This may be the case, but drawing attention to it would seem to undermine any sense of Catalan unity that the work might otherwise create and call into question its status as a resistance text.

However, in my opinion, this is not the case. The officials are depicted in such a way as will unite the nation against them, much as Webb did in portraying the Anglophilic Welsh. Moreover, as seen, anticolonial and resistance writers have been quick to criticise elements of their nations' populations (usually the elite or upper classes).⁵⁶⁰ This is therefore an accepted part of resistance writing. In addition, however, it portrays something about the nature of the nation. Drawing on the work of Steven J. Mock, Cramerí notes the importance of the recurring internal traitor figure in nationalist narratives. The idea of the traitor,

is also a pointer to the need for a modern civic nation in contrast to a previous reliance on shared ethnicity. If blood ties alone are not enough to ensure loyalty (and that the capacity of

⁵⁵⁹ Sánchez Piñol, quoted in Cramerí, *Goodbye Spain*, p. 91. Elsewhere he is a little kinder to Casanova saying that he himself did not necessarily share the protagonist's wartime-shaped view, “...he de dir que la meva opinió no ha de correspondre amb la del protagonista, que és força crític, perquè crec que el 1714 s'ha d'explicar des de la rauxa. Casanova tenia una actitud d'aprovat justet, però és que està envoltat d'herois!” “I have to say that my opinion does not correspond with the protagonist, who is fiercely critical, because I believe that 1714 has to be explained in terms of rauxa. Casanova had a perfectly reasonable attitude, but he was surrounded by heroes!” He does not feel, however, that Casanova is worthy of his hero status, as he survived the siege and was able to return to practising law in Barcelona a few years later. Sánchez Piñol quoted in Gaillard.

⁵⁶⁰ See Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 27-84 and San Juan's discussion of the corrupt regimes in the Philippines in most of his works.

the individual is directed towards legitimate goals), then something else must take their place.... It is this that we see in *Victus* – in the shape of the thoroughly Catalan ‘felpudos rojos’ [red doormats, Crameri’s translation] and their ‘false and vacuous patriotism’ – rather than one individual who betrays another...⁵⁶¹

If we accept this argument, then the highlighting of the incompetence and even treachery of the Generalitat officials in *Victus* can be seen to reinforce the novel’s status as a resistance text rather than undermining it. The treachery of the old ruling classes emphasises the need for a wholly civic nation based on ties of mutual attachment rather than those of blood. Thus, the Generalitat officials are not unquestionably Catalan simply by blood and birth. They have to prove themselves to their nation and in this instance they fail to do so. On the other hand, this promotion of the civic opens up the nation to incomers who can voluntarily become part of the whole if they wish to, as Villarroel does, rather than being excluded on the grounds of different descent, race, ethnicity or religion.

The passage on the mixed origins of the inhabitants of Catalonia also shows Catalans as a pragmatic people, keen on money, attributes which have traditionally been associated with Catalans often to the point of stereotyping.⁵⁶² These stereotypes often carry negative connotations of the Catalans as being

⁵⁶¹ Crameri, *Goodbye Spain*, p. 91.

⁵⁶² It is important here to consider briefly the use of apparently ‘racial’ stereotypes. The idea of the colonial or racial stereotype has of course been discussed in detail by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*. This concept is not one that Parry or San Juan criticise directly, so it does not seem inappropriate to include it in this thesis. Bhabha’s theorisation of the stereotype is complex but the main point necessary to note for the current discussion is that a colonial stereotype is an important part of colonial discourse and a representation that “vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated...as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual licence of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved.” (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 94-5.) So, for Bhabha, a stereotype is a perpetuation of a representation that people both believe to be true and fear to be false and one that must consequently constantly be repeated for the sake of reinforcement.

In *Victus*, the stereotypes that the Catalans and Castilians repeat about one another are clearly revealed and reinforced, not only in the passage quoted above but in other scenes such as the argument between Martí and the Castilian Zúñiga which will be discussed shortly. Castilians see Catalans as spineless and miserly; Catalans consider Castilians to be harsh, hidebound and overly keen on martial glory. Interestingly, Sánchez Piñol does not shy away from using these stereotypes; rather he reinforces them but subverts the usual order of things by portraying the stereotypes of Catalans as generally positive and the ones of Castilians as negative. In the same way, Bhabha argues that in order to truly understand and subvert the stereotype “it is crucial to construct its regime of truth, not to subject its representations to a normalizing judgement.” Only then can the stereotype be fully understood and countered rather

stingy, grasping or mercenary; even the narrator sometimes make reference to them, for example with his early comment: “Hasta los italianos tienen dichos sobre lo rácanos que pueden llegar a ser los

than simply being dismissed (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 95-6). Sánchez Piñol does this and takes the additional step of re-representing the stereotypical traits applied to each nationality.

This re-representation of stereotypical traits is in line to a certain extent with a process noted by Helena Miguélez-Carballeira in her article ‘The Empire within: Discourses of Masculinity and Empire in the Twentieth-Century Spanish and Catalan National Imagination’. She argues that since the beginning of the twentieth century Castilian nationalism has repeatedly promulgated the idea of Castile as a masculine and virile state, able to take care of its own affairs and those of the internal national regions like Catalonia which were by contrast portrayed as feminine. In the latter part of the twentieth century, however, the Catalan writer Jaume Vicens Vives attempted to subvert that stereotype by presenting a different idea of manhood – one that suited the Catalan ideal. He praised Catalonia’s industrialisation and suggested that “The Catalan proposal for the modernisation of Spain, as modelled on Catalan eighteenth-century economic expansion, is based on the “redemptive” power of work... To teach Spaniards this lesson was, according to Vicens Vives, the implicit purpose of Catalan industrialists’ exploitation of the Spanish government’s protectionist trading measures throughout the nineteenth century...” (Helena Miguélez-Carballeira, ‘The Empire within: Discourses of Masculinity and Empire in the Twentieth-Century Spanish and Catalan National Imagination’, *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 39 (2017) 105-128 (122-3).) Thus Catalan attributes of practicality and mercantilism, formerly viewed negatively, were reinterpreted as positive and Catalonia was shown to have more power and virtue than Castile. Vicens Vives used the language and images of the Castilian imperialist discourse, including the word “virilitat (virility) – a term previously employed by Castilian nationalists to describe their nation – to explain *Catalan* national difference in masculine terms (Miguélez-Carballeira, ‘The Empire within: Discourses of Masculinity and Empire in the Twentieth-Century Spanish and Catalan National Imagination’, p. 123). Sánchez Piñol is doing something similar in *Victus*. He adopts the traditional stereotypes about Catalans and Castilians but portrays the former as positive and, perhaps, suitable qualities for a modern day state, while the stereotypical Castilian is mocked for his inflexibility, intolerance and focus on war. Thus, Sánchez Piñol uses the language of imperial discourse against itself, much as Miguélez-Carballeira argues that Vicens Vives does, and, in doing so, empowers his nation.

It could be argued that these stereotypes undermine the idea of a Catalan nation based on chosen civic identity rather than racial/ethnic membership. After all, the use of racial stereotypes would appear to suggest a race. However, all the stereotypes used in *Victus* - the pragmatism and stinginess of the Catalans, the rigidity of the Castilians - are values that can be learned and absorbed from one’s society rather than characteristics inherent to a certain people. In reality it is the values and priorities of the respective societies that are displayed in these stereotypes – values that are likely to be adopted by those who choose to live there. Therefore, in my opinion, the use of these stereotypes does not undermine the idea of a civic Catalan nationalism.

catalanes...”⁵⁶³ In the passage quoted above however, this focus on money appears to be a good thing as it makes for an open accepting society. Newcomers are welcome as long as they contribute. This also fits in with a civic as opposed to an ethnic nationalism.

Later in the same description of Barcelona, the city is portrayed as one with frequent festivals and carnivals:

Los festejos, tan abundantes en el calendario, obligaban a un gasto monumental. Las ferias y carnavales de Barcelona eran universalmente conocidos. ¡Los carnavales! Los aristócratas castellanos siempre tan castos, volvían de sus visitas a la ciudad escandalizados. Ricos y pobres en la calle, hombres y mujeres mezclados en una turba y bailando hasta altas horas de la madrugada. Intolerable. Para el noble de Castilla la ropa solo podía ser de un color: el negro riguroso. Cuando estuve en Madrid, en 1710, me sorprendió la negrura de sus patricios. En Barcelona era al revés. Se importaban más de trescientos tipos de telas; cuanto más dinero tenías, más colores lucías en el atuendo, y al bailar.⁵⁶⁴

Again, Barcelona and Madrid, and, by extension, Catalonia and Castile, are shown to be polar opposites. Castile is represented as dull and drab, fitting perhaps for a state with an authoritarian regime. Barcelona however is colourful and unrestricted by rigid proprieties. It is certainly portrayed as the more attractive place to live. Most interesting though is the aspect of the festivities that most scandalises Castilians - the mingling of the sexes and of rich and poor that occurs during these times. Barcelona’s festivities are democratic and inclusive; everyone takes part and, for that time at least, is considered equal. The fact that this is scandalous to Castilians implies that their land is one of rigid hierarchy and division between classes and sexes. Catalonia, on the other hand, is democratic. This reinforces a claim made earlier by the narrator: “Castilla, aristocrática y rural; Cataluña, burguesa y

⁵⁶³ Ibid., p. 52. “Even the Italians have sayings about the stinginess of the Catalans.” p. 36.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 201. “The festivities, which the calendar teemed with, cost colossal amounts. Barcelona’s festivals and carnivals were spoken of the world over. Those carnivals! The Castilian aristocrats, all so chaste, would return from their visits scandalized. Rich and poor out on the streets, men and women all together in a throng and dancing till the early hours. Just appalling. To a Castilian nobleman, clothing had to be one colour only: the severest black. When I was in Madrid in 1710, I was surprised by the blackness of its patricians. It was the opposite in Barcelona. More than three hundred kinds of fabric were imported, and the more money you had, the more colors you would flaunt in your attire and at the dances.” p. 171.

naviera. Los paisajes castellanos habían engendrado uno señores tiránicos.”⁵⁶⁵ He goes on to recount an anecdote from medieval times of a Castilian princess who coming to live in Catalonia after marriage, is horrified to find her servants talking back to her. When she complains to her husband he tells her there is nothing he can do as the people of Catalonia are free.⁵⁶⁶ The narrator admits this may be apocryphal but sees it as useful in depicting the differences between Catalan and Castilian society.

The highlighting of this difference helps Catalonia to appear both different to Castile and more attractive. Moreover, it is based at least roughly on historical fact. According to Lourdes Gabikagojeaskoa, Castile was known throughout the rest of Spain and Europe in medieval times for being a rigidly feudal society though it became a little more flexible as a result of repopulation following the Reconquista. In Catalonia on the other hand, society developed differently and the status of the ordinary people was enhanced, moving towards a more democratic form of representation than in Castile.⁵⁶⁷

However, perhaps the passage that shows most clearly the difference in the Catalan and Castilian outlooks is the argument Martí has with his former friend Diego Zúñiga. While in Madrid, Martí discovers that Zúñiga has been distributing pamphlets that tell lies about atrocities committed by Catalans. Their subsequent argument is intense and lays out the opposing priorities and world-views held by Catalans and Castilians respectively. Zúñiga extols the glories of the Castilian empire: “Tenemos un imperio que conservar, Martí, y en Barcelona solo buscan desangrarlo.”⁵⁶⁸ Martí, on the other hand, decries the Castilian empire:

-El imperio..., el imperio... ¿Qué ganasteis con conquistar un mundo? Los indios americanos os odian; los vecinos europeos ni siquiera os envidian, sino que os deprecian, y sostener esa miriada de posesiones en ultramar ha arruinado las arcas de Castilla. ¡Y os creéis con el derecho de exigir a reinos ajenos que participen en vuestros desmanes, y que lo hagan por la gloria de Castilla!⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 126. “Castile, aristocratic and rural; Catalonia, middle-class and shipowning. The Castilian landscape had produced oppressive signories...” p. 101.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 126.

⁵⁶⁷ Lourdes Gabikagojeaskoa, *Eran Soñadores de Paraísos: Nostalgia y Resistencia Cultural en la Obra de Juan Marsé* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2013), Kindle Location 248-53.

⁵⁶⁸ Sánchez Piñol, *Victus*, p. 260. “We have an empire to preserve, Martí, and in Barcelona, all they want is to bleed it dry.” p. 227.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 260-1. “Oh empire, empire... What have you gained by conquering a world? The American Indians hate you; your European neighbours don’t envy you, just hold you in contempt, and

Here, the Castilian is shown to be a greedy imperialist, while the Catalan is shown as almost dismissive of empire. This is not exactly an anticolonial position as Martí is arguing as much that empire is harmful for Castile as that it is morally wrong, but certainly his viewpoint is completely opposed to Zúñiga's. He also mentions the American Indians, perhaps suggesting a link between them and the Catalans as peoples that have been oppressed by Castile. Zúñiga does not even address this part of Martí's argument, which may imply that he (and Castile) consider the views of the American Indians irrelevant. Whatever the reasoning behind it, Martí's view is certainly very different to Zúñiga's.

Later in the passage, Martí tries to get his companion to see the futility of war and the hollowness of the ideas of martial glory:

Quizás lo incomprendible sea medir la honra por el instinto belicoso. Ese camino solo os ha llevado a las derrotas y a la quiebra. Todos las naciones que prosperan lo han hecho gracias al sudor y el dinero fluyente, no por las armas y la pólvora. Pero vosotros insistís en la terquedad del héroe obtuso. Cada barco que se llena de cañones en vez de barriles es una nave de mercancías perdida; cada regimiento que se instruye y se arma, una industria desperdiciada. Al menos así lo ven mis conciudadanos.⁵⁷⁰

There is something of the stereotypical money-loving Catalan in this argument, as Zúñiga is quick to point out, "Ahora lo entiendo... No queréis ser grandes, queréis ser ricos."⁵⁷¹ Martí's response is "que os intoxican los libros de caballerías. ¡Los malos!"⁵⁷² While stereotypes of both nations are underlined here, the Catalan way of pragmatism and trade would appear to be more attractive than the Castilian hunger for glory.

The issue that emerges from the passage most clearly, however, is that the two worldviews are not merely different but mutually incomprehensible and irreconcilable. Both men use the word

maintaining that myriad of possessions overseas has ruined Castile's exchequer. And you think you have the right to demand that other kingdoms take part in your excesses, and do so for the glory of Castile!" p. 227.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 261. "Maybe what's incomprehensible is measuring honor in terms of a hunger for war. That road has led you to nothing but defeat and bankruptcy. Every prosperous nation flows with money and sweat, not weapons and gunpowder. But you people insist on stubbornness, obtuse heroism. Every ship that is filled with cannons instead of barrels is one more ship lost to trade; every regiment trained and armed, an industry wasted. At least that is what my own fellow citizens feel." p. 228.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., p. 261. "I understand now... Greatness doesn't move you, only wealth." p. 228.

⁵⁷² Ibid., p. 262. "...you are drunk on books of chivalry. The bad ones!" p. 262.

incomprehensible and are clearly talking at cross purposes most of the time. In the course of the argument, Martí attempts to make Zúñiga see the extent of Castilian imposition upon Catalonia and to explain that nation's support for Charles by asking him to imagine the situation reversed:

¡Porque lo que vosotros llamáis unidad es opresión! Dime: ¿trasladarías la corte a Barcelona? ¿Admitirías que Castilla fuera regida por leyes catalanas? ¿Que vuestros ministros fueran escogidos solo entre los diputados catalanes? ¿Os gustaría que vuestras villas y ciudades fueran ocupadas por tropas catalanas, a las que deberíais alumbrar y cobijar, aun a costa de vuestras mujeres?⁵⁷³

Zúñiga however, is unmoved. He expresses the typical imperial philosophy: “Es ley de vida que los grandes devoren a los pequeños y los débiles sucumban ante los fuertes,”⁵⁷⁴ before insisting: “Y pese a todo, no es esa la actitud de Castilla. Pudiendo ser parte privilegiada de un todo, escogéis ser menos que la nada.”⁵⁷⁵ Zúñiga cannot understand the Catalans' desire to be separate – for him it makes sense for the smaller Catalonia to join willingly with the larger, more powerful Castile. Both could benefit from this union. What Martí does not point out, though he could, is that such a union would always be on Castile's terms and that it would be a far from equal partnership. Catalonia would be benefited only indirectly and only when it suited Castile – if their interests were to clash it would always be Castile that was favoured. This indirect argument for Catalan freedom and separatism resonates today as pro-independence parties argue that Catalonia would fare better outside of Spain. Thus *Victus* can again be seen as a pro-independence text, resisting the Spanish hierarchy and asserting Catalonia's rights as a nation.

Having demonstrated how *Victus* depicts Catalonia and Castile as irreconcilably opposed, I will now go on to examine how the text depicts the oppression of the Catalan people by the Castilian central power – a depiction that both attempts to strengthen the Catalan push for independence by fuelling their anger

⁵⁷³ Ibid., p. 261. “Because what you people call unity is in truth oppression! Tell me: Would you move the court to Barcelona? Would you allow Castile to be ruled by Catalan kings? Your ministers to be chosen from among Catalan government ministers alone? Would you like the idea of your villages and towns occupied by Catalan troops, having to bear them, take them into your homes, offer them up your wives?” p. 227.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 261. “Natural law dictates that big will consume small, the weak yield to the strong,” p. 227.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 261. “Despite everything, that is not Castile's position. You could be a privileged part of a whole, and instead you choose to be less than nothing.” pp. 227-8.

and resentment, and to show citizens of Spain and the wider world what happened to the Catalans at that time and so speak truth to power.

Oppression of Catalans

Throughout the narrative, *Victus* makes reference to the abuse and oppression of Catalans by the central state, before, during and after the War of Succession. This could certainly be seen as “making Spain aware of facts of which it is ignorant,”⁵⁷⁶ and thus speaking truth to power, in addition to producing an alternative history to counter the official histories and school textbooks which, particularly under Franco, revised history and “left many ignorant of these dimensions of the War of Succession, even in Catalonia itself.”⁵⁷⁷ Indeed at one point the narrator claims: “Los historiadores oficiales se limitan a contar la historia de los ejércitos oficiales,”⁵⁷⁸ implying that *Victus* will recount an ‘unofficial’ history.⁵⁷⁹ As a much-translated text *Victus* also brings this different version of events to a global audience, revealing the historical injustices visited upon Catalonia and, perhaps, winning sympathy and support for the nation in its current-day bid for independence. It will also educate the Catalan people about their past sufferings and struggles and, as a result, inspire them to work for their independence. In this it is similar to Webb’s descriptions of Wales’ sufferings. While the horrors experienced by the eighteenth-century Catalans are undoubtedly greater, the reason for mentioning them is the same – to arouse anger and thus motivation to work for change.

It is made clear that even before the War, Catalonia was far from settled. Martí describes the nation as having been “en un estado de guerra cuasi perpetuo,”⁵⁸⁰ for decades, and shows the human cost of this. Anfán, the young boy who will later become part of Martí’s adopted family, is an orphan – one of many – forced to survive alone as best he can: “Desaparecidos sus padres por causas naturales o a manos de algún asesino, Anfán se convirtió en uno de tantos desechos a la deriva.”⁵⁸¹ His very name is merely a corruption of the French enfant – child – which is obviously what the soldiers call him. He looks bewildered when Martí asks him where his father is – not only does he no longer have a father,

⁵⁷⁶ Sánchez Piñol, quoted in Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?*, p. 83.

⁵⁷⁷ Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?*, p. 76.

⁵⁷⁸ Sánchez Piñol, *Victus*, pp. 146-7. “Official historians limit themselves to official history,” p. 121.

⁵⁷⁹ See the thesis introduction for Thiong’o’s remarks on the production of ‘official history’ which deliberately excludes the colonised and dominated as a form of control.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 167-8. “...in an almost perpetual state of war,” p. 140.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 168. “His parents having died of natural causes – or at the hands of some murderer – Anfán, like so many, fell by the wayside.” p. 140.

he seems not to understand the concept.⁵⁸² He survives by following the passing army and living off their scraps, including, at times, providing sexual services to the soldiers. Anfán is hardly a paragon of childhood innocence; he steals, lies, and almost gets Martí hanged by claiming falsely that the protagonist abused him. But it is made abundantly clear that Anfán is this way because of what he has been forced to do to survive at such a young age – Martí reckons that when they first meet he can only be six or seven years old. Anfán, and his dwarf friend Nan, are living symbols of the turmoil visited upon Catalonia, and the further abuse they experience at the hands of the Bourbon army can easily be seen as symbolic of the damage wreaked upon the whole Catalan nation.

A natural result of Anfán's traumatic unstructured childhood but one that is interesting for this study is his language. On his first appearance we are told that: "Su catalán estaba moteado por un poco de castellano y un mucho de francés."⁵⁸³ Anfán is clearly Catalan, but his very language, one of the most important symbols of Catalan identity and integral to the Catalan identity of many, has been damaged and corrupted by the armies invading Catalonia. As his language is affected, so is his identity. This may not be as a result of conscious intent by the invading armies but it is still a form of oppression as by their very presence they are damaging the Catalan nation's identity.

If the unintentional results of the military presence are bad, then the intended are often catastrophic. The treatment the French and Castilian Bourbon forces mete out to any who oppose them is cruel and vindictive. Riding with the Bourbon force Martí describes a harrowing sight:

Nada más atravesar la frontera de mi Cataluña natal los árboles se poblaron de ahorcados. El convoy avanzaba lentamente ante la presencia constante de aquellos cuerpos oscilantes. En los árboles más gruesos podía haber cinco, seis, siete cadáveres repartidos por las ramas, unos más arriba y otros más abajo, con los pies zarandeados por el viento. La mayoría eran hombres, jóvenes, maduros y viejos, pero en un roble solitario vi colgada a una mujer. Ni siquiera se habían molestado en atarle las manos a la espalda. A los pies de la ahorcada, una niña y un perro con el hocico alzado. El animal lanzaba unos aullidos desgarradores y mientras husmeaba sus narices se contraían y dilataban como un fuelle. Lo que me conmovió fue que el perro sabía que la mujer estaba muerta; la niña no.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸² Ibid., p. 167.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., p. 167. "His Catalan was mixed together with a little Castilian Spanish and much French." p. 140.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 146. "As soon as we crossed into Catalonia, we began to see people hanged from the branches of trees. The convoy's slow advance was now constantly presided over by these oscillating

Even the cynical Martí is disturbed by this sight. He is also confused and distressed by the complete destruction of the town of Játiva:

Los días siguientes hablé muy poco. Me habían formado en la idea, elemental, de que un rey lucha para defender o ganar dominios, nunca para destruirlos. Una absurdidad así solo cabría en la mente de un loco. ¿Qué provecho podía obtenerse de una localidad arrasada? Játiva, la de las mil fuentes, borrada del mundo porque un rey había apoyado su pulgar en el mapa.⁵⁸⁵

The realities of war are clashing with Martí's rational theoretical education and he is struggling to reconcile the two. The Bourbon force's actions are oppressive to the point of being ridiculous; they are depriving themselves of a potentially useful city just to enact revenge upon the defeated. Their cruelty is beyond reason and shows the effect that the war had on the ordinary people of Catalonia. The citizens of Játiva have not merely suffered an invasion and a change of ruler; their city has been completely destroyed as a result of being in the wrong place and backing the wrong side. The fact that this war is depicted as having no noncombatants is both a warning and an encouragement to the Catalans of today. None of them can afford to stand aside; all must work for Catalan independence.

A different kind of abuse of the Catalan nation by Castile is the lies told in the pamphlets that are spread around Madrid by Martí's supposed friend Zúñiga. On first reading one of these Martí laughs as the claims appear ridiculous. The blame for the occupation of Madrid is placed firmly on the Catalans and the plotting they engaged in. There is no mention of the other participants of the Allied Forces – Austria, England, or Portugal, which leads to an unjust and unbalanced argument. The pamphlet then goes on to use scaremongering tactics:

Solo tengo presente los principales cargos. Cuando acabara la guerra íbamos a violar a las mujeres de Castilla y asesinar o enviar a galeras a sus maridos. Según ese panfleto, los catalanes

bodies. On the larger trees, there were sometimes five, six, seven cadavers swinging from the branches, some higher, some lower, feet stirred by the wind. Most were men of all ages, but I did see a woman hanged from one solitary oak. They had not even bothered to tie her hands behind her. Beneath her on the ground were a little girl and a dog; its snout thrust in the air, the animal let out heartrending yowls, snorting through its nostrils like a bellows. The dog knew the woman was dead, but most harrowing of all, the child did not." p. 121.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 146. "I spoke very little in the ensuing days. I had been educated to believe in a certain basic idea, that a king fights to defend or win territories – never to destroy them. Such an absurdity could make sense only in the mind of a madman. What use could there be in taking control of a place that has been flattened? Játiva, the city of a thousand wells, wiped from the face of the earth because a king had pointed his finger at a map." p. 120.

estaban detrás de un complot para apoderarse y monopolizar el comercio con América (del que Cataluña siempre había estado rigurosamente excluida por ser un reino aparte). Los impuestos sobre los castellanos serían, más que gravosos, de un rigor propio de esclavistas, e irían a parar al tesoro de Barcelona para disfrute de los rebeldes. Todos los mandos del ejército, así como los jueces y jurados de Castilla, serían suplantados por indígenas de nación catalana. Para asegurarse el control sobre Madrid se erigiría una fortaleza, con la que se tendría a sus habitantes ahorrados hasta el final de los tiempos.⁵⁸⁶

To Martí this is clearly ridiculous. However, as he reads it again and the consequences of such lies begin to occur to him, he becomes enraged and tears up the pamphlet, before storming off. “Yo había visto los desmanes de la tropa española en Beceite, los bosques catalanes llenos de sogas y ahorcados. Ahora se entendía de dónde sacaban sus soldados y oficiales tanta bilis asesina.”⁵⁸⁷ A few pages later when he confronts Zúñiga, he tries to make him comprehend the damage these lies cause: “Alguien escribe esos papelotes en un rincón oscuro y luego los bosques se llenan de ahorcados – dije - ¡Yo lo he visto! Alguien redacta ese montón de falsedades y el día después gentes ajenas a la tinta sufren degüello y despeñamiento.”⁵⁸⁸ Zúñiga, however, is completely unmoved.

This idea of misrepresentation of the Catalans by the Castilians is interesting on two levels when regarding *Victus* as a resistance text. Firstly, by revealing this misrepresentation, *Victus* performs its function as an alternative history, challenging official Spanish accounts. In doing this, it both educates and inspires the Catalans and attempts to speak truth to power. Secondly and more interestingly, is that if, as has been suggested, *Victus* is drawing comparisons between the events of the War of Succession

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 258. “All I have retained are the main charges against us. When the war ended, we would rape all the women in Castile and murder their husbands or send them off to the galleys. According to this pamphlet, the Catalans were behind a plot to take power and monopolize the trade with America (from which Catalonia had always been strictly excluded, being a separate kingdom). Taxes on the Castilians would be not merely extortionate but would make slaves of them, with all the money ending up in Barcelona’s coffers for the rebels to enjoy. Natives of Catalonia would supplant the whole of the army’s high command, and all Castile’s judges and jurists. To be certain of maintaining a hold over Madrid, a fortress would be erected, which would keep its inhabitants enchained until the end of time.” pp. 224-5.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 259. “I had seen the outrages of the Spanish forces at Beceite, Catalan forests full of nooses and hanged men. Now I could see the source of their soldiers’ and officers’ murderous bile.” p. 225.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 262. ““Someone scribbles this shit, in some unseen corner, and then, before you know it the forests are full of hanged men,” I said. “I’ve seen it! A pile of falsehoods like this gets written down, and the next day, people who have nothing to do with writing have their throats slit and their bodies thrown off cliffs.”” p. 228.

and current day events, then it could be suggesting that this misrepresentation is continuing today. When *Victus* was published in 2012, the independence movement in Catalonia was gathering force and beginning to come to the attention of the rest of the world. Portrayal in the media is an extremely important way of gaining national and international sympathy in the modern world. Spain with its larger and more powerful media has a distinct advantage in this area and Catalonia has not succeeded in getting the support of the European Union that it had hoped for. The Spanish media is even more powerful within Spain – a majority of Spaniards outside Catalonia from across the political spectrum are against Catalan independence – and the media has surely played a role in bringing this about. In showing that Castile once used lies as propaganda, Sánchez Piñol is subtly suggesting that this may be the case again and thus leads his readers, especially those outside of Catalonia, to question the images provided by the media.

This second conjecture is hard to prove but it is certainly an interesting consideration. There can be no doubt however that the passage discussing these pamphlets and Martí's reaction to them is crucial to *Victus*' role as an alternative history. The lies that the Castilians have spread about the Catalans are exposed and then the final injustice is revealed with the benefit of the elderly Martí's hindsight:

Lo diabólico fue que unos años después ese papelito se convirtió en realidad, pero aplicado a Cataluña y a una escala bíblica. Proyectando sus temores, los borbónicos fueron tan perfectos en la retribución de unas ofensas imaginarias que no descuidaron punto alguno. El asesinato en masa ya había empezado mucho antes del fin de la guerra. Tras el 11 de septiembre de 1714 todo el orden jurídico catalán fue arrasado y sustituido por el de Castilla. Durante décadas Cataluña fue considerada tierra ocupada militarmente. Todos los gobernantes que tuvo procedían de Castilla. Los impuestos arruinaron el país, antes rico, y redujeron al hambre a la mayoría. Y, por fin, para controlar Barcelona se construyó la Ciudadela, la fortaleza vaubaniana más pérfida jamás concebida.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 258. “What was so diabolical was that only a few years later, this little scrap of paper would be transformed into a reality, but applied to Catalonia, and on a biblical scale. The Bourbons, projecting their own fears, punished imaginary offences so thoroughly that no stone was left unturned. The mass murder began long before the war ended. After September 11, 1714, the legal framework of Catalan order was pulled down and Castile installed in its place. For decades Catalonia would be considered a land under military occupation. All of its rulers came from Castile. The once rich country was ruined by taxes, and the majority of its population reduced to penury. Finally, to keep Barcelona under control, they erected the Ciutadela, the most perfidious Vauban fortress ever conceived.” p. 225.

This hindsight reveals the double oppression enacted by Castilians here – they first spread lies about Catalan evils in order to arouse hatred and then apply these same evils to Catalonia. The injustice of the situation makes the oppression seem even worse. Again this is something that would not be included in an official account.

However, the worst oppression of the Catalan nation came after the fall of Barcelona. As the action of the novel ends on the day of the fall of Barcelona, this oppression is not discussed in detail, but references are made to it at various points in the novel as Martí looks back on events that occurred after September 11th 1714. The building of the Ciudadela in particular recurs as a symbol of that oppression. As seen, it was mentioned in the passage discussed above and is returned to later. Here the narrator emphasises its effectiveness as a means of control: “Hay una forma de sumisión más absoluta que la muerte: una esclavitud que perdure hasta el fin de los tiempos.”⁵⁹⁰ This magnifies the horror of the building and reflects the pamphlet’s claim that Catalonia would build a fortress in Madrid “con la que se tendría a sus habitantes aherrojados hasta el final de los tiempos.”⁵⁹¹ The fortress itself is described as: “Un tumor urbano que covertía a los Barcelonense en reos de su misma ciudad.”⁵⁹² This makes it seem almost alive, something that might grow further and smother the whole city. The statement that a fifth of the city was levelled to make way for it adds to the reader’s sense of the cruelty and injustice of the act and of the horror it inflicted upon the citizens.

Right at the end of the novel, during the final assault, more of Martí’s memories of the aftermath of the defeat are inserted. He mentions Josep Moragues, the guerrilla captain, who was dragged the length of the city on a cart before being executed and having his head displayed in a cage hanging from one of the city gates for twelve years. Worse still, in Martí’s opinion, was the fate of Manuel Desvalls who was exiled and lived to be a hundred without ever seeing his native land again. His pity and fellow feeling for Desvalls rings through the text. The sacred symbol of Barcelona, the flag of Santa Eulalia, is taken to a shrine in Madrid, in perhaps the most symbolic of gestures made by the victors.⁵⁹³ Most moving of all though, is Martí’s thoughts of Don Antonio, the Castilian who fought for Catalonia by choice:

Pero por encima de todos pienso en don Antonio, don Antonio de Villarroel Peláez, renunciando a la gloria y el honor, la familia y la vida, y todo por una fidelidad insensata para

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 448. “There is a form of submission more absolute than death: endless slavery.” p. 402.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., p. 258. “...which would keep its inhabitants enchained until the end of time.” p. 225.

⁵⁹² Ibid., p. 449. “...an urban tumour that converted Barcelonans into prisoners in their own city.” p. 404.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., p. 586.

con hombres sin nombre. Él, un hijo de Castilla, con todo lo bueno de esa tierra áspera, sacrificándose por la defensa de la misma Barcelona. Y ¿cuál fue su paga? Un dolor infinito, un olvido eterno.⁵⁹⁴

This late stream of images shows all too clearly the oppression of the Catalans by the victorious Bourbon forces. However, perhaps the most interesting with regard to *Victus* as an alternative history is Martí's thought that "cuando nos hubieran derrotado, cuando hubiéramos perecido, todos nuestros hijos serían, de hecho, educados por los vencedores."⁵⁹⁵ This heralds a new type of oppression, one by control rather than violence. The victors will deny the children of the vanquished knowledge of the ways and deeds of their forefathers and teach them Castilian traditions in place of Catalan ones. In turn, *Victus* is trying to reverse this process, bringing the Catalan perspective of 1714 to the contemporary reader, showing the horrors perpetrated upon the Catalan people that might otherwise have been written out of history. In the next section, I will examine how the text does the same thing with the Catalan resistance of the time, with particular focus on popular resistance.

A people's resistance

From its very beginning, *Victus* sets itself up as a novel about resistance. The text opens with these words from the now elderly protagonist:

Si el hombre es el único ser que posee una mente geométrica y racional, ¿por qué los indefensos combaten al poderoso y bien armado? ¿Por qué los pocos se oponen a los muchos y los pequeños resisten a los grandes? Yo lo sé. Por una palabra.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 587. "But above all, my thoughts turn to Don Antonio, Don Antonio de Villaruel Peláez, renouncing glory and honour, family and even life itself, and all for an allegiance that made no sense – to a group of nameless men. He, a son of Castile, embodying what was good about that harsh land, sacrificing himself for Barcelona, no less. And his reward? Infinite pain, eternal oblivion." p. 527.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 587. When we lost and all of us perished, all our children would be educated by the victors." p. 527.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 13. "If man is the only being with a geometrical, rational mind, why is it that the poor and defenceless take up arms against the powerful and well equipped? Why do the few oppose the many, and the small resist the great? I know the reason why. One word." p. 3.

The rest of the novel largely follows the young Martí's quest to discover this word and answer the question. The nature of the resistance that the novel portrays, however, is particularly interesting in the context of this thesis.

Crameri has argued that while *Victus* appears to raise Villaroel to heroic status the novel is more about the courage of the collective Catalan people as opposed to individual heroes: "The myth of the single national hero is dismissed in favour of a community heroism epitomised by the will to stick together against injustice."⁵⁹⁷ As demonstrated in the previous chapter, resistance by a people rather than an individual or an elite is crucial both to resistance theorists like San Juan following as he does Gramsci's idea of the national-popular and anticolonial activists who sought to mobilise the greatest possible number of people. Only the people united across class, linguistic, religious and other differences can hope to effect the radical transformation of their nation. Webb calls on the Welsh people to unite in this way – *Victus* demonstrates the Catalan people doing just that. This is unsurprising considering that both writers depict their respective nations as traditionally democratic and thus any resistance in their work is likely to be a mass popular movement. While there are clear class distinctions in *Victus*' Catalonia, representatives of all classes fight for their nation. The upper classes have a higher rate of traitors and deserters but, as will be seen shortly, many representatives of these classes also fought bravely during the siege of Barcelona.

Victus contains numerous examples of the Catalan people fighting together, bravely resisting, despite almost certain defeat. Fairly early in the novel, when the protagonist is fighting in the Bourbon army he sees the civilians of Tortosa fighting alongside the professional troops, while the women and children of the town bring them water and tend their wounds. Martí does not yet understand what drives them to do this, what is at stake:

El más sorprendido era yo. ¿Por qué no se quedaban en sus casitas a la espera de que todo se acabara? ¿Por qué unos simples paisanos, a quienes aquel asunto dinástico ni les iba ni les venía, asumían todos los riesgos del combate y las futuras represalias en caso de derrota? Topo de mí, yo seguía sin querer entender que aquella iba a ser la guerra del fin del mundo. Al menos para los catalanes.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁷ Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?*, p. 87.

⁵⁹⁸ Sánchez Piñol, *Victus*, p. 161. "I was dumbfounded. Why didn't they hole up at home and wait for the storm to pass? Why would these simple peasants, to whom dynastic affairs were neither here nor there, risk taking part in a battle, as well as the reprisals in the case of defeat? Fool that I was, I was yet to realize that this was going to be the war at the end of the war– the end of the Catalan world." p. 135.

These ‘simple peasants’ have realised or known instinctively what he, for all his education, has not, that this struggle is not simply about which monarch will sit on the distant throne in Madrid. It is about the continuation of their way of life as Catalans and the defence of their homes. To Martí, at this point, war is still a profession at which he works, something that he has studied and been trained for. He is only just being initiated into the true horrors and cost of war. To the inhabitants of Tortosa though, it is their way of life, and even their lives that are being threatened.

Later in the novel, similar examples of heroic collective resistance will be recounted during the siege of Barcelona. One passage that evokes admiration, pity and amusement in almost equal measure is that listing the battalions of the Coronela – the civilian militia. Traditionally each trade in the city formed its own company. Martí lists some of them (with certain choice comments of his own):

Primera compañía: notarios causídicos. (¡Pero si no sabían llevar mi causa! ¿Cómo se suponía que iban a disparar un fusil o guarnecer un baluarte?)

Segunda: herreros y caldereros.

Tercera: hortelanos.

Cuarta: alfareros, colchoneros y olleros. (Lo de los olleros se entiende mejor: cuando empezara el hambre sobrarían ollas vacías.)

Quinta: cinteros.

Sexta: carniceros. (Otros que se quedaron sin trabajo muy pronto.)

Séptima: zapateros remendones.

Octava: tintoreros y retorcedores de seda.

Novena: estudiantes de teología, medicina y filosofía. (Bonita graduación les esperaba.)⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 340. “First company: attorneys-at-law. (And they didn’t even know how to take care of my case! How could we expect them to fire a rifle or man a bastion?)

Second company: blacksmiths and tinkers.

Third company: market gardeners.

Fourth: potters, upholsterers, and makers of pots and pans. (At least these latter are easier to understand: When the hunger sets in, there will be empty pots and pans aplenty.)

With Martí's comments, this list seems almost amusing. But the severity and pathos of the situation is underlined by his next words: "Y con eso tendríamos que hacer frente a dragones y granaderos forgueados en mil batallas..."⁶⁰⁰ The humour of the unusual roster fades to be replaced with pity and a certain admiration. This admiration is reinforced later in the siege when a company of law students, enraged by the death of their beloved professor, charge a company of French grenadiers and manage to drive them back. These ordinary Barcelonans, with no military training, take on the superior forces of France and Castile and win at least a temporary victory. This fits in well with resistance theory and its Marxist influenced emphasis on the desire and power of the people to effect change.

This is only the most dramatic example of the resistance of the ordinary people. They willingly pull down their own houses to aid the war effort, they suffer incredible hardships as the siege drags on and when the end comes, citizens, including children and the elderly, join the militia in a last desperate attack. They make sacrifices and act for the good of the nation as the 'masses' in the works of Fanon and Cabral do.

But *Victus* also features resistance by some of the upper classes, if not all of them, and even the cynical Martí makes his admiration for them clear. One of these is Sebastià Dalmau, a nobleman by birth, who put his entire fortune into financing the war, including raising and outfitting his own regiment. Dalmau is presented as honest, good-natured and thoroughly likeable with no trace of snobbishness. Like Martí he is disgusted with the inefficiency and downright treachery of the Generalitat's representative on a trip to raise resistance in the Catalan countryside. The other nobles for whom Martí expresses admiration are those who, while they voted against resistance after the Allies withdrew from the war, remained in the city and bravely fought in its defence when the majority voted in favour of resisting. During the Parliamentary debate as to whether Catalonia should continue fighting alone he remarks movingly:

Fifth company: belt-makers.

Sixth company: butchers. (Another group who'll be out of work before long.)

Seventh company: cobblers.

Eighth company: silk weavers and dyers.

Ninth company: students of theology, medicine, and philosophy. (A fine graduation awaits them.)" p. 302.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 340. "And with this, we had to face dragoons and grenadiers trained through experience in a thousand battles..." p. 302.

...hubo nobles como Francesc Alemany, Baldiri Batlle, Lluís Roger, o Antoni València, que en conciencia creyeron que debían votar por la sumisión, y así lo hicieron. Después las cosas dieron un giro. Y lucharon. Siguiendo la voluntad de la mayoría, relegando sus opiniones particulares en favour del interés general. La Waltraud me pregunta por qué me saltan las lágrimas. Lo dire: porque estos hombres, que nunca quisieron resistir, combatieron sin desmayo durante un año largo de asedio. Sostuvieron las ideas de los otros, incluso contra ellos mismos. Y la madrugada de ese 11 de septiembre de 1714 sacrificaron sus propias vidas. Todos. Aún veo a València, atacando un muro de bayonetas sable en mano, deglutido por un mar de uniformes blancos.⁶⁰¹

These men make the ultimate sacrifice for their people, putting aside their personal beliefs and desires for the good of the community. Crameri argues that in *Victus*: “Those who are singled out as performing heroic acts are praised for their sense of ethical responsibility towards the people they lead...”⁶⁰² This is certainly true of the men mentioned here, who acted in support of ideas with which they disagreed because they knew it was their duty as leaders of the people to carry out the people’s wishes, despite the cost to themselves. Not only is this heroic, it reinforces the Catalan vision of itself as naturally democratic and thus very different to Castile. With the exception of Villarroel, Castilians are generally portrayed as autocratic, the aristocrats ruling the people rather than serving them. The Catalan nobles mentioned above are completely different; governed by the will of the people they will seek to carry out that will, whatever the cost to themselves. There are hints of San Juan’s popular-democratic ideal here. Again it shows the Catalans as people who are traditionally supportive of democracy and thus suggests that any Catalan state would be strictly democratic with the government serving the people’s wishes. The Catalans of 1714 serve as an example of what can be achieved when the people of the nation work together as, despite ultimately losing, they held out longer than would have been thought possible, and in doing so gained a heroic status that continues to inspire to this day.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., p. 318. “...there were noblemen like Francesc Alemany, Baldiri Batlle, Lluís Roger, or Antoni València, whose consciences led them to vote for submission, and so they did. Later things would take a turn. And they fought. They followed the will of the majority, setting aside their personal opinions in favour of the general good. Waltraud asks me why I have tears in my eyes. I can tell you: because these men, who never chose resistance, fought unfalteringly for a long year of siege. They acted in support of other people’s ideas, even those people who were opposed to them. And at dawn on September 11, 1714, they sacrificed their lives. All of them. I can see València now, attacking a wall of bayonets, saber in hand, swallowed up by a sea of white uniforms.” pp. 280-1.

⁶⁰² Crameri, *Goodbye Spain?*, p. 87.

By recounting their story, *Victus* acts as a resistance text, setting itself against the central Spanish government and urging Catalans to work for change.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that Sánchez Piñol's *Victus* can be seen as a resistance text in multiple ways. It acts as an alternative history, educating the Catalan people about aspects of their past and attempting to inspire them to work for the good of their nation in the present day. It also recounts these same events to readers within the wider Spanish peninsula and beyond, speaking truth to power in an effort to draw attention to the past and present sufferings of the Catalan people. It focuses on the nation people as the basis for change and stresses the value of Catalan traditions and, as a result, Catalonia's difference from Castile/Spain. It hints at the possibility of a Catalan state, one very different to the Castilian state that is portrayed as autocratic and repressive. By doing this, the text hopes to overcome the Catalans' traditional reluctance to have a state of their own, and to encourage them to struggle, even to make sacrifices if necessary, to bring that state into being. And finally, as a result, it can be seen as contributing to the Catalan independence movement. By recounting a tale of Catalan struggle and ultimate defeat, he is hoping to inspire a modern day Catalan struggle that will end in victory. The means and ultimate aims of the struggle may be different but the need for the Catalan people to unite and fight is not. Moreover, every Catalan is needed and everyone who is prepared to take part in that struggle is a Catalan regardless of their place of origin.

Chapter 3 – “Armed but not in the old way”: The Seeds of Change in R. S. Thomas

Introduction

Of all the Welsh writers discussed in this thesis, R. S. Thomas is the best known. He is one of the few Welsh writers in English who has achieved recognition outside of Wales and even Britain. His work has been translated into various languages and he was nominated for the 1996 Nobel Prize for Literature. For all this, though, he remains an essentially Welsh poet, writing in both poetry and prose about the Welsh landscape, culture and people. He was not as exclusive a writer as Webb – some of his work does deal with subjects other than Wales – but Wales and his complicated relationship to it and to his own Welshness are integral to both his character and his poetry.

Like Webb, Thomas was raised and educated through the medium of English but learned Welsh as an adult, working hard in his effort to acquire what he considered an essential aspect of true Welshness. From the 1950s onwards he became fluent enough in Welsh to write prose and lecture in that language but he never felt able to compose poetry in anything other than English, explaining that having come late to the language he did not have confidence in his ability to be sufficiently self-critical of his writing in Welsh.⁶⁰³ As he saw self-criticism as an essential part of the creative process, this effectively prevented him from composing poetry in Welsh– something that caused him great anguish during his life.⁶⁰⁴ Instead he was forced to settle for immersing himself in the Welsh-language literary tradition and using it in his English-language poetry - something he did ingeniously and in multiple ways, as Jason Walford Davies has shown.⁶⁰⁵

Although many of the writers discussed in this thesis have written in more than one language, this thesis focuses on their work in English or Spanish. However, an exception will be made in the case of Thomas, and some of his Welsh-language prose will be considered alongside his English-language work. This is because some aspects of his worldview and attitudes to Wales that will be crucial to the points made in this chapter are outlined in the Welsh texts. Moreover, as Ned Thomas has noted, the

⁶⁰³ R. S. Thomas, ‘Hunanladdiad y Llenor’, in *Pe Medrwn yr Iaith ac Ysgrifau Eraill*, ed. by Tony Brown and Bedwyr Lewis Jones, (Abertawe: Christopher Davies, 1988), pp. 103-110 (p. 109).

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 109.

⁶⁰⁵ Jason Walford Davies, *Gororau’r Iaith: R. S. Thomas a’r Traddodiad Llenyddol Cymraeg* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2003).

prose and poetry are complementary – images and ideas from the poems are often elaborated upon in the prose,⁶⁰⁶ as was the case with Webb. Indeed, W. Moelwyn Merchant goes further, claiming that “his [Thomas’] prose works are a necessary supplement to our understanding of his verse; they provide not so much a corrective to the argument of ideas conducted in his volumes of poetry as a delicate reorientation of those ideas and an adjustment of their tone.”⁶⁰⁷ Therefore Thomas’ prose in both languages will be considered here alongside his poetry.

The question as to what extent R. S. Thomas can be regarded as a resistance writer in the sense used in this thesis is an interesting one, and will of course be discussed throughout the course of the chapter, but I will introduce the main points of contention here. On the one hand, critics frequently use the word ‘resistance’ when discussing Thomas. Tony Brown for example talks about Thomas’ “assertion of the need for stubborn resistance to the intrusive world of consumerism and market values,”⁶⁰⁸ – a world he associates with English tourists and incomers to Wales – meaning that he saw a need for resistance that is in a way both nationalist and socialist, not so different to the ideas of both San Juan and Webb. Indeed Webb himself in a 1972 letter to *Poetry Wales* claimed that “...his [Thomas’] work acquires a relevance that transcends purely literary merit...”⁶⁰⁹ suggesting perhaps a political edge. Merchant, meanwhile, claims that:

If there can be such a literary phenomenon as ‘pure poetry’, then R. S. Thomas’s ‘purity’ as a poet seems compromised by his dual role as priest and self-conscious Welshman within a particular historical context; he assumes – demands – the old and honourable role of ‘unacknowledged legislator’ for the poet. This is of course no compromise but the source and strength of his content and of his peculiarly personal tone. This can be seen most clearly by examining a little more closely the commitment of his poetry to the social and political dilemmas of Wales.⁶¹⁰

This is a similar discussion to that of Harlow and San Juan on New Criticism where they condemn its influence in the development of the accepted idea that great art should be transcendental and thus not political or specific to a time or place. Merchant agrees that Thomas’ poetry cannot be seen as ‘pure’

⁶⁰⁶ Ned Thomas, ‘Introduction’, in *R. S. Thomas: Selected Prose*, ed. by Sandra Antsey (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1983), pp. 7-16 (p. 7).

⁶⁰⁷ W. Moelwyn Merchant, *R. S. Thomas* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989), p. 3.

⁶⁰⁸ Tony Brown, *R. S. Thomas* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), p. 2.

⁶⁰⁹ Harri Webb, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *Poetry Wales*, 7.2 (Spring 1972), 121-123 (p. 123).

⁶¹⁰ Moelwyn Merchant, p. 24.

from politics but argues that this is a strength not a weakness – a strength that reaches its apex when dealing with the issues of his nation – as happens in the work of many resistance writers.

In a 1969 lecture Thomas appeared to agree with Merchant's claim, stating,

...I have never been a pure poet in that way [a craftsman who focuses purely on words]. To make a poetic artifact out of words has never, or rarely ever been my first aim or satisfaction. There is always lurking in the back of my poetry a kind of moralistic or propagandist intention. It is as though, having found that I had a slight gift for putting words together to make poems, I used that gift as the best way I knew for getting a particular message across... Consequently I am tempted to preach this sermon in verse.⁶¹¹

Here Thomas expresses no concern or reserve about this “moralistic or propagandist intention,” but elsewhere his views appear different. In his article ‘Some Contemporary Scottish Writing’, despite admiring nationalist writers in Welsh, Scots and Gaelic he claims: “The muse is not to be browbeaten into singing an accompaniment to an ideology.”⁶¹² This is not, of course, the way in which resistance theorists view things. Thomas continues:

We must beware of lauding work merely because it has a nationalist flavour. Poetry can still be bad poetry for all its tang. Whatever we mean by good poetry, we are agreed that it always possesses the ‘rich, authentic tone’, and until we have cleared away a great deal of the rubbish in which we as a generation are bogged fast... and rid our ears of the continual monotonous drone of modern propaganda, we shall continue in our aimless cacophony.⁶¹³

Here, Thomas seems to be aligning himself with the traditional critical view that there is such a thing as “good” poetry, though he does not say what qualities a poem would have to possess in order to be considered “good,” apart from a “rich, authentic tone,” a quality that is not defined further. His dismissal of nationalistic work that does not fit his ideas of ‘good poetry’ is counter to resistance theory, as is his claim that the muse should not be forced to include ideology. On the other hand, he specifically praised writers like Hugh MacDiarmid in the same essay and held them up as examples for the Welsh to emulate. As seen in the chapter on Webb, MacDiarmid is, for San Juan, an exemplary

⁶¹¹ R. S. Thomas, ‘Words and the Poet’, in *R. S. Thomas: Selected Prose*, ed. by Sandra Anstey (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1983), pp. (82-3).

⁶¹² R. S. Thomas, ‘Some Contemporary Scottish Writing’, in *R. S. Thomas: Selected Prose*, pp. 29-40, (p. 34).

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

resistance writer. Therefore, it is unclear as to whether this article can be seen as establishing Thomas' claim to be a resistance writer or as undermining it.

His idea of the writer's role in politics and activism is also mixed. In his autobiography *Neb* he quotes Saunders Lewis as saying that creative writers could not be expected to act politically – rather, Thomas states, they would find their own way to contribute.⁶¹⁴ However Thomas was at times politically active, particularly after his retirement, as Brown has noted.⁶¹⁵ He became an organizer of his local CND branch, was part of a Trust that was set up in an effort to purchase Bardsey Island, and founded Cyfeillion Llŷn (the friends of Llŷn) to protect his local area's wildlife and Welshness. He also supported the law-breaking campaigns of Cymdeithas yr Iaith, though he did not take part in them.

Considering the contradictions inherent in Thomas' work, M. Wynn Thomas has suggested that there is a split between Thomas' poetry and his actions. In a 1972 article Dafydd Elis Thomas accused R. S. Thomas of “indulging in a poetics of despair,”⁶¹⁶ and of failing to support the young Cymdeithas yr Iaith activists in his writing.⁶¹⁷ Wynn Thomas concedes that this is true, within limits at least, and remarks:

R. S. Thomas had not really supported in his poetry (as opposed to his public remarks and actions) the courageous efforts being made at that time to protect and advance the Welsh language. He clearly could not find it in himself as a poet to muster a coherent, convinced counter-attack against the social, political and economic forces that threatened his Wales.⁶¹⁸

It is hard to argue against this. However I believe that a closer look from a resistance angle will reveal that the seeds at least of a counter-attack are present.

Thomas also has an interesting perspective on the resistance idea of all struggles being linked. In some places he seems to subscribe to it – as we shall see in the next section, he saw parallels between the Welsh situation and that of many other minority and subjugated peoples: the Irish, the Native Americans, the Czechs and Hungarians under Soviet rule. Moreover he saw capitalism as responsible for damaging Wales both culturally and environmentally, writing to Raymond Garlick:

⁶¹⁴ R. S. Thomas, *Neb*, pp. 123-4.

⁶¹⁵ Brown, *R. S. Thomas*, pp. 91-3.

⁶¹⁶ Dafydd Elis Thomas, “The Image of Wales in R. S. Thomas's Poetry”, *Poetry Wales* 7.2 (Spring 1972), 59-66 (p. 66).

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-6. The claims made in this article will be considered in more detail later in the chapter.

⁶¹⁸ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013) p. 91.

There is misery among my patriotic friends here, as they see a nation and its language being destroyed by a hundred and one things, which I hardly need detail to you. And the shame is that Welsh supineness, indifference, materialism and a willingness to be conditioned are almost as much to blame as outside pressures. Not that the world is in much better shape. The materialism of the West is bound to bring nemesis upon it before long. It is disheartening to see how little support green policies command at the polls, while the rest are poisoning the earth to death.⁶¹⁹

In his extensive study of Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, M. Wynn Thomas compares the Welsh poet with Denise Levertov, writing:

As a ‘speaker’ against social evils, Levertov was as indefatigable as she was impassioned, always insistent that ‘the days of separating war, and racism, and pollution of natural resources, and social injustice, and male chauvinism, into neat little compartments are over’... Thomas would have been sympathetic to such a radically holistic approach. An objector to the Second World War, he went on to protest against the military’s appropriation of Welsh land, the building of nuclear power stations, the violent degrading of the local environment (particularly in his local Llŷn), and, of course, the colonisation of Wales, and the undermining of the Welsh language and culture. Of these causes, it was these last only that he addressed explicitly in his poetry, whereas Levertov was incomparably more politicised...⁶²⁰

However, unlike San Juan and Webb, Thomas did not seem to see the class struggle and the national struggle as one. In another letter to Garlick he states bluntly: “I can’t forgive the miners for their lack of interest in Welsh,”⁶²¹ and claims: “I have always blamed them for setting the class struggle before the national one. If they had identified with the Welsh cause instead of the workers in England and the Labour party, we would have self-government by now.”⁶²² He clearly does not see the link between the miners’ struggle and the national struggle in the way Webb did, though in a backhanded way he does acknowledge the importance of the miners’ support (or lack thereof) to the Welsh cause.⁶²³ However,

⁶¹⁹ R. S. Thomas, *R. S. Thomas: Letters to Raymond Garlick 1951-1999* ed. by Jason Walford Davies (Llandysul: Gomer, 2009), p. 144.

⁶²⁰ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, pp. 249-50.

⁶²¹ R. S. Thomas, *R. S. Thomas: Letters to Raymond Garlick 1951-1999*, p. 124.

⁶²² *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁶²³ It is important to note that both these views come from private letters and therefore cannot really be counted as resistance literature. However, they give a useful idea of Thomas’ mindset and are therefore worth bearing in mind when examining his work. Moreover the second view is supported in the opening poem of the short collection *What is a Welshman?* which ends with the lines, “how green is the childhood/ of a glib people taunting/ them with the abandonment/ of the national for the class

unlike Webb, he does not consider why the miners might not have felt able to identify with the Welsh cause that had put so much emphasis, at least initially, on a rural Welsh-speaking identity. This highlights one of the major differences between Webb and Thomas; Thomas blames the miners for their lack of identification with the Welsh cause, Webb, in general, blamed the way the Welsh cause was presented to them.

Another issue which is crucial in establishing Thomas' claim as a resistance writer is the question of his audience. As seen in the introduction, the question of audience has always been an issue for Welsh writers in English and for resistance writers. In the case of Webb the answer was relatively straightforward – he wrote for those of his countrymen who could not speak Welsh. Thomas, however, was traditionally dismissive, indeed contemptuous, of those areas of Wales where Welsh was not spoken in his time, and it seems unlikely he would address their inhabitants, or indeed that many of them would have wanted to read his work considering the opinions of them that he voiced both inside his work and outside of it. For whom then was he writing? The Welsh-language Welsh people with whom he longed to identify? Or the English whom he despised but who published his work? This is an important consideration with regards to his claim to be a resistance writer and one which will be discussed in the third section of this chapter.

R. S. Thomas produced an extensive body of writing; some twenty collections of poetry, as well as various uncollected poems, and numerous prose articles. This chapter will focus primarily on his political poetry written mainly in the 1960s and the prose works that complement those poems, along with the early Iago Prytherch poems. M. Wynn Thomas has warned of the dangers of taking parts or periods of Thomas' poetry separately rather than seeing the entire work as an integrated whole,⁶²⁴ while Ned Thomas and Walford Davies have argued that it is a mistake to see R. S. Thomas' Welshness as being revealed only in the political poetry.⁶²⁵ I fully agree with these cautions but exploring the entire body of work is beyond the scope of this chapter so I will focus on the above mentioned poems as they are the best place to begin when evaluating Thomas' claim to be a resistance writer.

Unlike the majority of the writers examined in this thesis, Thomas has received a reasonable amount of critical attention and there are several studies discussing his work, life and opinions. Consequently,

struggle.” R. S. Thomas, ‘He lives here’, in *What is a Welshman?* (Swansea: Christopher Davies, 1974), p. 1. Here too the choice is presented as being the national cause or the class cause – to choose both as Webb would advocate is not possible.

⁶²⁴ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 9.

⁶²⁵ Ned Thomas, ‘R. S. Thomas and Wales’, *The Page's Drift: R. S. Thomas at eighty*, ed. by M. Wynn Thomas (Bridgend: Seren, 1993), pp. 211-220 p. 220; Jason Walford Davies, p. 16.

much of what will be discussed in this chapter will have already been mentioned by other critics. However, this chapter will attempt to draw on these points in order to evaluate Thomas' status as a resistance writer, something that has not been considered and that will, consequently, read his work from a new angle.

This chapter will begin with a consideration of Thomas' views on Wales and England and the relationship between them. This will show that he sees Wales as effectively a colony, though he does not often use that word, and that he frequently compares Wales with other subjugated nations. As we saw, Webb used a similar tactic and it can be seen as the first step towards seeing all struggles as one - a crucial part of the resistance literature paradigm. At times he also begins to examine the uneven structures of power between Wales and England. The chapter will then consider the important question of his audience and, following that, his attempts to speak truth to power. It will then discuss the accusations of being too negative and bleak that have been leveled against his work and consider both whether these are just and whether that affects his ability to produce resistance literature. Finally it will consider the type of resistance that his work espouses and his apparent creation of Sánchez Piñol's "enclaves of resistance." Rather than drawing on specific areas of resistance theory these final two sections will concentrate on the overall effect of Thomas' work. On the whole, I will argue, his Welsh resistance is less open and inclusive than Webb's but that there are signs that a broader approach is developing in his work.

Wales and England's relationship in R. S. Thomas' work

Before going any further, a discussion of Thomas' views of Wales and England and the relationship between them may prove useful. Recent criticism has noted some contradictions with regards to these opinions,⁶²⁶ so it is important to note that, as with all resistance writing, the focus here will be on Thomas' view as portrayed in his writing and public statements. The purpose of this chapter is not to investigate what he actually thought and felt but what he stated in his contribution to the cultural life of Wales.

Like Webb, Thomas presented Wales as a nation subjugated by England and blamed England for many of Wales' ills. The English are constantly presented as invaders, whether as soldiers in the past or as tourists and second home buyers in the present. In his autobiographies Thomas complains several times about the influx of English tourists to the Llŷn.⁶²⁷ In the age of nuclear threat he was also concerned that Wales would be dragged into England's wars after the central government had disregarded the wishes of the county councils of Wales that had declared their areas nuclear-free zones.⁶²⁸

Like Webb, Thomas also made comparisons between Wales and other subjugated countries and cultures, and, as with Webb, this sees him taking the first step towards the idea that all struggles are one. He does not quite come to this realisation but certainly sees similarities to the Welsh situation in oppressed and formerly oppressed countries. In *Blwyddyn yn Llŷn*, he wrote about the upheaval in Eastern Europe with the Berlin Wall coming down and the gradual breakup of the Soviet Empire, resulting in the liberation and independence of many small nations. While he is careful to stress that these nations have suffered more than Wales, he sees the parallels and regrets that Wales is not making a similar bid for self-government.⁶²⁹ In *Neb* meanwhile, he takes a further step, recognizing that

⁶²⁶ See, for example, M. Wynn Thomas' statement, "Not the least complex of the tangle of contradictions at the core of his being was the contrast between his hostility to most things English and a snobbishness consistent with his rather plummy, consciously cultivated Episcopal accent. This fierce champion of Welsh-language culture chose to provide his son with a thoroughly anglicising education at a leading English public school. Yet, in discussion with me, he caustically remarked that any Welsh-language poets who contemplated publishing a bilingual volume should be warned that in including English they would just be making up to a cannibal." M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 5.

⁶²⁷ See for example, R. S. Thomas, *Neb*, (Caernarfon: Gwasg Gwynedd, 1992), p. 85 and R. S. Thomas, *Blwyddyn yn Llŷn*, (Caernarfon: Gwasg Gwynedd, 1990), pp. 41, 52-3, 59-60.

⁶²⁸ R. S. Thomas, *Neb*, p. 114.

⁶²⁹ R. S. Thomas, *Blwyddyn yn Llŷn*, pp. 89, 93-4.

England has oppressed countries other than Wales: “Mae’r Saeson yn hen lawiau ar ddelio hefo cenhedloedd darostyngedig; cawsant ganrifoedd o brofiad. Ystyrier y trais yn Iwerddon.”⁶³⁰

The most striking comparison between Wales and a subjugated people, though, comes in his Welsh-language review of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. Here Thomas comments favourably on Dee Brown’s book which portrays the Native Americans sympathetically and chronicles their struggles to keep their native territories. Unsurprisingly, Thomas sees parallels with Wales, though again he stresses that the Native Americans have suffered more: “Nid yw dioddefiadau’r Cymry i’w cymharu ag eiddo’r Indiaid Cochion, er bod tranc y Cymry’n mynd ymlaen ers canrifoedd. Ond y mae cymhariaethau rhyngddynt a gwahaniaethau, pob un yn arwyddolcaol dros ben.”⁶³¹ Earlier in the review he describes how the Native Americans were legally cheated as well as driven from their lands. Turning to the Welsh he writes:

... goresgynnwyd Cymru gan y Saeson a chipiwyd y rhan orau o’n tir. Erbyn heddiw, wrth gwrs, nid gwiw sôn am drais. Mae’n gwlad heddiw’n cael ei meddiannu gan y Saeson mewn modd hollol gyfreithlon, yn ôl ddeddf y Sais, sef trwy bres. Ac y mae’r rhan fwyaf o’n cyd-Gymry’n gwbl ddi-hîd, cyhyd ag y cânt yr elw ariannol.⁶³²

The parallels with the Native Americans are made very clear and through them the state of contemporary Wales as a result of its subordinate position. Thomas highlights the uneven structures of power that exist between Wales and England, stressing the financial and legal power that the latter has and how it abuses this. Welsh land is being taken over by the English and, even worse, many Welsh people are happy to acquiesce in this as long as they make a profit.

⁶³⁰ R. S. Thomas, *Neb*, pp. 109-10. “The English are old hands at dealing with subjugated nations; they have had centuries of experience. Consider the violence in Ireland.” R. S. Thomas, ‘No-One’, in *R. S. Thomas: Autobiographies*, ed. and trans. by Jason Walford Davies (London: Phoenix, 1998), p. 94. All translations are from this version.

⁶³¹ R. S. Thomas, ‘Adolygiad ar *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*’ p.80. “The sufferings of the Welsh are not to be compared with those of the Indians, although the decline of the Welsh has been going on for centuries. But there are comparisons to be made between them, and contrasts, each extremely significant.” R. S. Thomas, ‘[Review of] *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*’, trans. by John Phillips, Tony Bianchi and Catherine Thomas, in *Selected Prose* pp. 175-81 (p. 179). All translations are from this version.

⁶³² *Ibid.*, p. 80. “... Wales was conquered by the English and our best land taken. Nowadays of course, it won’t do to talk about violence. Our land today is being taken over by the English completely legally, according to English law, namely by means of money, and most of our fellow Welshmen do not care at all, so long as they make a profit.” p. 179.

This last point is important as, far more than Webb, Thomas also blamed the Welsh people for colluding with England. Whereas Webb tended to direct his ire at certain public figures in Wales – those who aspired to be English - Thomas was far less discriminating. He saw the majority of his compatriots as either colluding with English rule for profit or too spineless to stand up for themselves and their country. He could be scathing about Welsh public figures too – in the comparison of Wales with Eastern Europe he lamented both that very few Welsh people would turn out to protest the fate of the language compared to the fifty million who turned out to demand freedom in Prague, and that: “Ar ben hynny roedd ganddynt [pobl Dwyrain Ewrop] arweinyddion oedd yn wleidyddol aeddfed a chraff. Mae ein harweinwyr bondigrybwyll ni’n wleidyddol naïf neu’n anonest, os credant y gallwn gadw’n hunaniaeth tra’n siarad Saesneg fel ein prif iaith a gwneud cyfeillion mynwesol o’r Saeson.”⁶³³ Here the blame is fairly evenly spread between politicians and electorate, but elsewhere the ordinary citizens bear the full brunt of Thomas’ condemnation. Writing in his autobiography *Neb* of the remoteness and poverty of the farmhouses in the Montgomeryshire hills and the loss of the cultured Welsh language community that had once existed there, he claims “...daeth elfen wleidyddol i’w ganu hefyd, ynghyd â chryn chwerwder oherwydd gormes y Saeson a barodd i hyn ddigwydd.”⁶³⁴ However he then adds: “Ond gyda gonestrwydd bardd gwelodd hefyd ffaeiddau’i gyd-Gymry, nad oedd ganddynt ddigon o asgwrn cefn i godi a mynnu’r hawl i’w llywodraethu eu hunain.”⁶³⁵ Similarly, in the well known poem ‘Reservoirs’ the English may be “elbowing our language”⁶³⁶ but they are doing so “into the grave that we have dug for it.”⁶³⁷ This is very far from Webb’s ringing declaration: “We believe in the Welsh people.”⁶³⁸

These comments hint at other aspects of Thomas’ views about Wales that are revealed in both his writing and in public comments. Firstly, his view of Wales is, in many ways, both essentialist and exclusive. In his early years of writing in particular, he tends to represent the Welsh as a racial group

⁶³³ R. S. Thomas, *Blwyddyn yn Llŷn*, p. 94. “...they [the Eastern European nations] had leaders who were politically mature and wise. Our own unmentionable leaders are politically naïve or dishonest if they think that we can keep our identity while speaking English as our main language and making bosom friends of the English.” R. S. Thomas, *A Year in Llŷn*, in *R. S. Thomas: Autobiographies*, ed. and trans. by Jason Walford Davies, pp. 111-71 (p. 170). All translations are from this version.

⁶³⁴ R. S. Thomas, *Neb*, p. 51. “...a political element came into his poetry, together with a great deal of bitterness because of the English oppression that caused these things to happen.” pp. 58-9.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51 “But with the honesty of a poet he also saw the failings of his fellow-Welshmen, who had not sufficient backbone to rise and demand the right to govern themselves.” p. 59.

⁶³⁶ R. S. Thomas, ‘Reservoirs’, *Collected Poems* (London: J. M. Dent, 2003), p. 194.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁶³⁸ Harri Webb, ‘We Believe in the Welsh People’, *No Half-way House*, pp. 64-6 (p. 64).

rather than as a linguistic or national community. This will be discussed in more detail in the last section of the chapter. However, he was also passionately attached to the Welsh language that he had begun to learn at the age of thirty. With what was perhaps the zeal of the convert he worked to protect and promote it, seeing in it the key to true Welshness, the “inner sanctum.”⁶³⁹ In contrast, he saw English as a foreign language in Wales. This view had two potentially damaging results, however. Firstly, it meant that Thomas always struggled with the idea that he was a Welsh writer who had to compose in English, especially as he could not really accept the idea of a truly Welsh literature in English. As M. Wynn Thomas has shown, this may have largely been as a result of the influence of Saunders Lewis,⁶⁴⁰ the great Welsh-language writer and nationalist who in 1939 denied that there could be such a thing as an Anglo-Welsh literature.⁶⁴¹ Thomas actually went to see Lewis early in his career and received the latter’s blessing to write in English for Wales,⁶⁴² but this seems to have been of only limited comfort to him. He felt it deeply as can be seen by the numerous references to the issue in his Welsh-language autobiographies and his extended treatment of it in ‘Hunanladdiad y Llenor’ (‘The Creative Writer’s Suicide’).⁶⁴³ As Ned Thomas notes, his view on this develops over the course of his career, becoming ever more uncompromising. Early on in his career it seemed to be less of an issue for him and he was able to see the possibility of young English-language writers like himself taking up the “mantle” of the previous generation of great Welsh-language writers. Later however he appeared to change his mind and therefore lament even more his inability to compose poetry in his national language.⁶⁴⁴

The second result of this idolising of the Welsh language was a tendency to see those parts of Wales where Welsh was not spoken as somehow less Welsh. He describes the inhabitants of his curacies on the Welsh border as “Cymry Seisnigaidd eu hacen a’u hagwedd.”⁶⁴⁵ In both ‘Y Llwybrau Gynt’ and *Neb* he describes looking west towards the mountains of North Wales from these curacies and deciding

⁶³⁹ This term is used by both M. Wynn Thomas and Daniel Williams to describe R. S. Thomas’ view of Welsh-language Wales. M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 85; Daniel Williams, *Wales Unchained*, pp. 142-3.

⁶⁴⁰ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, pp. 95-9.

⁶⁴¹ Saunders Lewis, ‘Is there an Anglo-Welsh Literature?’ (Cardiff: Cardiff section of the Guild of Graduates of the University of Wales, 1939).

⁶⁴² R. S. Thomas, *Neb*, p. 45.

⁶⁴³ R. S. Thomas, ‘Hunanladdiad y Llenor’, in *Pe Medrwn yr Iaith ac Ysgrifau Eraill*, ed. by Tony Brown and Bedwyr Lewis Jones, (Abertawe: Christopher Davies, 1988), pp. 103-110.

⁶⁴⁴ Ned Thomas, ‘Introduction’, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁴⁵ R. S. Thomas, ‘Y Llwybrau Gynt’, in *Pe Medrwn yr Iaith ac Ysgrifau Eraill*, pp. 58-76 (p. 67). “Welshmen with English accents and attitudes.” R. S. Thomas, ‘Former Paths’ in *R. S. Thomas: Autobiographies*, ed. and trans. by Jason Walford Davies, pp. 1-16 (p.10). All translations are from this version.

to learn Welsh “er mwyn cael dod yn ôl i wir Gymru.”⁶⁴⁶ In ‘Y Llwybrau Gynt’ he does add “fy nychymyg,”⁶⁴⁷ acknowledging that this Wales is one of his construction, but it is still very clear that for him Wales meant the Welsh language. In *Neb* there is no such qualification. Many critics have written about his movement west in search of Welsh-speaking Wales and his disillusionment in the parishes of Manafon and Eglwys-Fach when he found that English predominated there.⁶⁴⁸ He was perhaps even more dismissive of the industrialised valleys of the South as he saw industrialisation as alien to Wales in much the way English was. In a letter to Raymond Garlick he writes “I have little sympathy with the ‘Good a Welshman as you, mun’ attitude of the south.”⁶⁴⁹ For Thomas the true Wales was rural as well as Welsh-speaking. In his autobiographies he talks of beginning to get “...darlun cyfun o Gymru, ei mynyddoedd, ei rhostir a’i nentydd ewynnol.”⁶⁵⁰ As Justin Wintle notes however, there are some notable absences from this view,⁶⁵¹ absences that Harri Webb would not have tolerated. Indeed, such a statement expresses the very view against which Webb raged in his article ‘The Welsh Establishment.’⁶⁵² Thomas’ view was not an uncommon view, but it could be extremely damaging and divisive. By portraying these areas and their inhabitants as somehow less than truly Welsh he was increasing their alienation from Wales and actually damaging the cause of Welsh nationhood, making it harder for all citizens of Wales to unite in common purpose. In *Neb* Thomas bemoans the fact that the Welsh do not unite,⁶⁵³ but does not stop to think about why they might not, or what contribution, if any, his own attitude might make to that lack of unity.

There is one final important aspect of Thomas’ view of Wales and England to consider as it bears directly on the type of resistance that he espoused. Thomas was a committed pacifist who rebuked the

⁶⁴⁶ R. S. Thomas, ‘Y Llwybrau Gynt’, p. 67. “...in order to return to the true Wales.” In *Neb* he phrases it slightly differently, “...fel modd cael dod yn ôl i’r wir Gymru,” R. S. Thomas, *Neb*, p. 40, which Walford Davies translates as, “...as a means of enabling him to return to the true Wales.” p. 50, but the sentiment is the same.

⁶⁴⁷ R. S. Thomas, ‘Y Llwybrau Gynt’, p. 67. “...of my imagination.” p. 10.

⁶⁴⁸ See for example, Ned Thomas, ‘R. S. Thomas and Wales’; Jason Walford Davies, ‘Introduction’ in *R. S. Thomas: Autobiographies* pp. ix-xxxv (pp. xviii-xx).

⁶⁴⁹ R. S. Thomas, *Letters to Raymond Garlick 1951-1999*, p. 128.

⁶⁵⁰ R. S. Thomas, *Neb*, p. 50. “...a unified picture of Wales, her mountains, her moorland and her foaming streams.” p. 58.

⁶⁵¹ Justin Wintle, *Furious Interiors* (London: Harper Collins, 1996), p. 196.

⁶⁵² Harri Webb, ‘The Welsh Establishment’, in *No Half-way House*, pp. 147-8. It is also against San Juan’s principles. As we saw in the introduction and in the chapter on Webb, San Juan declared that the nation included all classes and ethnicities and elsewhere he specifically mentioned the importance of both workers and peasants. As we shall see, Thomas saw the latter as essentially Welsh but disregarded the former.

⁶⁵³ R. S. Thomas, *Neb*, p. 110.

Church in Wales for not taking a more pacifist stance during the Second World War. However, his pacifism frequently came into conflict with his nationalism. M. Wynn Thomas claims that:

It was for Thomas a matter of vital importance to establish, to his own satisfaction, that Welsh independence might feasibly be gained by acts of courage not involving armed struggle (such as the non-violent campaign of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg...⁶⁵⁴

However, Wynn Thomas also notes that Thomas is aware that effective independence movements can rarely evade bloodshed completely, quoting Thomas' statement in *Neb*:

The sadness of things is that the only way to freedom is through fighting for it. That is the lesson of history. Though R. S. was a pacifist, as was fitting for a priest, he knew of no example to the contrary, except India... He couldn't recommend violence even in the Welsh cause.⁶⁵⁵

Thomas appears to be wrestling with his conscience and beliefs here. His abiding principles seem to be preventing him from advocating what he feels the nation needs. However, it is not quite true that he did not recommend violence in the case of Wales. In addition to supporting the lawbreaking (but non-violent) actions of Cymdeithas yr Iaith, he also, more surprisingly, agreed publicly with the burning of English-owned second homes in Wales by the organization Meibion Glyndŵr. Though its members took care to ensure the houses were empty at the time of burning, there was always the possibility that someone would be injured or killed as a result of these actions. When asked about his support in the light of this, Thomas responded somewhat shockingly: "What is one death against the death of the whole Welsh nation?"⁶⁵⁶ When asked whether he was not effectively advocating violence with these words, he replied:

I don't think so. It's being quite reasonable. We have to be on the defensive in Wales because we are a small country of two and a half million people living alongside an English nation of 55 million people. When we talk about the death of one English person, we mean a physical death. But Christ said, 'Don't fear those that have the power to destroy the body, fear those that have the power to destroy both the body and the soul.' And when you're dealing with a nation,

⁶⁵⁴ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 159.

⁶⁵⁵ R. S. Thomas, quoted in M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 159.

⁶⁵⁶ R. S. Thomas quoted in Brown, *R. S. Thomas*, p. 91.

you're dealing with a spiritual concept, and there's no doubt that the soul of Wales, the identity of Wales, have been eroded and are being eroded further all the time. That is why I said that.⁶⁵⁷

Interestingly, in this instance, Thomas goes further than Webb who, as we have seen, could not advocate violence against the English. Webb was openly militant and had a more radical goal – complete independence for Wales, while Thomas focused mainly on the fate of the Welsh language. But here the pacifist Thomas surpasses him in extremism. To do Thomas justice, he is not suggesting that violence in the Welsh case is a good thing, and elsewhere he claimed that he would be deeply saddened if the activities of Meibion Glyndŵr caused deaths.⁶⁵⁸ However he is still saying what Webb could not: that English death would not be too high a price to pay for the survival of the Welsh language.

On another occasion, when an interviewer noted that he could be quite politically incorrect about the English, Thomas responded: “If you are defending a minority you have to be extreme.”⁶⁵⁹ While he does not mention the type of extremism here, and the interviewer was talking about his public comments about the English, he can hardly have been unaware that by using the word ‘extreme’ in his reply, he would be making a link, albeit a nebulous one to extremist groups that use violence.

As Brown comments:

Manifestly, Thomas was walking a perilous line between the pacifist beliefs he had held since the Second World War and his passionate, even desperate, awareness of the need to protect the Welsh language and the culture that it embodies. Here, in being willing to countenance the fact that direct action may involve fatalities, not only is he clearly moving away from the Gandhian position of passive resistance but he is seemingly willing to blur the classic distinction between physical action against property and action against people.⁶⁶⁰

This change of view and idea of resistance is interesting and suggests that Thomas may be a more complex and radical resistance writer than might at first be thought. However, as Wynn Thomas has noted, this resistance only seems to appear in Thomas' public pronouncements, not in his writing which

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 92.

⁶⁵⁸ Anon., ‘Poet Denies Support for Arson Campaign’, *Wales on Sunday*, 23 April 1995 (clipping, page number not available).

⁶⁵⁹ R. S. Thomas quoted in Wintle, p. 29.

⁶⁶⁰ Brown, *R. S. Thomas*, p. 92.

makes claiming him as a resistance *writer* more problematic.⁶⁶¹ Answering the question of for whom he wrote will shed further light on the matter.

Audience

San Juan claims that consideration of a writer's audience is a question often dismissed by established critics:

For most Western scholars and critics, the pivotal issue proposed by Mao Tse-tung in his well-known Talks at the *Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* (1942) – “For whom is the writer writing?” – sounds ominously political and therefore irrelevant to literary enquiry. With some exceptions, the reigning conception of art as divorced from politics or any social extrapersonal criteria – the kernel of what is called the bourgeois liberal dispensation – still forms the basis for critical judgement in the learned journals and universities.⁶⁶²

This is not, however, necessarily the case in the field of Welsh Writing in English where the question of audience has been crucial for establishing the literature as genuinely Welsh. Questions of audience have been debated within this discipline since its beginning.⁶⁶³ There has therefore been a reasonable amount of discussion surrounding Thomas' intended audience and I will draw on that existing work in this next section.

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the question of Thomas' audience is key to establishing him as a resistance writer. Generally in the twentieth century, Welsh authors who write in English have had two choices of audience: their fellow English-speaking Welsh or the English-language reader outside Wales - predominantly in the rest of the United Kingdom. As already seen, with a rich literature available in the Welsh language, most who could read Welsh chose to do so, regarding English-language work by Welsh authors as foreign. However this began to change in the second half of the twentieth century. The two literatures of Wales began to come closer together and two of the writers responsible for this were R. S. Thomas and Emyr Humphreys. As Tony Bianchi notes, both the Welsh-language and the Anglophone traditions regarded Thomas as their own and a similar thing happened

⁶⁶¹ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 91.

⁶⁶² San Juan, *From the Masses, to the Masses*, p. 23.

⁶⁶³ See for example Bohata, pp. 133-6, 118-26; Harri Pritchard Jones, ‘Review of Glyn Jones’ *The Dragon has Two Tongues*, *Poetry Wales* 3 (Spring 1969), 45-50 (pp. 47-9).

with Humphreys.⁶⁶⁴ These authors therefore had a third potential audience available to them – the Welsh-language Welsh - complicating the issue of for whom exactly they wrote.

The matter is of course made yet more complex by the fact that none of these potential audiences are monolithic blocks – readers within them will be differentiated from each other by gender, class, religion, location, employment and a plethora of other things. Bianchi’s essay focuses primarily on Thomas’ Anglo-Welsh audience. Certainly the poems Bianchi examines have a deeper resonance for a Welsh reader but I would argue that it is a very specific kind of Welsh reader – one who probably has little Welsh or who may have acquired it later in life, likely to be sympathetic to, if not an active adherent of, Welsh nationalism, middle class, educated and sharing Thomas’ view of the ideal Wales as rural and removed from modernity. As Bianchi notes when discussing ‘A Welshman at St James’ Park’:

The ideal reader understands the poem therefore [sic], by acknowledging his Welshness; but in doing so must also accept that that Welshness is synonymous with a rejection of urban society and of the mass, mindless materialism implied by the image of birds “seduced...by/ bread they are pelted with”.⁶⁶⁵

This poem, consequently, might find little resonance in a dweller of the South Wales valleys or of Cardiff or Swansea who would for the most part be unable to see their own identity in the poem’s depiction of Welshness. It therefore seems unlikely that these people, English-speaking Welsh though they are, were among Thomas’ intended audience.

The phrase ideal reader hints at an important concept; authors do not just write for their audiences - they also construct them, as Bianchi and Andrew Webb have argued in their essays on R. S. Thomas’ audience.⁶⁶⁶ As already mentioned, Bianchi’s essay examines Thomas’ construction of his ideal Anglophone Welsh reader. He highlights a variety of Thomas’ techniques but the conclusion is inescapable though Bianchi does not openly state it, Thomas constructs his Anglo-Welsh audience to be very like him – rural, anti-modern and loving of, indeed feeling subordinate to as Bianchi points out,

⁶⁶⁴ Tony Bianchi, ‘R. S. Thomas and his Readers’ in *Critical Writings on R. S. Thomas*, ed. by Sandra Anstey (Bridgend: Seren, 1992), pp. 154-81 (p. 162).

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁶⁶⁶ Bianchi, ‘R. S. Thomas and his Readers’; Andrew Webb, ‘R. S. Thomas, Emyr Humphreys and the Possibility of a Bilingual Culture’, in *The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature*, ed. by Geraint Evans and Helen Fulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 529-556.

the Welsh-language literary tradition.⁶⁶⁷ There is little mention in his poetry or prose of the inhabitants of the industrialised valleys of the South and what little there is is usually derogatory. In the poem ‘He lives here’ the industrial valleys are described in unpleasant terms “bleak hills/ black with the dust of coal,” and the miners are called “lost souls,” who speak “a language/ filched from the dictionary of the tribes we await.”⁶⁶⁸ M. Wynn Thomas and Dafydd Elis Thomas have drawn comparisons with Saunders Lewis’ work especially the poem ‘Y Dilyw 1939’ which depicted the industrial valleys as an ugly blight upon the face of Wales and its inhabitants as almost subhuman.⁶⁶⁹ This was not likely to encourage the people depicted in this way to pay attention to his poetry or to read more of it.

In his article, however, Andrew Webb argues that Thomas is seeking to create two types of bilingual audience. The first type is the fully bilingual, that is Welsh-speakers who also speak English.⁶⁷⁰ The second is an audience that, while unable to speak Welsh, lives in Wales and is aware of the existence of cultural differences and tensions in a way that a non-Welsh-speaker from outside of Wales would not be.⁶⁷¹ His argument, which will be explored further in later sections, is plausible but again I would argue that Thomas’ audience of the second type would be Welsh people who already felt as he did, rather than people who might be converted to the cause of Welsh resistance. The majority of the English-speaking Welsh, those from the valleys and cities of the South, are unlikely to be receptive to the resistance element of his work.

Despite this, however, most people would agree that Thomas wrote for a Welsh audience of some sort. M. Wynn Thomas claims that “he [R. S. Thomas] clearly produced a significant body of poetry for, and sometimes deliberately addressed it to, the Welsh people;”⁶⁷², while Thomas himself in a questionnaire issued by Keidrych Rhys, the editor of the magazine *Wales*, when answering the question “For whom do you write?” quoted Yeats’ famous words about writing for his own race.⁶⁷³ However, surprising though it may be in a poet who so stridently declared his Welshness, I would argue that it is possible to suggest that Thomas’ primary target audience was English. Wintle claims “from early on R. S. sought, and found, a readership beyond the so-called ‘Celtic fringe’,” noting that all but the first two collections

⁶⁶⁷ Bianchi, p. 160.

⁶⁶⁸ R. S. Thomas, ‘He lives here’, in *What is a Welshman?* (Swansea: Christopher Davies, 1974), p. 1.

⁶⁶⁹ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, pp. 99-100; Dafydd Elis Thomas, ‘The Image of Wales in R. S. Thomas’s Poetry’, pp. 62-3.

⁶⁷⁰ Andrew Webb, p. 533.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 533.

⁶⁷² M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 105.

⁶⁷³ “Yeats’s words come to mind: “All day I’d looked in the face/ What I had hoped ‘twould be/ To write for my own race/ And the reality.”” Quoted in Wintle, p. 220.

of Thomas' poetry were published by London publishers.⁶⁷⁴ Although I do not think that Wintle has taken adequate consideration of the paucity of English-language publishers in Wales and thus the frequent necessity for Anglophone Welsh writers to publish in England, the contention is an interesting one. Some of Thomas' poems are definitely addressed to an English audience – 'Welcome' for example which will be discussed in more detail in the section on enclaves of resistance.⁶⁷⁵ Others like the hill country poems are arguably portraying a distinct way of life for an external audience. In this he is not so dissimilar to writers like Rhys Davies who have sometimes been accused of writing about their Welsh communities for the pleasure of the English (although, as I will argue in the next chapter, I think Davies is doing more than this). Given the context of Thomas' autobiographies, letters and public announcements it is difficult to see him doing this, and to do him justice the external audience could easily be people of Wales external to the way of life that he is describing, but this is not clear from the poems alone and it could be argued that R. S. Thomas is writing, at least partly, for an English audience. Certainly he was widely read in England.

Ironically, his English audience gave Thomas an opportunity to perform one of the main functions of a resistance writer - speaking truth to power. This will be discussed in the next section.

Speaking Truth to Power

An important aspect of resistance writing, one that has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, is the idea of speaking truth to power – that is announcing the injustices one's people have suffered to the world, including the power(s) responsible. Indeed, it could be argued that this is a major justification for writing in a world language like English or Spanish and so is particularly important to the writers in this thesis. All the writers in this thesis speak truth to power to some extent – we have already seen some examples in *Victus* - but it could be argued that Thomas, with his audience outside Wales, had more opportunity to do so than most. Moreover, given that his writing does not make overt

⁶⁷⁴ Wintle, p. 231.

⁶⁷⁵ M. Wynn Thomas actually claims that this poem is also intended for a Welsh audience. "...The poem is for home consumption, as much as for foreign or English consumption. It is indirectly addressed – addressed, that, is, via the English – to the Welsh people whose national anthem, it sometimes seems, is the old radio favourite, 'We'll keep a welcome in the hillsides'." M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, pp. 86-7. However, I would still argue that the intended audience is English and the poem an expression of the poet's resentment towards them.

calls to arms the way writers like Webb do, examining his method of speaking truth to power is a different and interesting angle to take when considering his claim to be a resistance writer.

Thomas recognises the importance of writing about his nation's problems for others in the poem 'Commission,' written for Raymond Garlick. Having congratulated the English-born Garlick for choosing to live in Wales, learn Welsh and work on behalf of his adopted nation, Thomas goes on to outline Garlick's especial role as he sees it:

You know our grievance, know the bitter poison,
Black as despair, seeping from the wound
Your country dealt us; plead our rightful case
To those who come to us for what we give,
Who take and leave us ruined by their taking,
Since we must give in ways they understand.
They cannot see, the stale prerogative
Of history foists them on our luckless land;
Open their eyes, show them the heart that's breaking.⁶⁷⁶

Thomas charges Garlick with recounting Wales' woes to England and with showing them the effects their actions have had, even if these effects were not intended. This is very close to the idea of speaking truth to power, of letting the wider world know about a small culture's plight. I would argue that Thomas undertakes a similar project in much of his English-language writing and attempts to speak truth to the power of the British government and the English majority in the British Isles. While his potential audience is anyone who can read his work, I think that his focus in the following poems is the kind of reader for whom Ned Thomas claimed that he wrote *The Welsh Extremist* as an attempt to convey the pressures upon the Welsh-language community,

...a kind of Englishman...who is not concerned with power and size but with quality of life...who realizes that a language is something that people rightly want to preserve, that

⁶⁷⁶ R. S. Thomas, 'Commission' in *R. S. Thomas: Uncollected Poems*, ed. by Tony Brown and Jason Walford Davies, (Tarsset: Bloodaxe, 2013), p. 43.

community is not something to be lamented when you have lost it in new towns and housing estates, but to be cherished where you have it; who is revolutionary enough to believe that things really can be changed, that we can imagine something better than our present society and move towards it...⁶⁷⁷

This, above all, is the type of reader outside of Wales that Thomas is most likely to touch through his speaking truth to power.

San Juan's focus when discussing speaking truth to power is the Guatemalan activist and writer Rigoberta Menchu whose testimonio *I, Rigoberta Menchu* describes her coming to activism as a result of the torture and murder of her family and the attempted genocide of her people. Once again, it is important to stress that I am in no way suggesting that the experiences of the Welsh people are comparable in scale or horror to those of the Guatemalans, merely that San Juan's commentary may provide some interesting insights when applied to R. S. Thomas.

Much of the discussion of *I, Rigoberta Menchu* focuses on postmodern elements which are not particularly relevant to Thomas' work as it is considered in this chapter. One thing that San Juan does discuss however is the idea that Menchu is trying to open up a dialogue. He stresses that "the basis for egalitarian communicative exchange is lacking," but argues that Menchu does at least make an attempt at starting a dialogue.⁶⁷⁸ And, as I will show, I believe that Thomas, with his audience outside Wales, is attempting to do the same thing.

Many of Thomas' poems deal with specific injustices inflicted upon the Welsh people by the English-dominated British government, though as seen earlier, he was quick to admit to Welsh culpability as well. 'Reservoirs' - the poem mentioned in relation to this - is a good place to start in examining Thomas' speaking truth to power. In it he baldly describes the physical, psychological and cultural effects the reservoirs have had on Wales. The poem begins by grounding its topic firmly in Wales, declaring: "There are places in Wales I don't go:/ Reservoirs..."⁶⁷⁹ These reservoirs are "the subconscious/ Of a people, troubled far down..."⁶⁸⁰ showing the psychological effects the flooding of these valleys has caused in addition to the practical effect of scattering communities. The difference between "the serenity of their expression... a pose/ For strangers, a watercolour's appeal/ To the

⁶⁷⁷ Ned Thomas, *The Welsh Extremist*, p. 19.

⁶⁷⁸ San Juan, *Beyond Postcolonialism*, p. 33.

⁶⁷⁹ R. S. Thomas, 'Reservoirs', *Collected Poems*, p. 194.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

mass”⁶⁸¹ and “the poem’s/ Harsher conditions,”⁶⁸² – his reality – is striking. He is revealing what lies beneath the surface of these reservoirs to people who would not otherwise know – “strangers”. As the reservoirs are in Wales and are “the subconscious of a people,” the suggestion is that the strangers are from outside of Wales – in the context of the rest of Thomas’ work it seems likely that they are English. So Thomas is here speaking to the English, trying to reveal to them the human cost of the creation of the reservoirs that seem so beautiful and useful to them. He goes on to describe the villages that have been drowned in plaintive terms:

...There are the hills,

Too; gardens gone from under the scum

Of the forests; and the smashed faces

Of the farms with stone trickle

Of their tears down the hillside.⁶⁸³

These words evoke pathos; it is difficult to read them and remain unmoved. In this first part of the poem there is no anger, no blame, just sorrow and this is why I think it is most effective at speaking to Thomas’ audience. The second half which has a bitterer tone and rages against both the English and the Welsh is likely to alienate many readers and so is less effective.

Another of Thomas’ poems that deal with a specific abuse of Welsh land is ‘Afforestation’. Bohata has shown that many Welsh writers of the twentieth century chose to write (in both languages) about Forestry Commission policy as harmful and alien to Wales, and to see the Commission as a branch of a foreign, uncaring central government.⁶⁸⁴ Although there were many examples of the government taking control of land in Wales for military and economic purposes – the drowning of valleys to create reservoirs; the purchase of land for military training grounds – the Forestry Commission is a common target, its trees seen as erasing the place that was there before – a place usually constructed in the writings as essentially Welsh.⁶⁸⁵ Therefore, Thomas is part of a movement of sorts when producing this poem, though his work is not really a call to resist in the way that Waldo Williams’ Welsh-language poem ‘Preseli’ is. In that poem, written to celebrate one occasion where the locals successfully resisted

⁶⁸¹ Ibid., p. 194.

⁶⁸² Ibid., p. 194.

⁶⁸³ Ibid., p. 194.

⁶⁸⁴ Bohata, pp. 81-4.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

another attempted takeover, this time by the military, Williams describes the mountains as a wall around his native area and declares: “Cadwn y mur rhag y bwystfil, cadwn y ffynnon rhag y baw.”⁶⁸⁶ Thomas’ ‘Afforestation’ has no such ringing call to arms; the poet acts more as witness of what is being done to the land. Certainly the trees are portrayed as invasive: “Colonising the old/ Haunts of men.”⁶⁸⁷ The speaker claims to prefer: “The bare language of grass/ To what the woods say,”⁶⁸⁸ and sees the trees as useless and alien to the Welsh way of life:

The grass feeds the sheep;

The sheep give the wool

For warm clothing, but these - ?

[...]

Thin houses for dupes,

Pages of pale trash⁶⁸⁹

The natural process of sheep farming where the sheep are raised to provide wool for clothing is sharply contrasted with the apparently worthless trees that can only produce “thin houses”. Moreover, in the context of Thomas’ other work, it is reasonable to take sheep-farming as representative of what Thomas sees as the traditional Welsh rural way of life. The trees have damaged – indeed uprooted – this culture and replaced it with trees that “won’t take the weight / Of any of the strong bodies / For which the wind sighs.”⁶⁹⁰ This suggests that the alien English culture that replaces the Welsh is both of less value and less enduring than the culture it has supplanted. In addition to showing how English policies are interfering with the Welsh way of life, Thomas is arguing that they are inferior to it. But although there is some resentment here it is heavily overlaid by a wistful sadness for what has been lost. As M. Wynn Thomas notes with regards to ‘Reservoirs,’ “...it takes the form not so much of a protest as of a bitter elegy...”⁶⁹¹ The poet does not attempt to intervene in the process nor does he encourage others to do so; he merely records it.

⁶⁸⁶ “Keep the wall from the brute, keep the spring clear of filth.” Quoted and translated in Bohata, p. 95.

⁶⁸⁷ R. S. Thomas, ‘Afforestation’, *Collected Poems*, p.130.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁶⁹¹ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 103.

It could be argued, though, that this works in the poem's favour as part of Thomas' project to 'speak truth to power'. Anger in the poem would be more likely to alienate his English readers and therefore undermine his efforts. H. J. Savill argues that many of Thomas' nationalist poems "show an acidity that critics and readers alike find distasteful,"⁶⁹² and this is likely to be heightened in the case of the people attacked in the poems. An example of this is the vitriolic 'It hurts him to think' which refers to yet another injustice done to the Welsh – probably the greatest one in Thomas' view – the suppression of the Welsh language. While, as seen in the thesis introduction, there have been no decrees specifically against the Welsh language in recent times (unlike Catalan), laws like the 1870 Education Act which made English the language of schooling contributed to the decline of Welsh as a spoken language. As seen elsewhere, Thomas was quite prepared to condemn the Welsh for not standing up for their language, but he also blamed English incomers and government policy, particularly for the fact that he himself had been raised without Welsh. This poem is one of his bitterest expressions of these feelings. It would certainly find an echo in the minds and hearts of his Welsh readers but it can also be seen as an attempt to convey to the English people the damage they have done to the Welsh language.

The poem begins: "The decree went forth/ to destroy the language,"⁶⁹³ leaving no doubt that he sees this as a deliberate act, although he does not actually say from whom the decree came. The natural assumption would be the English though the next few lines possibly suggest otherwise: "The nursing future/ saw the tightening lips/ of the English drawn on the hard sky..."⁶⁹⁴ Here the role of upbringing is explored, suggesting that parents are culpable for seeing English as the language of the future and consequently not passing Welsh on to their children. Thus the Welsh may be considered partly to blame, though it is clear that the pressure is coming from the English. As the poem continues, however, the English are firmly re-established as the perpetrators. They insist the Welsh must learn to speak English if they are to acquire certain jobs: "'You can have the job,/ if you ask for it in the right/ words'."⁶⁹⁵ Meanwhile, the English refuse to buy Welsh produce which would help the country people continue their traditional way of life; instead they tell them: "'We want/ nothing from you but your/ land'."⁶⁹⁶ The English are represented as ruthless exploiters, colonisers as in 'Afforestation', taking from Wales only what they want and shaping the Welsh for their own purposes. What at first was about

⁶⁹² H. J. Savill, 'The Iago Prytherch Poems of R. S. Thomas' in *Critical Writings on R. S. Thomas*, ed. by Sandra Anstey (Bridgend: Seren, 1992), pp. 30-45 (p. 42).

⁶⁹³ R. S. Thomas, *Collected Poems*, p. 262. M. Wynn Thomas has noted the similarity of the language to the terms used to narrate the tale of Herod and the Massacre of the Innocents, and the consequent darkness the realisation of this adds to the poem. M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 101.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

language has broadened into exploitation in every sphere. In one startlingly vivid image: “The [presumably English]/ industrialists came, burrowing/ in the corpse of a nation/ for its congealed blood.”⁶⁹⁷ This image makes the English appear vampiric, not just exploiting but actually sucking the life out of Wales. The longer term effects of English involvement are shown in the vitriolic final lines which return to the issue of the Welsh language: “I was/ born into the squalor of/ their feeding and sucked their speech/ in with my mother’s / infected milk,/ so that whatever/ I throw up now is still theirs.”⁶⁹⁸ M. Wynn Thomas has remarked upon the crudity of the expression ‘throwing up’ – a colloquialism unusual in Thomas’ work,⁶⁹⁹ but one that heightens immeasurably the sense of bitterness and resentment that the speaker feels towards the English. They have robbed him of his language and, perhaps worse, they have done so subtly, by persuading people like his mother to bring their children up to be English rather than Welsh-speaking. ‘Infected’ implies pollution or corruption - in this case of the mother’s role of passing down her national values to the child. This is what England has done to Wales and to the Welsh language. It is highly graphic. However, this poem is probably a little too vitriolic to be effective in addressing an English audience. While the violent resentment makes it shocking and memorable, it closes off the possibility for dialogue – even the most sympathetic English reader is unlikely to enjoy being described in such terms. Moreover, the crudity of the words and the visceral nature of the images are in themselves disgusting and more likely to repel readers than to compel them to think. The more muted poems like ‘Afforestation’ have a better chance of success.

In all these poems though, it is noticeable that Thomas does not make any suggestions to reverse the situation or calls to resist it. Rather he is just recounting what happens and is lamenting for what has been lost. He is bearing witness to the dissolution of a culture. Bohata does suggest that the act of remembering a culture can be a way of keeping it alive and thus an act of resistance,⁷⁰⁰ but compared to other forms of resistance writing it can seem a little passive. This is more comprehensible though if they are considered in terms of speaking truth to power, as an attempt to open up a dialogue. If they are addressed primarily to an English audience then it is completely understandable that there is no call for resistance. Rather, Thomas is trying to show what is happening to Wales to the sympathetic English outsider who would be otherwise heedless of these occurrences, giving them the opportunity to respond and to act, rather than alienating them as Webb’s work would. Speaking truth to power is a secondary

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 262.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 262.

⁶⁹⁹ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 101.

⁷⁰⁰ Bohata, pp. 102-3.

concern in *Victus* and barely a concern at all in Webb's work; however it can be seen as primary in much of Thomas' work.

Thomas' tendency to simply record rather than suggest action is at least partly counteracted in his article 'The Depopulation of the Welsh Hill Country'. He recounts the experience of walking the hills of Montgomeryshire and finding many abandoned farm houses in various states of ruin. While he laments the leaving of so many of the area's population, he asserts that "I would not trespass upon the editor's valuable space merely for the sake of threnodising. The fact is that despite the many ruined homesteads in these upland districts, there are others still managing to hold out, and it is for their sake that I write."⁷⁰¹

Here, Thomas does appear to be taking a side and urging action rather than just recounting the depopulation of the uplands. He declares: "Before it is too late, therefore, these people must be helped."⁷⁰² He also offers some practical suggestions albeit limited ones: "What we want there are good roads and grants or loans to put the houses and buildings in repair and a revival of the type of trade such as the wool trade, which would benefit these people."⁷⁰³ As in 'Afforestation', the wool trade and, as a result, sheep-farming are seen as natural and beneficial parts of these peoples' lives. These suggestions may be limited but they are open-ended; Thomas does not say from where the grants and loans should come. They could come from the British government – indeed that may even be his prime target, although representatives of this government would be unlikely to read the magazine *Wales* in which the article was published. However, once again the question of audience is left open and so these words could be addressed to the English, encouraging them to do the right thing by the Wales they have been, deliberately or otherwise, destroying. Thomas speaks truth to power, opening up the possibility of dialogue, and as a result of this he can be seen, at least partially, as a resistance writer.

⁷⁰¹ R. S. Thomas, 'The Depopulation of the Welsh Hill Country', in *R. S. Thomas: Selected Prose*, pp. 19-25 (p. 21).

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

A Living Nation?

A resistance writer must be able to move people through their work, whether that is their own people to action or their potential opponents to greater thought or understanding. It is therefore vital that however dark the subject matter with which they are dealing, there remains an element of hope. Portraying a cause as lost is not the way to inspire people to join it.

One criticism of Thomas is that the vision of Wales and the Welsh that he presents is too bleak. It is so completely devoid of hope that it is likely to make people despair rather than move them to work for change. This argument is best expressed by Dafydd Elis Thomas. In his 1972 article he argues that the view of Wales and her people presented in R. S. Thomas' poetry is negative and unhelpful. As discussed in previous sections, he notes that Thomas' image of Wales focuses on rural Wales and that he is highly dismissive of the people from the valleys.⁷⁰⁴ As a member of Plaid Cymru soon to be an MP, Elis Thomas knew how harmful that attitude could be, both to the people and the nation. He further argues cogently that Thomas' nationalism is almost entirely historically based. This in turn is damaging for the nation as it precludes the possibility of dealing with the issues of the present. As he explains, the "wounds" mentioned in 'The Patriot' are not those of "unemployment, migration, non-democratic government, lack of economic development, linguistic injustice etc. which the patriot opens, but 'the concealed wounds/ Of history in the comfortable flesh'."⁷⁰⁵ It is common and natural, even necessary, for nationalist writers to focus on the past but to do so to the extent that Thomas does precludes the possibility for development and change built on that history, and therefore the history becomes almost worthless. As Thomas himself wrote in the poem 'Welsh Landscape': "There is no present in Wales,/ And no future;/ There is only the past."⁷⁰⁶ This is not, as Elis Thomas argues, a healthy or helpful vision of the nation. While he disagrees with the idea that a poet's work must of necessity show development,⁷⁰⁷ the ideas here are so fixed they are stagnant.

Elis Thomas also highlights the frequent images of death that appear in Thomas' poetry: the "carcase of an old song," in 'Welsh Landscape', the "putrefying of a dead/ Nation," the Welsh language's "grave," in 'Reservoirs' and the invitation to come and die in Wales in 'Welcome to Wales'.⁷⁰⁸ He sees the influence of Welsh-language writers like Saunders Lewis and Gwenallt in Thomas' historically-

⁷⁰⁴ Elis Thomas, p. 63.

⁷⁰⁵ Elis Thomas, p. 60.

⁷⁰⁶ R. S. Thomas, 'Welsh Landscape', *Collected Poems*, p. 37.

⁷⁰⁷ Elis Thomas, pp. 61-2.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-5.

focused nationalism, and contrasts them with slightly younger poets like Harri Webb and the Welsh-language Euros Bowen who offer some form of hope.⁷⁰⁹ Webb's image of the centre of Wales as a 'green desert' may appear bleak but, Elis Thomas argues, it contains "both the positive and negative elements in the Welsh situation. Wales is certainly a desert, but it is a desert which can be turned green."⁷¹⁰ Bowen, meanwhile, praises the Cymdeithas yr Iaith activists, seeing them as working successfully for the future.⁷¹¹ Elis Thomas concludes that in this work "the poetics of despair is replaced by a poetics of revolutionary hope," something, he implies, that does not happen in Thomas' work.⁷¹² Thomas' view "does not correspond with the exciting *living* reality which we are experiencing now in Wales."⁷¹³ It could thus be considered almost obsolete and certainly it is not useful to a nation that is trying to move forwards towards some sort of sovereignty. San Juan writes:

Ultimately, the struggle hinges on the drawing power of the principles and visions articulating a popular consensus for long-range transformation of social power which I think can be found most vividly in the site of cultural production; in those practices which express the feelings, sentiments, hopes, institutions, dreams, and aspirations of the masses...⁷¹⁴

An effective struggle needs to be supported by creative work portraying long term aims and expressing hope for the future. All the work discussed by Harlow and San Juan does this to some degree. According to Elis Thomas, R. S. Thomas' work does not, and if this is the case then that would seriously hamper his work's resistance potential.

In general terms M. Wynn Thomas agrees with Elis Thomas, conceding that R. S. Thomas did not really support the actions of Cymdeithas yr Iaith and similar groups in his work.⁷¹⁵ Therefore, while Thomas does chronicle the oppression that the Welsh suffer as Thiong'o urged,⁷¹⁶ he does not mention the resistance to that oppression that should be the other part of resistance writing. Consequently, intentionally or otherwise, his poetry can give the impression that the situation is hopeless.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 65-6.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., p. 65.

⁷¹¹ Ibid., pp. 65-6.

⁷¹² Ibid., p. 66.

⁷¹³ Ibid., p. 66.

⁷¹⁴ San Juan, *Writing and National Liberation*, p. 4.

⁷¹⁵ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 91. See the chapter introduction for an extended discussion of Wynn Thomas' point.

⁷¹⁶ Thiong'o, *Moving the Centre*, pp. 96-7. See the thesis introduction for a more extended account of Thiong'o's claim.

However, as seen, Wynn Thomas is careful to distinguish between Thomas' poetry and his actions and public pronouncements.⁷¹⁷ This is important because Thomas did act in defence of the Welsh language and certainly supported those who committed civil disobedience and potentially even violence in its name. There is a dissonance between his public statements and his poetry which potentially undermines his claim to be considered as a true resistance writer for, as we have seen, the true resistance writer does not distinguish between their art and their politics. However, I will argue that there is more hope in his work than there at first appears to be.

One aspect of Thomas' historical focus that Elis Thomas does not consider but that adds significantly to the despair his poetry can arouse is the prevalence of defeat. There are few victories in Thomas' poetry. The sense of defeat is even more pervasive than in the previous two authors studied and does not appear to contain the counter of hope found in those works. The Welsh fight constantly, desperately, bravely, but ultimately they are defeated or at least driven back. In the most striking case, 'Welsh History', Thomas writes: "We fought and were always in retreat,"⁷¹⁸ although he does add "and yet the stranger/ Never found our ultimate stand/ In the thick woods, declaiming verse/ To the sharp prompting of the harp."⁷¹⁹ In the second stanza the sense of defeat continues: "Our kings died, or they were slain/ By the old treachery at the ford./ Our bards perished..."⁷²⁰ Here Thomas is at least chronicling the Welsh people's resistance as well as their oppression, but Andrew Webb argues that the people depicted in this poem are shown to be "falling back to an 'ultimate stand' of 'verse' and 'harp', a set of traditions – bound up with the Welsh language – that remain impenetrable to a 'stranger'. The role of the poet, it would seem, is that of 'declaiming verse' to the gathered tribe: making culture's last stand."⁷²¹ This idea of a last desperate cultural enclave will be discussed further in the next section.

And yet, it appears that this last stand is in some ways more successful than it at first appears. After all, the 'enemy' never succeeds in finding their "ultimate stand."⁷²² Moreover the last stanza does seem to carry a note of hope. It begins: "We were a people, and are so yet,"⁷²³ signaling a change of tone and

⁷¹⁷ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 91. See the chapter introduction.

⁷¹⁸ R. S. Thomas, 'Welsh History', *Collected Poems*, p. 36.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁷²¹ Andrew Webb, p. 530.

⁷²² R. S. Thomas, 'Welsh History', *Collected Poems*, p. 36.

⁷²³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

sounding similar to Webb's declaration "The Welsh people are and the Welsh people will be."⁷²⁴ More interesting still is the rest of the stanza:

When we have finished quarreling for crumbs

Under the table, or gnawing the bones

Of a dead culture, we will arise

Armed but not in the old way.⁷²⁵

This stanza suggests that Thomas is in fact aware of the dangers of focusing too much on the past. Far from promoting the idea of fixating on a stagnating culture, he urges the Welsh to act and move forward. The last line suggests that a new way of fighting is needed for the current times – dialogue, protest and, perhaps, writing, as opposed to military action. M. Wynn Thomas has noted the comparison between this line and Thomas' statement in his lecture 'Abercuawg' that:

Wales once had some kind of freedom... That freedom depended on force of arms... That was the way of those days. The time of armed forces is now finished, if civilisation is to survive. If Wales knows these things which pertain to her peace, Abercuawg may come nearer.⁷²⁶

The world has changed and Wales and the Welsh must change with it or forever be left behind. This interpretation sees Thomas expounding ideas very close to those of the resistance literature theorists discussed in the introduction.

Wynn Thomas also notes that the last line is interesting because it was later changed. In the *Collected Poems* the poem reads "we will arise / And greet each other in a new dawn."⁷²⁷ Wynn Thomas argues this is less committal.⁷²⁸ The original would seem to allow for some sort of action, "militant action, if not military"⁷²⁹ in the Welsh context. Wynn Thomas believes that Thomas changed this line because of his unease about any hint of violence, particularly after being accused in the 1970s and 80s of supporting the actions of Meibion Glyndŵr.⁷³⁰ A "new dawn" is still a positive image, however, finding an echo both in Sánchez Piñol's 'brighter dawn' in the closing sentence of *Victus*, and in many

⁷²⁴ Harri Webb, 'An Old and Haughty Nation Proud in Arms' *No Half-way House*, p. 87.

⁷²⁵ R. S. Thomas, 'Welsh History', *Collected Poems*, p. 36.

⁷²⁶ R. S. Thomas, 'Abercuawg' quoted in M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 150.

⁷²⁷ R. S. Thomas, *Collected Poems*, p. 36.

⁷²⁸ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, p. 150.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-1.

other nationalist discourses. In both versions, therefore, the last stanza speaks of hope for the future. Whether the Welsh are “armed,” in a new way or greeting each other in a “new dawn,” things are new and changed for the better. Moreover the poem does not say “if” but “when” – it is a prophecy not just a hope and that, more than anything, gives the poem a positive close.

Other poems also speak, albeit tentatively, of an ongoing fight, contrasting the old methods of battle with the new. The poem ‘Welsh Border’ from *The Bread of Truth* claims: “People have died here,/ Good men for bad reasons,”⁷³¹ seeming to act as a memorial for the heroes of the past. But then surprisingly the poem claims that they are: “Better forgotten,”⁷³² a striking turn of perspective which the final lines of the poem support:

For the dead, enlistment
Of memories is over.
The real fight goes on
In the mind; protect me,
Spirits, from myself.⁷³³

While the introduction of the “Spirits,” of the last line casts some doubt on what kind of fight is being fought – it could be with the poet’s personal past, his own dark thoughts, or various other things – I think that with the juxtaposition of the physical battles of the past it is not unreasonable to consider this mental fight as, at least partly, a national one. There is not, perhaps, as much hope here as in the last stanza of ‘Welsh History’, but at least Thomas is acknowledging that the fight continues and that it is worth fighting.

Elis Thomas cites Thomas’ use of Glyndŵr as part of his historically focused nationalism, noting that in *Song at the Year’s Turning* there is a whole poem – ‘The Tree’ - devoted to Glyndŵr.⁷³⁴ Indeed the poem is subtitled ‘Owain Glyn Dŵr speaks’.⁷³⁵ It uses the image of a tree to symbolise how Glyndŵr, inspired by the bards of his day, rose up to lead his people. It is true that most of the poem focuses on Glyndŵr’s historical rising and its ultimate defeat with symbolic lines like: “The music ceased,” and:

⁷³¹ R. S. Thomas, ‘Welsh Border’, *The Bread of Truth* (London: Hart-Davis, 1963), p. 9.

⁷³² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷³⁴ Elis Thomas, p. 61.

⁷³⁵ R. S. Thomas, ‘The Tree (Owain Glyn Dŵr Speaks)’, *Collected Poems*, p. 32.

“It is winter still in the bare tree...”⁷³⁶ but this is only natural as the rising ultimately failed. However, there is a note of hope once more in the final stanza – Glyndŵr still stands:

But here at its roots I watch and wait
For the new spring so long delayed
And he who stands in the light above
And sets his ear to the scarred bole,
Shall hear me tell from the deep tomb
How sorrow may bud the tree with tears
But only his blood can make it bloom.⁷³⁷

In a way not too dissimilar to Webb’s ‘By a Mountain Pool’, Glyndŵr is still waiting to inspire nationalists of the future. Unlike in Webb’s version he does not accomplish this within the poem – he is still waiting. But, as in ‘By a Mountain Pool’, he will inspire the modern day Welsh though, as Brown has noted “to make the tree flourish again will involve effort on their own behalf by the Welsh people, and perhaps sacrifice...”⁷³⁸ Glyndŵr, heroic though he is, cannot save Wales alone – the nationalists of the present must join him. This also carries echoes of Y Ddraig Goch’s words in the closing speech of ‘The Babes in Milkwood’ where the dragon can only help the Welsh to help themselves. Dai must first summon her and then “takes the sword in hand,” and fights alongside her.⁷³⁹ Likewise, in ‘The Tree,’ Glyndŵr requires the nationalists of the future to act. There is thus a link between past and present that Elis Thomas does not note. The Welsh past is not being invoked for its own sake but in order to inspire the Welsh of the present time. This allows for the possibility of change and improvement and therefore cannot be dismissed as merely a ‘poetics of despair’.

If hope appears only subtly in Thomas’ poetry it is clearer in one of his Welsh-language prose pieces - the review of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* - Thomas declares:

Ni ddarfu am genedl y Cymry eto. Mae’r iaith yn parhau. Ni’n caewyd ni eto mewn rhanbarth i’r brodorion rygnu byw. Mae gennym bobol deallus, synhwyrol. Ni lygrwyd ein hawyr a’n

⁷³⁶ Ibid., p. 32.

⁷³⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

⁷³⁸ Brown, *R. S. Thomas*, p. 34.

⁷³⁹ Harri Webb, ‘The Babes in Milk Wood’, in *A Militant Muse*, pp. 15-20 (p. 19).

nentydd eto. Mae'r iawn o'n tu ni. Codwch chi, y Cymry, a mynnu arweinwyr o'ch dewis eich hunain i'ch llywodraethu yn eich gwlad eich hunain, i'ch helpu i lunio dyfodol fydd yn unol â'ch traddodiadau gorau, cyn ei bod hi'n rhy hwyr.⁷⁴⁰

Here, the sense of hope is far more obvious. There is a sense of urgency certainly, but the reason for this is that the Welsh people can still do something to change their circumstances. Thomas urges action rather than despair in a rallying cry not dissimilar to Webb.

So while much of Thomas' writing, the poetry in particular, can give a very bleak view of Wales as a dead nation living only in the past, certain poems when read more closely do reveal signs of hope. This is even truer in the case of the review of *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee*. In this sense he can be seen as a resistance writer, urging his compatriots to fight (not necessarily by military means) for Wales' freedom. However, he does not do so consistently. At times, the criticisms levelled at him by Elis Thomas are just and seriously hamper his ability to inspire his readers, whether Welsh, English or international, and this limits his effectiveness as a resistance writer.

By now, though, it seems that it is fair to regard Thomas as a resistance writer, if a limited one at times. Therefore in the last part of this chapter I will consider the nature of the resistance that he espouses.

Enclaves of Resistance

This thesis distinguishes between two types of resistance. The first is that which forms the “watertight enclaves” that Sánchez Piñol mentions. The second is a more open inclusive resistance that accepts and attempts to integrate those newcomers who are willing to be integrated. As we saw in the chapters on Webb and Sánchez Piñol this is the type of resistance their work generally espoused, and I agree with Sánchez Piñol and Williams that this is a more healthy resistance for a small nation.

⁷⁴⁰ R. S. Thomas, ‘Adolygiad ar *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*’ in *Pe Medrwn yr Iaith*, p. 82. “The Welsh nation is not finished yet. The language is still alive. We have not yet been put into a reservation to scrape a living there. There are intelligent, sensible people among us. Our air and our streams have not yet been polluted. Right is on our side. Rise up, you Welsh, demand leaders of your own choosing to govern you in your own country, to help you make a future in keeping with your own best traditions, before it is too late.” pp. 180-1.

R. S. Thomas is a more complicated case than either of the two discussed previously. As mentioned in the introduction, he is one of the poets Williams cites as constructing the idea of Welsh Wales as being beyond the reach and comprehension of any incomer. The poem 'Welcome' which Williams quotes certainly seems to suggest this declaring as it does to the English visitor:

You can come in.
You come a long way;
We can't stop you...
But you won't be inside;
You must stop at the bar,
The old bar of speech.⁷⁴¹

As Williams puts it:

Language functions here as a 'bar' to entry, an impermeable borderline between external and internal realms. You're welcome to Wales, but you'll see nothing of Cymru. Language is the key to an inner sanctum that lies beyond the tourist's gaze, a barrier to the incomer's integration. Though the poem's narrator is unable to stem the tide of incomers, he can compensate for that by suggesting that there's a unique experience that lies beyond the visitor's comprehension, and beyond the poem's implied Anglophone reader.⁷⁴²

For Williams, therefore, 'Welcome' functions as a resistance poem by implying that there is some part of Wales that cannot be seen and understood, and thus obtained, by incomers.⁷⁴³ The barrier protecting that part of Wales is the Welsh language. The Welsh language prevents Wales from being completely absorbed by these incomers but it also appears as a closed system, an attribute which is impossible to acquire, whereas in reality, as Thomas knew, languages can be learned by both incomers and members of the nation who were raised without that language. As we have seen, Williams argues that this view of the Welsh language is harmful to it and thus Thomas' work in 'Welcome' can be seen as undermining the status of the language which was surely not his intent.

⁷⁴¹ R. S. Thomas, 'Welcome', in *Collected Poems*, p. 134.

⁷⁴² Daniel Williams, *Wales Unchained*, pp. 142-3.

⁷⁴³ Williams is not using resistance theory but as seen in the thesis introduction some of his ideas fit well with such an approach.

‘Welcome’ also implies resistance through its defiant tone but this is not necessarily a constructive resistance. It is easy to see it, in the same way Andrew Webb does ‘Welsh History,’ as “culture’s last stand.”⁷⁴⁴ At least in ‘Welcome’ the Welsh language appears to be holding its ground by acting as a barrier to incomer rather than being “always in retreat,”⁷⁴⁵ like the people of ‘Welsh History’. But it is only holding its ground; there is no sense of renewal, only of stubborn resistance and exclusion. This poem forms an ‘enclave of resistance’ and I would like to argue that much of Thomas’ other work does something similar.

In Thomas’ work, I have identified two main types of these enclaves: the Welsh-language one which implied in ‘Welcome’, and the one he creates in his writings about the Welsh hill country. The first is completely impenetrable to anyone who does not speak Welsh, and does not suggest the possibility of acquiring Welsh, which, as Williams has shown, is problematic as it implies a conflation of language and race. The second is even more racially based as it sees the Welsh hill farmers (mainly of Montgomeryshire)⁷⁴⁶ as the last remnants of the ‘true’ Welsh people, holding on to their traditions against the rising tide of Anglicisation and modernisation. This second will be discussed first.

Much has already been written about Thomas’ hill country poems, particularly those featuring Iago Prytherch.⁷⁴⁷ Prytherch is a remarkable figure. Supposedly a representative farmer of the hill country around Manafon in Montgomeryshire, he appears in some nineteen poems in all, spread across seven collections of Thomas’ poetry. He is an unprepossessing figure in many ways with “his spittled mirth,”⁷⁴⁸ “his clothes, sour with years of sweat/ And animal contact,”⁷⁴⁹ and his “half-witted grin.”⁷⁵⁰ At first this appears a denigrating portrait of a working man by a poet from an educated bourgeois background. The poet certainly acknowledges the gulf between them, saying: “There is something frightening in the vacancy of his mind.”⁷⁵¹ However, in the last six lines the tone of the poem changes, becoming almost celebratory. Prytherch’s stoicism and determination are praised; “he is a winner of

⁷⁴⁴ Andrew Webb, p. 530.

⁷⁴⁵ R. S. Thomas, ‘Welsh History’, *Collected Poems*, p. 36.

⁷⁴⁶ In his already mentioned essay ‘The Depopulation of the Welsh Hill Country’, Thomas felt that the Montgomeryshire hill country could serve as a prototype for the rest of the Welsh uplands at least.

⁷⁴⁷ See for example, H. J. Savill, ‘The Iago Prytherch Poems of R. S. Thomas’ in *Critical Writings on R. S. Thomas*, pp. 30-45; Anne Stevenson, ‘The Uses of Prytherch’, in *The Page’s Drift: R. S. Thomas at eighty*, ed. by M. Wynn Thomas (Bridgend: Seren, 1993), pp. 36-55; Patrick Crotty, ‘Extraordinary Man of the Bald Welsh Hills: The Iago Prytherch Poems’ in *Echoes to the Amen: Essays After R. S. Thomas*, ed. by Damian Walford Davies (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 13-43.

⁷⁴⁸ R. S. Thomas, ‘A Peasant’, in *Collected Poets*, p. 4.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

wars,”⁷⁵² because he “season by season/ Against the siege of rain and the wind’s attrition, /Preserves his stock, an impregnable fortress/ Not to be stormed even in death’s confusion.”⁷⁵³ The final line describes him as “enduring like a tree.”⁷⁵⁴ As Wynn Thomas notes “implicit in that praise is Thomas’ commendation of Iago for his exemplary Welshness – his stubborn adherence to a way of life that had survived innumerable centuries and their transient conflicts.”⁷⁵⁵ Iago’s courage and strength is not of a flamboyant or typically heroic sort but rather a stubborn refusal to yield to the external pressures of nature and poverty. This is a quality Thomas admired, as he revealed in John Ormond’s 1972 film *R. S. Thomas: Poet and Priest* when talking about the tough farmers of the hills surrounding Manafon... “since you’ve got in these communities people who’ve probably been like this over the centuries, the very fact that they endure there at all – that they make a go of it at all – suggests that they have got some hard core within them.”⁷⁵⁶

This resilience and continuity is celebrated in another poem ‘The Welsh Hill Country’ which, although not one of the Iago Prytherch poems, has much in common with them. Here too the dirtier and harsher side of farming is evoked, in this case adding a slight dig at those (perhaps including himself) who would romanticise the life of hill farmer:

Too far for you to see
The fluke and the foot-rot and the fat maggot
Gnawing the skin from the small bones,
The sheep are grazing at Bwlch-y-Fedwen,
Arranged romantically in the usual manner
On a bleak background of bald stone.⁷⁵⁷

The ‘romantic’ arrangement of the sheep as the flock appears from a distance is sharply contrasted with the unpleasant reality of the diseases the sheep suffer. Thomas is strongly suggesting here that while

⁷⁵² Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁵³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁵⁵ M. Wynn Thomas, *Serial Obsessive*, pp. 158-9.

⁷⁵⁶ R. S. Thomas quoted in John Ormond, ‘R. S. Thomas: Priest and Poet’, *Poetry Wales* (Spring 1972), pp. 47-57 (p. 50).

⁷⁵⁷ R. S. Thomas, ‘The Welsh Hill Country’, in *Collected Poems*, p. 22.

the life of the hill farmer may appear romantic, in reality it is harsh and onlookers from a distance cannot recognise this – the life of the hill farmer is impenetrable to the outsider.

The second stanza continues to depict the increasing ruin of the area with “the moss and mould on the cold chimneys,” “the nettles growing through the cracked doors,”⁷⁵⁸ and the empty cottages with holes in the roofs. The third however switches its focus to a single solitary figure – “a man [who] is still farming at Ty’n-y-Fawnog.”⁷⁵⁹ The hardships of his life have clearly taken their toll on him as can be seen by the “slow pthisis/ wasting his frame...”⁷⁶⁰ Like Prytherch he is not an attractive figure, but also like him this unnamed farmer is still battling on: “Contributing grimly to the accepted pattern.”⁷⁶¹ “Accepted pattern,” suggests doing things in the way that they have always been done. Tradition was very important to Thomas who was extremely wary of technological advances; in several works, including his lecture ‘Abercuawg’, which will be discussed shortly, he expressed his dislike of the ugliness and soulessness of modern technology. In another hill farmer poem, ‘Cynddylan on a Tractor’, Thomas contrasts the past and present, describing a farmer’s pride in his new tractor while lamenting what he sees of as the effects of this mechanisation: “Gone the old look that yoked him to the soil; / He’s a new man now, part of the machine, / His nerves of metal and his blood oil.”⁷⁶² It is not a wholly condemnatory poem – the word “yoked,” suggests that Thomas is acknowledging that the traditional way of doing things was backbreaking and Cynddylan now rides to his work “as a great man should.”⁷⁶³ He is described as “the knight of arms”⁷⁶⁴ which seems to be a compliment, and strengthens the link with the past that is created by the name Cynddylan.⁷⁶⁵ However, this tractor has caused Cynddylan to become “part of the machine,”⁷⁶⁶ which seems to be to his detriment as it divorces him from nature:

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., p. 22.

⁷⁶² R. S. Thomas, ‘Cynddylan on a Tractor’, *Collected Poems*, p. 30.

⁷⁶³ Ibid., p. 30.

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

⁷⁶⁵ M. Wynn Thomas explains that Cynddylan is a name taken from early Welsh poetry. It most famously occurs in *Canu Heledd*, a poem lamenting the tragic loss of Cynddylan and his family in battle.

⁷⁶⁶ R. S. Thomas, ‘Cynddylan on a Tractor’, *Collected Poems*, p. 30.

The sun comes over the tall trees
Kindling all the hedges, but not for him
Who runs his engine on a different fuel.
And all the birds are singing, bills wide in vain,
As Cynddylan passes proudly up the lane.⁷⁶⁷

It is true that there is little in the hill farmer poems apart from names like Iago Prytherch, Cynddylan and Bwlch-y-Fedwen to suggest Wales or a Welsh enclave. Indeed some critics have argued that it is likely that Prytherch is a monoglot English speaker.⁷⁶⁸ However, some of Thomas' prose works might suggest otherwise. In *Neb* he explained: "Er na siaredid Cymraeg yn y plwyf hwn, yr oedd yn y brynau ac o fewn cyrraedd lleoedd megis Yr Adfa a Llanfair Caereinion."⁷⁶⁹ Therefore, if Iago Prytherch was indeed a hill farmer he may well have spoken Welsh. Moreover, in other works of prose, Thomas makes it clear that he considers the hill country as one of the last bastions of essentially Welsh life. In 'The Depopulation of the Welsh Hill Country', Thomas described the inhabitants of the country surrounding Manafon as "the true Welsh peasantry,"⁷⁷⁰ and added "to know them is to feel a real affection for them."⁷⁷¹ This implies an essentialist racial view of the Welsh. Interestingly, Brown has drawn attention to Thomas' familiarity with the early numbers of the periodical *Wales* which included essays like the one by John Cowper Powys entitled 'Welsh Aboriginal (or The Real Welsh)'. As Brown explains: "Such debates on Welsh identity... would, manifestly, have had deep personal resonance for R. S. Thomas as he read this issue of *Wales* at Manafon; his response seems to have been immediate for the next issue contained five poems by R. S. Thomas..."⁷⁷² However, Thomas also described the cultural aspect of the lives of the peasantry: "But here and there among the upland people there are poets and musicians, pennillion singers..."⁷⁷³ While these people "are but shadows of what their fathers were..."⁷⁷⁴ Thomas claims that "their lives are more colourful and more interesting than the life of the

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 30.

⁷⁶⁸ Savill, p. 33; Stevenson, p. 40.

⁷⁶⁹ R. S. Thomas, *Neb*, p. 40. Although Welsh was not spoken in this parish [Manafon], it was in the hills and within reach of places such as Yr Adfa and Llanfair Caereinion." p. 50.

⁷⁷⁰ R. S. Thomas, 'The Depopulation of the Welsh Hill Country', p. 21.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid., p. 21.

⁷⁷² Brown, p. 30.

⁷⁷³ R. S. Thomas, 'The Depopulation of the Welsh Hill Country', p. 23.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

average lowlander.”⁷⁷⁵ The people of the uplands are seen as the true inheritors of Welsh culture. Either way though, his Welsh uplands is an enclave of resistance, be it racial or cultural; a remnant of a people desperately holding on to a way of life that no outsider can truly understand or permeate.

I will now turn to the idea of the Welsh language as an enclave implied by ‘Welcome’. The idea of the Welsh language as a barrier to incomers can be found elsewhere in Thomas’ writings. In a review of certain travel guides to Wales in *The Listener* he wrote:

But without the key of the Welsh language one and all must needs pass by the door that opens on the real Wales [... The Welsh] are a homely people; they live in their kitchens. They have their front parlour, of course, and without the language the traveler will never get beyond it, however comfortable or uncomfortable he may feel. Nor is this to say that the kitchen is always the best place. But it is there that the Welsh are at home.⁷⁷⁶

Without the Welsh language, people can only ever be guests in the homes of the Welsh. The language is a barrier that protects the “real Wales.” This does not necessarily imply that Welsh is a closed system as Williams claimed, people can learn Welsh after all as Thomas himself did, but it does give the impression of a remote and forbidding culture – one of Sánchez Piñol’s “watertight enclaves.”

Following this it is interesting to turn to the lecture ‘Abercuawg’ that Thomas gave at the National Eisteddfod in 1976. He discussed what was effectively his Welsh utopia, though the lecture is in many ways about the search for it, as is the companion poem ‘Abercuawg’ that appeared a few years later. The lecture is complex and sophisticated, drawing upon ideas from philosophy and linguistics, and there is no space to discuss much of it here. I will focus only on the aspects of Thomas’ idea of Abercuawg that are relevant to its status as an enclave of resistance.

Unlike the life of the Welsh hill farmers, Abercuawg has very little basis in reality. The name comes from an ancient Welsh poem speaking of a place that no longer exists. Indeed, Thomas describes how he went in search of Abercuawg’s physical location and though he found the spot felt nothing there.⁷⁷⁷ Thomas’ Abercuawg is both an ideal and a search for that ideal. In the lecture he describes it as “wnelo â’r broses o ddyfod i fod.”⁷⁷⁸ It is an ideal that, like all ideals, is unlikely to be realised, but by doing

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

⁷⁷⁶ R. S. Thomas, ‘Uncollected Review’, quoted in Brown, p. 60.

⁷⁷⁷ R. S. Thomas, ‘Abercuawg’, in *Pe Medrwn yr Iaith*, pp. 83-97 (pp. 84-5).

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 93. “...the process of becoming.” R. S. Thomas, ‘Abercuawg’, trans. by John Phillips, Tony Bianchi and Catherine Thomas, in *Selected Prose*, pp. 153-66 (p. 162). All translations are from this version.

the right thing people can become closer to it: “Os gŵyr Cymru y pethau sy’n perthyn i’w heddwch, gall Abercuawg ddyfod yn nes.”⁷⁷⁹

This has a quasi-religious image of building heaven on earth. In the poem ‘Abercuawg’, meanwhile, Abercuawg is described as “an absence,”⁷⁸⁰ but Thomas adds that: “An absence is how we become surer/ of what we want,”⁷⁸¹ not so different to his sometime image of God as “that great absence”.⁷⁸² And the image of Abercuawg presented in the lecture is certainly a place that Thomas wants. It is rural “ym mha le bynnag y bo Abercuawg, y mae yno goed a chaeau a blodau a nentydd perloyw, dihalog...”⁷⁸³ with technology kept tastefully to a minimum “...nid fforest o bolion a pheilonau a fydd yno, ond coed deiliog. A bydd y polion wedi’u gosod yn chwaethus o’r golwg...”⁷⁸⁴ As already noted, it will be peaceful with no wars. And, of course, it will be Welsh-speaking. Towards the end of the lecture, Thomas claims; “...nid trwy gyfaddawdu y cyrhaeddwn ni Abercuawg. Ac y mae dwyieithedd, gan ein bod ni’n trafod iaith, yn gyfaddawd.”⁷⁸⁵ He scornfully adds: “Os caiff caredigion dwyieithedd eu ffordd, bydd rhaid cael fersiwn Saesneg ar y mynegbost sy’n cyfeirio at Abercuawg, a hwnnw uwchben y Gymraeg wrth reswm!”⁷⁸⁶ He may not actually say so but it is clear that for Thomas a Welsh utopia would be monolingually Welsh.

Considering this, it is interesting to contrast the ideal Wales of ‘Abercuawg’ with that of a Welsh-language novel that Thomas actually mentions in lecture – Islwyn Ffowc Elis’ *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd*. The novel, published by Plaid Cymru and “unashamedly political,” as Ffowc Elis himself later admitted,⁷⁸⁷ was published in 1957. It tells the story of a man, Ifan Powel, who is given the opportunity to travel eighty years into the future. Having found an ideal independent Wales there, he goes back to his own time. In his second trip to the future, however, he finds a nightmarish regime where Wales is

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 94. “If Wales knows these things which pertain to her peace, Abercuawg may come nearer.” p. 163.

⁷⁸⁰ R. S. Thomas, ‘Abercuawg’, in *Collected Poems*, p. 340

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., p. 340.

⁷⁸² R. S. Thomas, ‘Via Negativa’, in *Collected Poems*, p. 220.

⁷⁸³ R. S. Thomas, ‘Abercuawg’, *Pe Medrwn yr Iaith*, p. 87. “...whatever Abercuawg might be, it is a place of trees and fields and flowers and bright unpolluted streams...” p. 158.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 96-7. “...it will not be a forest of poles and pylons, but a leafy wood. And the poles will be tastefully placed out of sight...” p. 165.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 96. “...it is not through compromise that we shall arrive at Abercuawg. And bilingualism (since we are speaking of language) is compromise.” p. 165.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 96. “If the proponents of bilingualism get their way, we shall have to have an English version on the signpost that points to Abercuawg, and that will have to be above the Welsh of course!” Ibid., p. 165.

⁷⁸⁷ T. Robin Chapman, *Islwyn Ffowc Elis* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 44.

simply a province called West England, ruled by an oppressive government, covered in forestry, and with the last Welsh speaker on the brink of death. In this chapter I want to look briefly at the ideal Wales and, more specifically, the question of language there.

Walford Davies argues that Thomas makes considerable use of the Welsh text in the Abercuawg lecture and has noted various echoes of the ideal Wales of *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd* in Thomas' text. Some examples include the idea of protecting and celebrating the beauty of the Welsh countryside by blending necessary technology with the landscape, the use of traditional Welsh names and the centrality of the Welsh language.⁷⁸⁸ On this last though they differ slightly as Davies notes; in Abercuawg Thomas rails against bilingualism and the idea of a bilingual signpost to Abercuawg as seen above.⁷⁸⁹ However, in the ideal Wales of *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd*, there are bilingual signposts, though the Welsh comes first.⁷⁹⁰ Even allowing the English language to exist in the ideal Wales though is a concession Thomas seems unlikely to make. Moreover, in *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd* virtually all citizens of this ideal Wales appear to be bilingual, speaking Welsh and English fluently. Powel is at first disappointed to hear two people speaking English in this Welsh utopia, but his guide urges him to greet them in Welsh and when he does so he finds that they immediately switch to perfect Welsh. His guide explains that people from English-language families may choose to speak English with each other, but that they all learn to speak Welsh as well.⁷⁹¹ While Thomas does not actually say that English would not be spoken at all in Abercuawg, it is heavily implied. It is striking that the Welsh-language writer from a Welsh-language background can find room in his ideal Wales for the English language while the predominantly English-language Thomas brought up in an English-speaking home cannot. This may be the zeal of the convert, it may be his well documented resentment at his background or it may be for other reasons that there are not space to consider here, but this comparison does serve to show just how extreme Thomas' views on the link between the Welsh language and the true, ideal Wales were.

So it seems that Thomas, while he could be considered a resistance writer in the broader sense, does not really embody the kind of open inclusive resistance that Webb and Sánchez Piñol espouse. His images of Wales and Welsh culture resemble those 'watertight enclaves' against which Sánchez Piñol warned. The view given of Welsh culture is exclusive and impenetrable, and also anti modern, especially considering the dislike of technology shown in 'Cynddylan on a Tractor' that also appears in the

⁷⁸⁸ Walford Davies, pp. 227-8.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁷⁹¹ Islwyn Ffowc Elis, *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd* (Caerdydd: Plaid Cymru, 1957), p. 39.

‘Abercuawg’ lecture. Indeed, Grahame Davies has argued that Thomas’ whole nationalist project was in fact an anti-modern one; Wales may have been where he chose to make his stand and the Welsh traditional way of life the culture he chose to defend, but modernity was the true enemy that he was facing.⁷⁹² The ‘Abercuawg’ lecture, Davies claims, is the clearest expression of this attitude, citing the passage that reads:

Oblegid ym mha le bynnag y bo Abercuawg, y mae yno goed a chaeau a blodau a nentydd perloyw, dihalog, gyda’r cogau’n dal i ganu yno. Dros y fath le yr wyf yn barod i wneud aberth hyd angau efallai. Ond beth am le sy’n rhy lawn o bobl, lle mae stryd ar ôl stryd o dai cyfoes, di-gymeriad, pob un a’i gwt modur a’i bolyn teledu; lle mae’r coed a’r adar a’r blodau wedi ffoi oddi arno o flaen cynnydd blynyddol y concrit a’r macadam, lle mae’r bobl yn gwneud yr un math o waith undonog a dienaid er mwyn cynnal mwy a mwy o’u tebyg? A hyd yn oed os mai Cymraeg fydd iaith y trigolion hyn; hyd yn oed os byddant wedi bathu gair Cymrag ar gyfer pob teclyn ac erfyn sy’n perthyn i’r oes dechnegol, blastig y maen nhw’n byw ynddi, a fydd hwn yn lle y mae’n werth esgor arno, yn werth aberthu drosto?⁷⁹³

Davies argues that ‘Abercuawg’ makes no secret that its priority is the traditional way of life rather than the Welsh language per se but notes that many nationalists have missed or ignored this.⁷⁹⁴ I think his argument is a little extreme but it is undeniable that the main concern in ‘Abercuawg’ is that it should be a traditional, rural Wales. It should be Welsh-speaking certainly, but the other conditions are paramount. A future Wales that was completely Welsh-speaking but primarily urban and technologically advanced would not satisfy him. Thus his Welsh-speaking enclave is also traditional to the point of being anti-modern and this is a deeply unhealthy vision for a country. The ideals presented are both exclusive and unattainable and deny the possibility of progress. They perpetuate the stereotype

⁷⁹² Grahame Davies, *Sefyll yn y Bwlch* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1999), pp. 135-90.

⁷⁹³ R. S. Thomas, ‘Abercuawg’ quoted in Grahame Davies, p. 181. “Because whatever Abercuawg might be, it is a place of trees and fields and flowers and bright unpolluted streams, where the cuckoos continue to sing. For such a place I am ready to make sacrifices, maybe even to die. But what of a place which is overcrowded with people, that has endless streets of modern, characterless houses, each with its garage and television aerial, a place from where the trees and the birds and the flowers have fled before the yearly extension of concrete and tarmacadam; where the people do the same kind of soulless, monotonous work to provide for still more and more of their kind? And even if Welsh should be the language of these people; even if they should coin a Welsh word for every gadget and tool of the technical and plastic age they live in, will this be a place worth bringing into existence, worth making sacrifices for?” p. 158.

⁷⁹⁴ Grahame Davies, p. 170.

of Wales being backward and therefore irrelevant to the modern age and in resisting incomers the writing also resists the possibility that they might bring beneficial change.

However, as Daniel Williams explains, there are other ways to look at Thomas' work which might suggest the necessity of a reassessment of this conclusion. He draws attention to an essay by Geraint Evans that considers R. S. Thomas, for all "the stridency of Thomas's opinions and overt linguistic nationalism,"⁷⁹⁵ as the paradigm for more recent writers who write in both languages and have begun to feel that literary language in Wales "can be as plural as identity itself."⁷⁹⁶ Evans explains that for most of the twentieth century authors who could write in Welsh felt obliged to do so – anything else was treason to a language under severe pressure.⁷⁹⁷ Unable to write poetry in Welsh but identifying with the struggles of Welsh language, Thomas "became the conscience of a nation."⁷⁹⁸ Evans claims that: "Welsh-speaking Wales took him on his own terms and he became, in a way no writer in English before him had become, a truly national figure."⁷⁹⁹ This of course added status to his poetry and seeing poetry so Welsh in nature despite being written in English might have helped change the minds of some of those who felt that Welsh was the only appropriate language for Welsh literature.⁸⁰⁰

As already seen, Thomas wrote prose in both English and Welsh, but increasingly in Welsh, in addition to his English language poetry. Evans argues that, particularly from the early 1970s on, Thomas was writing for a bilingual audience "whose knowledge of his Welsh-language prose informs a reading of his English-language poetry."⁸⁰¹ In doing this he has begun "to construct a bilingual audience: to write a series of texts in two languages which are sufficiently interconnected so that a knowledge of one becomes a precondition for understanding the other."⁸⁰² Evans goes on to say that this provided a model for writers like Gwyneth Lewis who write in both languages:

From the point at which he began to publish prose works in Welsh, R. S. Thomas is increasingly writing a single, coherent body of work in two languages for a single audience. And it is this radical and challenging body of work which forms the literary paradigm which helped enable a generation of writers in late twentieth-century Wales to begin to cross the border from the neurosis of bilingual treachery to the code-switching fluency of a modern, self-

⁷⁹⁵ Williams, p. 147.

⁷⁹⁶ Evans, p. 133.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁸⁰⁰ Andrew Webb, p. 538.

⁸⁰¹ Evans, p. 127.

⁸⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 127.

determining multilingual nation which is a nation state in Europe rather than a colonial economy in the remnants of an empire.⁸⁰³

Evans therefore suggests that bilingual writing is healthy and that Thomas' work began to liberate Welsh culture from clinging neurotically to the Welsh language. Culturally Wales is stronger as a result of this. This liberating and enabling aspect of Thomas' work is very different from the enclaves of resistance discussed earlier and suggests that his work can be seen as part of a more positive resistance movement, in addition to being more inclusive as it makes a space for English-language writing in Welsh culture.

Further evidence of this move towards inclusivity can be found in Andrew Webb's essay that has already been discussed. Drawing on both Williams' and Evans' work, Webb has argued that Thomas (and Humphreys) construct a bilingual audience in two senses of the word. The first is a fully bilingual audience able to speak and read both Welsh and English. The second, however, is an audience that while unable to speak Welsh lives in Wales and is aware of the existence of cultural differences and tensions in a way that a monoglot English reader would not be.⁸⁰⁴ Considering various aspects of Thomas' work: the synchronicity of his English and Welsh prose, his examination of what it meant to write about Wales in English, his use of Welsh poetic techniques in his own poetry and the multitude of references to Welsh literature and history in that same work, Webb argues that while fully bilingual readers with a knowledge of Welsh-language literature have the fullest understanding of the text, "those same bilingual readers are also challenged in their conception of literature from Wales."⁸⁰⁵ The discovery of a literature "imbued with Welsh literary references and prosodic techniques, and informed by a biography that is written in Welsh, and yet written in the English language,"⁸⁰⁶ forces them to reconsider any ideas that they may have had about Welsh literature being possible only through the medium of Welsh. So, Webb concludes, "while the surface attitudes and implicit political views expressed in Thomas' poetry serve to reinforce a tribal conception of Welsh-language culture, its form, language and cultural references work against any single language-based notion of the Welsh 'tribe'."⁸⁰⁷ Meanwhile, Thomas' poetry will also appeal to the non-Welsh-speakers of Wales. Webb

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁸⁰⁴ Andrew Webb, 'R. S. Thomas, Emyr Humphreys and the Possibility of a Bilingual Culture', p. 533.

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 540.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 540.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 540.

cites the opening of the poem 'Welsh Landscape': "To live in Wales is to be conscious/ At dusk of the spilled blood/ That went into the making of the wild sky..."⁸⁰⁸ claiming,

[this] is an appeal to Welsh readers defined not by their race, or language, but by their home address. What unites such readers is their consciousness of the divisions and violence that form Welsh history. This will not speak – at least not in the same way to monoglot English readers who do not 'live in Wales', and who are not presumably aware of Wales's cultural complexity.⁸⁰⁹

Therefore, Thomas' poetry can in some ways unite the people of Wales across the linguistic divide by focusing on location not language and consequently can be seen as beginning to espouse a more open Welsh resistance.

Webb concludes the section of the essay that focuses on Thomas by referring to his description of the people of Flintshire, pointing out that these people can also be seen as part of Thomas' "true Wales," as it is among them that he makes the decision to learn Welsh.⁸¹⁰ This is debateable, but it is certainly true that the inhabitants of Flintshire are specifically described as Welshmen, however English they may sound and act. They are like the inhabitants of the bar at the end of Thomas' long poem 'Border Blues' who declare: "Despite our speech we are not English,/ ...We are not English".⁸¹¹ It is equally true, however, that on reading Thomas' work these natives of Flintshire may not have felt themselves to be part of his ideal Wales or indeed felt any desire to be.

It is also true that these 'Welshmen' were still born within Wales, suggesting a geographical/tribal view of the Welsh people which is still exclusive of incomers. However, Thomas showed that he was aware of the value certain incomers could bring and the element of choice in national identity in the poem he wrote for Raymond Garlick that has already been discussed. In this he hailed Garlick as: "Welsh not by birth, but for a better reason."⁸¹² He underlined the importance of this choice by continuing: "Birth being compulsory and not chosen/ As you chose this: to live here and be kind/ To our speech, learning it, and to our race..."⁸¹³ Garlick, by choosing to learn Welsh and live as a Welshman despite being born in England, has made a greater commitment to the country and language than many who were born

⁸⁰⁸ R. S. Thomas, 'Welsh Landscape', *Collected Poems*, p. 37.

⁸⁰⁹ Andrew Webb, 'R. S. Thomas, Emyr Humphreys and the Possibility of a Bilingual Culture', pp. 540-1.

⁸¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 542.

⁸¹¹ R. S. Thomas, 'Border Blues', in *Collected Poems*, pp. 69-72 (72).

⁸¹² R. S. Thomas, *Uncollected Poems*, p. 43.

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

there. This poem is a tribute to Garlick and his actions, and so here Thomas can be seen to be acknowledging the value of incomers who respect and value Wales and Welsh-language culture. This casts a new light on seemingly exclusive poems such as ‘Welcome’, suggesting that it is only addressed to incomers who aim to exploit or harm the nation rather than those who wish to settle and make it their home. This is closer to Webb’s idea of Wales and indeed Sánchez Piñol’s idea of Catalonia – an open nation that welcomes all who wish to become part of it.

Therefore Thomas’ resistance is not as closed and his enclaves are less ‘watertight’ than they at first appear. However, this more open resistance is less obvious than that of the two writers discussed so far in this thesis. On the surface his image of his nation and his ideas of resistance are quite excluding and therefore, I would argue, his resistance is in some ways less effective than that of Webb and Sánchez Piñol.

Conclusion

I would claim then, at the conclusion of this chapter, that it is possible to regard Thomas as a resistance writer, though not to the same extent as authors like Webb and Sánchez Piñol. There is no doubting his determination or his commitment to his nation, but some of his depictions of Wales as an apparently dying land are unhealthy and unhelpful for the nation. However, as I have shown, not all of these portrayals are as straightforwardly negative as they at first appear. Equally, while at times Thomas can present Wales as closed to outsiders, at others he shows just the beginnings of a more open approach to nationalism and nationalist resistance – one that could encompass all those who wish to be Welsh no matter their language or origin.

Chapter 4 – Recovering History, Recovering Writers - Eduardo Mendoza's *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* and Rhys Davies' Rhondda Trilogy

Introduction

This final chapter returns to the historical novel. As we have seen, rediscovering and recounting an oppressed nation's past, particularly one that defies the official version told by the dominant power, has been important for most of the authors discussed in this thesis, though not all of them have used the historical novel as a medium for this retelling. It is however a natural form to use. Writing about the development of the historical novel in Spain in the post-Franco years, José Saval notes that:

La novela histórica aparece como una recuperación del pasado y una revisión tanto de la historia como del pasado colectivo sustraído por una prensa partidista y regimental y la imposibilidad de expresar puntos de vista distintos por el control de la censura.⁸¹⁴

So in Spain, in the aftermath of an oppressive dictatorship that had controlled the education system and the press, authors used the historical novel as a means of recovering the history that had been suppressed. In Catalonia this was particularly important as the Catalan angle on historical events had not been taught or discussed.⁸¹⁵ Recovering their history was one way of regaining their sense of themselves as a nation, and the historical novel provided a means to do this. Albert Sánchez Piñol's *Victus* provides an excellent, though later, example. Neither of the authors discussed in this chapter produce such radical work - there is no suggestion that they are attempting to speak of an independent state for their nations - but both Eduardo Mendoza's *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* and Rhys Davies' Rhondda Trilogy attempt to depict their nations' history in a way that is different to the dominant narrative, using a mixture of 'real' history and invented facts.⁸¹⁶ Both works contain traces of some of

⁸¹⁴ José Saval, *La Ciudad de los Prodigios, de Eduardo Mendoza* (Madrid: Editorial Síntesis, 2003), p. 19. "The historical novel appears as a recuperation of the past and a revision as much of history as of a collective past suppressed by a partisan and regimental press and the impossibility of expressing any different point of view as a result of the censorship."

⁸¹⁵ See Cramer, *Goodbye Spain?*, p. 73.

⁸¹⁶ Davies' novels generally remain closer to historical accounts than Mendoza's. Davies may combine different strikes or change certain dates, but the events described in his novels all took place. While many of the events Mendoza describes took place, they are punctuated by clearly invented details and Caragh Wells points out that Mendoza admitted in an interview that he falsified Barcelona's history in the novel (Caragh Wells, 'The City of Words: Eduardo Mendoza's *La Ciudad de los Prodigios*', *The Modern Language Review*, 96.3 (2001), 715-22 (pp. 717-8)). However, as I will demonstrate, I believe

the ideas that appear in the work of the more radical writers discussed in this thesis. I will argue that these texts both recover a lost history for their nation and speak truth to power in a similar way to R. S. Thomas, as a result of the authors' popularity in Spain and England.

Comparing these two writers is problematic in some ways as they are writing at different times; Mendoza began publishing in the last few years of Davies' life. Roughly half a century separates the Rhondda Trilogy (published in the mid nineteen thirties) and *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* (published in 1986). They are therefore written at different times as well as in different national and political situations. As demonstrated in the thesis introduction however, with a resistance literature model, this difference in time and situation is not as problematic as it might be in the case of other comparative models, because in resistance literature all struggles are linked regardless of where and when they take place. Different struggles surface at different times but as part of the same struggle; thus comparing them and the literature they produce is valid. There are also many similarities between the texts. They are set in similar time periods; *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* is primarily set between the two World Fairs held in Barcelona in 1888 and 1929,⁸¹⁷ though it contains passages dealing with earlier events. Davies' work, being a trilogy, naturally covers a greater period – roughly a century – beginning with the industrialisation of Glamorganshire in the first part of the nineteenth century and ending with the Great Depression of the 1930s. More importantly though, both writers cover a time of great change for their homelands: the coming of industry and modernity. However, as will be seen, generally Davies is against industrialisation, while Mendoza, though critical of the exploitation it entails, is in favour of progress, praising the ingenuity of the people of Barcelona (the novel has been translated with the title *The City of Marvels*). Davies sees industrialism as anti-Welsh while Mendoza sees the drive for progress and invention as a typically Catalan trait. Very early in the novel we are told that the protagonist's landlord is fascinated by inventions,⁸¹⁸ while much later the protagonist sponsors a poor Catalan inventor allowing him to design one of the first helicopters.⁸¹⁹ Both works, though, show the disorientation the characters feel in a time of rapid change.

these details can be explained and that they do not detract from the text's resistance qualities. The majority of the history is accurate and those details which are not add to Mendoza's project of resistance writing in a different way.

⁸¹⁷ Saval notes that this was a very important time period for the consolidation of the cities of the new capitalist society and that it was the time of greatest growth and development for Barcelona. Saval, p. 52.

⁸¹⁸ Eduardo Mendoza, *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2008), p. 19.

⁸¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 528.

Another similarity between the two works is the use of an individual or family to stand, at least in part, for their nation. *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* follows the story of Onofre Bouvila, a young boy from rural Catalonia, as he comes to Barcelona seeking employment. He works for a while distributing pamphlets for the local anarchists, then develops an entrepreneurial streak, comes to the attention of the powerful gangs that run the city and rises within their organisation, becoming rich and respected though never quite accepted despite everything that he does for the city. Onofre can be seen as representing Catalonia because of his roots in rural Catalan soil and because of the work he does for Barcelona, a city that is often taken as symbolic of Catalonia as a whole. It is important to note, however, that Onofre is not an idealised figure as might be expected of a character representing their nation. He is selfish, unscrupulous, manipulative and ruthless. While he never kills anyone himself, several are killed on his orders, and he uses his landlord's daughter's love for her father to force her to go to bed with him (Onofre) – refusing to bail her father out of prison unless she sleeps with him. This is an act of rape and blackmail and the later revelation that she always loved and wanted him cannot justify this or make Onofre appear in a better light. Onofre is thus something of an anti-hero and certainly is not the ideal hero expected of a nationalist text. As discussed in the chapter on *Victus*, the use of a flawed hero or antihero is not necessarily an issue but Onofre is far worse than Martí and thus his status as national representative is problematic.

Davies' protagonists, too, have failings, though less grave. The Rhondda Trilogy follows three generations of the Llewellyn family - landed gentry of Glamorganshire.⁸²⁰ In *Honey and Bread*, the focus is mainly on Owen and David, the sons of Tudor Llewellyn the squire who has squandered the family fortune and is forced to sell the estate to a coalmining company to pay his debts – something Owen will not accept. The novel describes the final days of the rural valley and the early industrialisation. *A Time to Laugh* follows Tudor Morris, son of Owen Llewellyn's illegitimate son as he abandons the class into which he was born and throws himself into the workers' struggle, eventually marrying the sister of the workers' leader. It is set at the end of the nineteenth century and covers strikes and riots loosely based on real events. A link to the earlier book is provided by Tudor's grandmother Bronwen – Owen Llewellyn's former lover. In *Jubilee Blues*, the Llewellyn family

⁸²⁰ Raymond Williams famously discussed the use of a family to stand for a class in industrial novels in contrast to the individual protagonist of the middle-class novel. Raymond Williams, 'The Welsh Industrial Novel', in *Who Speaks for Wales?: Nation, Culture, Identity*, ed. by Daniel Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), pp. 95-111. Rhys Davies is not one of the authors that Williams considers in this essay and it is debatable as to whether the Rhondda Trilogy would count as an industrial novel in Williams' terms because of its use of middle-class protagonists. There is an interesting study to be made examining Davies' work through the lens of Williams' essay but that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

representative is David Morris, Tudor's son, but the main focus of the novel is Cassie Jones, a servant girl from the country who marries and moves to the industrial valley to open a pub. There she witnesses the effects of the General Strike of 1926 and its aftermath - poverty, unemployment, the desperate hunger marches. Like Onofre, none of the protagonists are perfect. Owen Llewellyn is petulant and frequently cruel to his family as is his great grandson David Morris,⁸²¹ Tudor dedicates himself to his cause to the detriment of his relationships with his mother and quasi-fiancé, Mildred, and Cassie, despite her sympathy for the unemployed miners, shrinks from the ugliness of the valleys and indeed at one point expresses her opinion that they should all be flooded with water (probably not with the inhabitants still there though this is not specified).⁸²² None of these are the ideal protagonist of a nationalist allegory. However, they are far superior to Onofre and it is possible to see in them flawed identifiable characters, much like Martí from *Victus*.

Both works also focus on a particular place – the Glan Ystrad valley in the case of Davies (fictional but heavily based on Davies' native Rhondda) and Barcelona in that of Mendoza (real but also at times fantastic) – and use these as a synecdoche for the whole of Wales/Catalonia. Indeed, critics have argued that Barcelona is in fact the second protagonist of Mendoza's novel.⁸²³ Saval sees the human protagonist and the city as reflecting each other: “El crecimiento y expansión de la ciudad es paralelo a la ascensión social de Onofre Bouvila...”⁸²⁴ Other places are visited but the main focus is the one area. What happens in these areas is examined in detail and then shown to represent the rest of nation. The focus may be specific but the vision is wider.

Before beginning an examination of the texts, a little information about the two authors may be useful. Rhys Davies was born in Blaenclydach in the Rhondda area of South Wales in 1901. Though surrounded by miners and their families he was one step removed from them as his family owned a grocery store, ensuring a difference in both class and occupation to the majority of the valley's inhabitants. Several critics have commented on the effect this remove had on Davies' relationship with the industrial community, but at the same time they have noted that he and his family were still connected to and dependent on that community.⁸²⁵ Davies left school at the age of fourteen, worked for

⁸²¹ See, for example, Rhys Davies, *Honey and Bread* (London: Putnam, 1935), p. 9 and *Jubilee Blues* (London: William Heinemann, 1938), pp. 76-8.

⁸²² Davies, *Jubilee Blues*, p. 165.

⁸²³ See for example, Àlex Broch, Vance Holloway and Amelia Pulgarín, all quoted in Saval, pp. 78-9.

⁸²⁴ Saval, p. 50. “The growth and expansion of the city parallels the social rise of Onofre Bouvila.”

⁸²⁵ Meic Stephens, ‘Introduction’, in *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 1-28 (p. 5); Michael J. Dixon, ‘The Epic Rhondda: Romanticism and Realism in the Rhondda Trilogy’, in *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare*, ed. by Meic Stephens

a while in his parents' shop, then moved to London to escape the Rhondda which he found oppressive. There he worked to establish himself as a professional writer, with eventual success, though he periodically returned to his parents' house when short of money. He was a prolific writer, publishing some nineteen novels and over a hundred short stories. Despite leaving Wales at a relatively young age, it was the setting for the majority of his fiction. Much of the existing criticism on Davies has focused on the effects of his homosexuality, which, as a result of the repressive laws of the time and the conservative society from which he came, he never openly admitted.⁸²⁶ However, critics have also noted his somewhat problematic view of Wales and some have accused him of making use of his country and people to sell novels in England.⁸²⁷ As already discussed, this is a common accusation made against Welsh writers in English but one Davies has received more than most. A near contemporary of his, Pennar Davies, coined the term 'professional Welshmen' for those who deliberately misrepresented their countrymen to the English for profit and used Davies as his prime example,⁸²⁸ while Huw Osborne, considering a number of Davies' works in his 2009 study of the author, concludes that the author is writing those works at least for an English audience.⁸²⁹

However, as we have seen in the case of R. S. Thomas, writing for an English audience is not necessarily a barrier to being a resistance writer, and I will argue that in the Rhondda Trilogy at least, Davies can be interpreted as writing for both Welsh and English audiences, retelling the history of the South Wales valleys from the perspective of what Katie Gramich, adopting Frank O'Connor's term, calls "submerged population groups",⁸³⁰ which she sees as including homosexuals, women, and the working class. Gramich further argues that "in the context of his time (and ours?) the Welsh themselves

(Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 40-53 (p. 40); Stephen Knight, 'Not a Place for Me': Rhys Davies's Fiction and the Coal Industry', in *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 54-70 (p. 68); Tony Brown, 'The Memory of Lost Countries': Rhys Davies's Wales', in *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 71-86 (p. 72).

⁸²⁶ See for example: 'M. Wynn Thomas, "Never Seek to Tell thy Love": Rhys Davies's Fiction', in *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 260-82, and large sections of Huw Osborne, *Rhys Davies* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009).

⁸²⁷ See for example Dixon, p. 40.

⁸²⁸ Davies Aberpennar, 'Anti-Nationalism Among the Anglo-Welsh', *The Welsh Nationalist* (February 1948) p. 3.

⁸²⁹ Osborne argues that Davies' primary audience was always the English but focuses on *My Wales* and *The Story of Wales* in particular. Osborne, pp. 37-8. Of course Davies had little choice about publishing in England; as mentioned in the thesis introduction there were virtually no opportunities for publishing in English within Wales until well after the Second World War.

⁸³⁰ Katie Gramich, 'The Masquerade of Gender in the Stories of Rhys Davies', in *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 205-15 (p. 209).

might be regarded as such a population group,” affirming that Davies is writing from a Welsh perspective.⁸³¹ In doing this he speaks truth to power in the case of the English audience, helps his people rediscover and affirm their history in the case of the Welsh and, as Webb did, represents the struggles of the workers and the Welsh as the same struggle.⁸³² He is less radical and less successful than Webb in this but I will argue that the seeds at least of Webb’s firmer ideas are present in the novels discussed here.

Davies as a resistance writer is problematic in other ways. His apparent anti-modernity and desire to return to a completely rural Wales can be seen as an example of creating one of Sánchez Piñol’s enclaves of resistance, and his apparent linking of Welshness and the Welsh language with a rural way of life that is dying out appears to fall into one of the traps that Daniel Williams warns against.⁸³³ Davies’ racial view of the world is also problematic. These will be discussed in further detail in the final section of this chapter.

Most problematic of all though is Davies’ ambivalent relationship with Wales and with politics. He always described himself as Welsh, but did not openly commit to his nation in the way the other writers in this thesis did. He expressed his dislike of flag waving and believed that art and politics should be separate, declaring: “Down with passports to art.”⁸³⁴ This appears to be the complete antithesis to the view of a resistance writer. However, Davies was, at times, self-contradictory, and I do not believe that he was as indifferent to either Wales or politics as his statements suggest. Certainly, the Rhondda Trilogy shows an interest in the social and political issues of the area. Therefore, I think he can be seen as espousing an early and tentative form of resistance, expressing ideas and using techniques that would be taken up in greater force by later and more radical writers.

⁸³¹ Ibid., p. 209.

⁸³² Osborne notes that Davies was seen in England as not only Welsh but as a representative of the Rhondda working-class, when in fact he was actually lower middle class. Osborne quotes various reviews published in England that seem to imagine (incorrectly) that Davies is an insider writing of the class struggle. However, Osborne also notes that Davies’ sympathy for this class is genuine and so his slightly distanced writing position is not of necessity a barrier to the production of resistance literature that considers the class and national struggles. Osborne, pp. 58-64. Moreover, an interview by Davies in *The Western Mail* implies to Osborne that: “Davies suggests that the ‘rawness’ of life in Wales transcends any intent he may have had as a writer, that his craft is secondary to and determined by his subject.” Osborne, p. 64. This prioritising of subject over form is of course highly typical of resistance writers.

⁸³³ See the thesis introduction for an extended outline of Williams’ argument.

⁸³⁴ Davies, quoted in Stephen Knight, “‘Not a Place for Me’: Rhys Davies’s Fiction and the Coal Industry”, in *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 54-70 (p. 69).

Eduardo Mendoza was born in Barcelona in 1943 and studied law in the 1960s. He worked for various businesses before moving to New York in 1973 and remained there till 1982, working as an interpreter for the United Nations. He then left to become a full time writer, having begun publishing novels in 1975. He has published around fifteen to date, all in Spanish, a choice of language which he attributes, primarily, to growing up during the Franco dictatorship when the use of Spanish was enforced in public and heavily encouraged in private “[h]abía entonces familias que hablaban en castellano porque era lo que se hacía. En mi caso, por ejemplo, ocurrió eso.”⁸³⁵ The majority of his novels are set in Catalonia, many in Barcelona itself.

It is generally less problematic to consider Mendoza as a committed national author than it is to see Davies in that way. Although all his novels were written in Spanish, he wrote two theatre plays in Catalan: *Restauració* and *Glòria*. He is one of the authors that Francesc Vallverdú mentions as an example of Spanish-language writers who showed themselves to be part of Catalan culture through their political beliefs and writing.⁸³⁶ However, David Knutson claimed that while Mendoza is considered a Barcelona author ‘par excellence,’ this has not always extended to him being viewed as a Catalan author.⁸³⁷ In his article Knutson seeks to rectify this, arguing that though he writes in Spanish, Mendoza consistently writes about and celebrates his nation, and Catalan nationalism is present in his work “sobre todo en la consideración del orgullo catalán acompañado por el relato de las relaciones entre Barcelona y Madrid.”⁸³⁸ Consequently his allegiance to Catalonia appears to be stronger than Davies’ to Wales. However, certain elements of *La Ciudad de los Prodigios*, particularly the use of humour, satire in particular, and the surreal and fantastical inclusions, can appear to undercut the message of the text and thus its resistance potential. I will demonstrate later that this is not necessarily the case, especially in the case of satire where it depends largely on who or what are being satirised, but the text is not as straightforwardly resistant as *Victus*.

In taking these two authors who might not normally be thought of as resistance writers and considering them in this way, I am hoping to do something new. As mentioned in the thesis introduction, San Juan

⁸³⁵ Eduardo Mendoza quoted in David Knutson, ‘Eduardo Mendoza ¿Novelista Catalán?’ in *La Cultura Catalana de Expressió Castellana: Estudios de Literatura, Teatro y Cine*, ed. by Stewart King (Kassel: Reichenberger, 2005), 72-83 (p. 74). “There were therefore families who spoke in Castilian (Spanish) because they had to. This is what happened in my case, for example.”

⁸³⁶ Francesc Vallverdú, ‘Pròleg’, in Ute Heinemann, *Novel·la Entre Dues Llengües: El Dilema Català o Castellà*, trans. by Laura Puigdomènech, (Kassel: Reichenberger, 1996), pp. ix-xiii (p. xii).

⁸³⁷ Knutson, p. 74.

⁸³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75. “...above all in the consideration of Catalan pride, accompanied by an account of relations between Barcelona and Madrid.”

wrote at length about the English-language Filipino writer Nick Joaquín “generally considered a paragon of English-speaking writers,”⁸³⁹ and thus not part of a revolutionary Philippines’ literature. However San Juan argues it is important to reread Joaquín’s work in the light of resistance theory and obtain whatever seeds are possible from it. To do otherwise “automatically surrenders the “sign” called “Joaquin” to the enemy.”⁸⁴⁰ The same can be said to justify Davies’ and Mendoza’s inclusion in this thesis, though Mendoza needs less justifying. If these writers are not considered as Welsh/Catalan resistance writers then they may be taken up by the ‘enemy’ – the dominant culture - and used against their nation.

In addition to this method of reading (or rereading), the chapter will discuss the recovery of history and the production of an alternative account - one that speaks of resistance, speaking truth to power, the questioning of power structures in the case of Mendoza, and the linking of different types of resistance. These ideas have been discussed in previous chapters therefore there will of necessity be a certain amount of referring back and less elaboration of the theories involved in order to avoid repetition.

It is important to note that this chapter is focusing only on the specific texts already mentioned and not on the whole of the authors’ oeuvre. Authors’ opinions may not be consistent across the entire body of their work. Davies in particular was a prolific writer and expressed some contradictory views. In his non-fiction work *My Wales* he angered many Welsh critics by describing the Welsh language as “a lovely tongue to be cultivated in the same way as some people cultivate orchids, or keep Persian cats.”⁸⁴¹ However, no such opinion appears in the Rhondda Trilogy and it is important not to read it in the light of any knowledge of, or preconceptions from, Davies’ other work. If they can be seen as resistance texts, then the contents of the author’s other work are irrelevant. Apart from a single reference to *The Story of Wales* to illustrate the common representation of Wales as a mountainous country, the entire focus of the sections on Davies in this chapter will be on the Rhondda Trilogy. Likewise, the sections on Mendoza will concentrate wholly on *La Ciudad de los Prodigios*.

The chapter will begin by examining the representation the texts make of Wales and Catalonia and of their relationship with England and Spain. It will then consider to what extent the authors link different types of struggle - national self-determination, workers’ rights, gender equality and so on, with a particular look at Davies’ use of ‘figures of resistance’ – individuals who mount some form of resistance to the changes taking place in the valley. As seen in previous chapters, seeing all struggles as

⁸³⁹ San Juan, *After Postcolonialism*, p. 186.

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁸⁴¹ Davies, *My Wales*, (London: Jarrolds, 1937), p. 219.

linked is a key element of resistance theory. The next section will analyse certain passages in both works that read almost like excerpts from historical textbooks, arguing that by the insertion of these extracts the authors are trying both to recover and retell the history of their nation and to undermine the dominant historical discourse by subverting the textbook style slightly. Finally, as in the previous chapter, the type of resistance espoused by each author will be examined. I will argue that Davies' resistance is very conservative and closed while Mendoza's is more open but that in both cases their reliance on racial typing affects the quality of their resistance.

The State of their Nations

As with the other writers discussed in this thesis, we shall start by examining Mendoza and Davies' views of their nations and their relationship to the state as this will create context for the rest of the discussion. Both authors make clear distinctions between their nation and Spain and England respectively, though generally they are not as binary in their depictions as Sánchez Piñol and Webb. While Mendoza does not necessarily present Catalonia as a separate nation, he does depict it as different to the rest of Spain and decries the Madrid government's attitude and policies. As seen in the introduction, for Knutson, Mendoza's depiction of the relationship between Barcelona and Madrid is one of the most distinctly Catalan nationalist traits of the author's work and one of the most relevant today,⁸⁴² and Knutson sees *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* as the text which most exemplifies that.⁸⁴³ Davies, on the other hand, does seem to see Wales as a separate country, and the English incomers, both soldiers in the fifteenth century and industrialists in the eighteenth and nineteenth, are depicted as invaders. This section will examine the parts of the novels that comment either explicitly or implicitly on the status of Wales and Catalonia and their respective relationships with England and Spain as this will form a basis from which to consider their perspective on their nation's history and their resistance.

I will begin with Mendoza's work as *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* is clearly a pro-Catalan text, although it does criticise Barcelona and Catalonia on occasions. Mendoza draws attention to Catalonia's difference from the rest of Spain early in the novel by mentioning the arguments against the secession of Catalonia from Spain.⁸⁴⁴ Admittedly the argument that he mentions is ridiculous – he claims that Catalans are tall and therefore if Catalonia were to secede from Spain the national average height

⁸⁴² Knutson, p. 75.

⁸⁴³ Ibid., pp. 78.

⁸⁴⁴ Mendoza, p. 22.

would drop, something that cannot be allowed, and this does lessen the impact of this statement and its resistance potential. However ridiculous and untrue this may seem, by mentioning these arguments, Mendoza is highlighting that these discussions have taken place and thus alerting the reader that Catalonia is different and has at least considered separating from Spain. Knutson sees this humour as diminishing the importance of the issue and thus undermining the seriousness of the debate, though he does consider that Mendoza might be suggesting that the disagreements between Catalonia and the rest of Spain are based on numerous accumulated trivialities.⁸⁴⁵ However, I agree with Saval that Mendoza's use of humour and surreal elements in otherwise seemingly factual historical passages can serve to make the reader question all established facts,⁸⁴⁶ and thus this seemingly trivial reason may lead to a questioning of Spain's determination to stop Catalonia seceding. Moreover, I would argue that by mentioning this one ridiculous reason, Mendoza is attempting to render all Spanish objections to the secession of Catalonia ridiculous, in which case, under the guise of humour, *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* is making a very radical statement indeed.

Later on in the novel, Mendoza sets up Catalonia's difference in a more obvious and serious manner. Catalonia is depicted as being far more advanced industrially and technologically than the rest of Spain. There are many descriptions of growth and development within Catalonia as a whole and Barcelona in particular, and in the early pages of the novel references are made to several of the first examples of progress within Spain happening in Barcelona/Catalonia: the first regular stagecoach service, the first experimental gaslight system, the first steam-powered motor, the first railroad.⁸⁴⁷ Catalonia's difference and superiority in the field of technological development is made abundantly clear; indeed the narrator states outright that: "La diferencia que había en este sentido entre Barcelona y el resto de la península era abismal..."⁸⁴⁸ Here Mendoza produces a view of Barcelona and the rest of Spain as binary as Sánchez Piñol's, though he does not extend the difference to the whole of Catalonia in the way the later author does.

Despite its superiority, Mendoza presents Catalonia as being at the mercy of a centrist Madrid government that hinders its development, both accidentally because of incompetence and deliberately

⁸⁴⁵ Knutson, pp. 78-9.

⁸⁴⁶ Saval, p. 77. It should be noted that Saval does not discuss this passage in particular when considering Mendoza's use of humour.

⁸⁴⁷ Mendoza, pp. 26-7.

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27. "The gap between Barcelona and the rest of the peninsula was enormous." Eduardo Mendoza, *The City of Marvels*, trans. by Bernard Molloy, (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), p. 12. All English translations are from this version.

because of malice. When describing the central government's economic policy and handling of popular unrest at the turn of the twentieth century, the narrator remarks indignantly:

El Gobierno por su parte se limitaba a recoger los frutos que esta situación ponía en sus manos y abordaba con desengana el problema interno de Cataluña como si se tratara de otro problema colonial: enviaba al principado militares trogloditas que sólo conocían el lenguaje de las bayonetas y que pretendían imponer la paz pasando por las armas a media humanidad.⁸⁴⁹

As Knutson notes, there is no way to defend the behaviour of the Madrid government in this passage.⁸⁵⁰ It is seen as inept and uncaring, unappreciative of the wealth that Catalonia provides to the rest of the peninsula, and finally resorts to indiscriminate violence. It is both incompetent and aggressive, completely removed from the people it supposedly governs. Catalonia's grievances are justified by this passage and it echoes Webb's criticisms of the British government in articles like 'Alien Rule the Road to Ruin' as "a usurers government," acting with "criminal irresponsibility."⁸⁵¹

There are two other extended accounts of disagreement between Barcelona and Madrid and by extension between Catalonia and Castile/Spain which illustrate the point further. The first of these in the novel, although not chronologically, is the argument over the funding of the Barcelona World Fair of 1888; the second is the question of the development of Barcelona that arose in the middle of the eighteenth century. Both are worth looking at in a little more detail as they are crucial to the way in which Mendoza portrays Catalonia and its relationship to the rest of Spain.

The World Fair of 1888 was extremely important to the city of Barcelona as a whole and it is equally central to the early part of *La Ciudad de los Prodigios*. The young Onofre finds work there and its success or failure is a source of anxiety for the whole society. Numerous pages are devoted to descriptions of its construction and its opening, and also to its planning and arranging. This last is the important part for this discussion. Finding that they are unable to pay for the whole event, the Barcelona council send two delegates to Madrid to ask for financial help. The Catalan delegates suffer greatly in Madrid; as Knutson notes, they are described as being in an environment that is alien to them

⁸⁴⁹ Mendoza, p. 226. "The government, for its part, sat back and reaped the fruits of the situation, dragging its heels when it came to tackling Catalonia's internal problems, as if Catalonia were just another colony. It dispatched military troglodytes who knew only the language of the bayonet and whose idea of imposing peace was putting half of mankind to the slaughter." p. 173.

⁸⁵⁰ Knutson, p. 79.

⁸⁵¹ Harri Webb, 'Alien Rule the Road to Ruin', pp. 155, 157.

and are the target of deliberate abuse by Ministry officials because they are Catalan.⁸⁵² They are forced to wait for hours a day without seeing the Minister, their Catalan accents are mocked and they spend months in a shabby hotel room ignored by the staff. Underlings at the ministry even play practical jokes upon them.⁸⁵³ This, in fact, gives the Catalans a moral authority and an inner strength which ultimately leads to the Minister capitulating quickly when he finally sees them,⁸⁵⁴ but this does not in any way excuse the treatment meted out to them. Moreover, it soon becomes apparent that Madrid has not completely given in. The narrator notes tellingly that “...el Gobierno central no había dado tanto dinero como para evitar la ruina del municipio de Barcelona, ni tan poco que los catalanes pudiesen adjudicarse todo el mérito de la empresa.”⁸⁵⁵ Madrid is shown as looking out for its own interests at the expense of Barcelona’s – indeed it is suggested that Madrid is pleased by Barcelona’s troubles. It is true that Barcelona is not shown to be faultless in this rivalry – the novel reports that there is a considerable amount of smugness that the first World Fair in Spain will be held in Barcelona not Madrid. However the Madrid government is censured far more heavily by the text.

This slightly ambivalent criticism is also found in the subsection that begins the fourth chapter. This describes the development and expansion of Barcelona in the mid-nineteenth century and again shows the central Madrid government exercising control over Barcelona while not caring about its welfare. The chapter begins with a discussion of Barcelona’s city walls in spite of which “no hubo ocasión en que las murallas impidieran la conquista o el saqueo de Barcelona. Sí, en cambio, su crecimiento. Mientras dentro la densidad de población iba en aumento, hacía la vida insostenible...”⁸⁵⁶ Details of this ‘intolerable life’ follow: overcrowding, families packed into rooms which leads to an early loss of innocence for children, and the spread of epidemics.⁸⁵⁷ This is supported by figures that show Barcelona’s population density was far greater than other cities at the time.⁸⁵⁸ Then the narrator comes to the main point of this section – the reasons for the appalling state of Barcelona:

¿Por qué no se derribaban las murallas? Porque el Gobierno no daba permiso: con pretextos estratégicos insostenibles mantenía asfixiada la ciudad, impedía que Barcelona creciera en

⁸⁵² Knutson, p. 80.

⁸⁵³ Mendoza, pp. 58-60.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 62.

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 137. “...the central government gave not enough to save the Barcelona City Council from ruin yet enough so that the Catalans could not take all the credit.” p. 103.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 227. “the capture or the sacking of Barcelona was never halted... The city’s growth, however, was. While within the walls the population density went on rising, making life intolerable...” p. 174.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 228-9.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 229.

extensión y en poder. Los reyes, reinas y regentes que se sucedían en el trono de España fingían tener problemas más acuciantes y los gobiernos se mostraban remolones cuando no sarcásticos...⁸⁵⁹

Here the central government is condemned in no uncertain terms. It is shown to be deliberately oppressing Barcelona, keeping its inhabitants in appalling living conditions, to prevent the city becoming too powerful.

Finally the walls are demolished but the city still needs an expansion plan to develop and modernise properly. Here the narrative takes on a slightly surreal or magical realist element as the concerned mayor of Barcelona is visited by visions and a visitor whom he believes to be an angel (but who later turns out to be the devil) offering assistance. A bizarre impracticable plan to redevelop Barcelona as the new Jerusalem is produced by a stranger who promptly vanishes. The mayor is delighted with the plan but the council are more cautious and remind the mayor that he must consult with Madrid. The mayor responds furiously: “¿Es posible que hasta la voluntad de Dios tenga que pasar por Madrid?”⁸⁶⁰ and the councillors remind him that it is the law “...aliviados. Fingían solidizarse con la ira del alcalde, pero en el fondo confiaban en pasarle la pelota a Madrid, en que Madrid les sacara las castañas del fuego. Siempre que han podido que nos han fastidiado, pensaban, pero esta vez, para variar, con su negativa nos harán un favor tremendo.”⁸⁶¹

This scene reveals the strict control Madrid exercises over Barcelona and by extension Catalonia though it also shows that there are Catalans who are willing to collaborate with Madrid. In this case, though, I would argue that they are in fact taking advantage of the repressive bureaucratic centralising system, subverting something set up to control Catalonia to achieve their own ends. This could, therefore, be seen as a form of subtle resistance, although this is weakened by the fact that they are using it to undermine their own mayor. However this is perhaps justified because they are doing it for

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 229. “Why were the city walls not demolished? Because the government would not give permission: on strategic pretexts that did not stand up to analysis, it kept the city in a state of suffocation, kept it from growing in size or power. The kings, queens, and regents who in turn occupied the Spanish throne claimed that they had more pressing problems to deal with. The government was at best indifferent, at worst sarcastic...” p. 176.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 234. ““Must even the will of the God first go through Madrid?”” p. 180.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid., p. 234. “...privately relieved. They made a show of solidarity with the mayor’s fury, but in truth were passing the buck to Madrid. “Whenever they can, they dump on us,” they thought. “For a change, let them do us a big favor and turn this down.”” pp. 180-1.

the good of Barcelona – the plan the mayor proposes is hopelessly impractical. They are therefore subverting the state system for the good of their nation.

The Madrid Minister responds to the proposal by reminding the mayor that the regulations require the submission of three alternative plans for the Minister to choose between. Tellingly, however, the Minister chooses none of the three plans submitted by the Barcelona council, instead going for a fourth project that none of the council had considered.⁸⁶² This choice reveals a complete disregard of the opinion of the people of Barcelona even when it pertains to their own city. Once again, the central government ignores the needs and wishes of the Catalans and instead imposes its own will on Barcelona. Madrid and Barcelona have not only different but opposing agenda.

The seriousness of this difference and the oppression it engenders is somewhat undercut by the slightly farcical nature of what follows. The mayor, enraged, demands that the entire council challenge their opposite number in Madrid to a duel, a preposterous suggestion with which the councillors pretend to agree fervently but have no intention of carrying out. The mayor resigns and later commits suicide and goes to hell where he discovers the devil was behind the new Jerusalem plan. This makes it hard to take the issues raised in the passage seriously. However, if it were attempting to ‘speak truth to power,’ the humour and surreal elements might have been deliberately adopted to lessen the radical nature of the text and ensure that its message was read rather than ignored by Spanish readers. As we saw in the previous chapter, the most virulent message is not always the most effective one as it has a tendency to repel the reader. The humour in this passage may make it more palatable and so teach people facts of which they were unaware, showing Spanish readers the oppressive actions of their ancestors but without making them feel censured for it. As mentioned earlier, Saval also argues that the use of humour and surreal elements in historical passages undercut the idea of a serious historical narrative and so make the reader question all written history.⁸⁶³ This could serve as a resistance strategy in undermining ‘official’ history but it is not the most effective as generally those recovering a minority history do not want *that* history questioned. Therefore, this particular passage is more suited to ‘speaking truth to power’ rather than simply recovering history.

⁸⁶² While the circumstances surrounding the event are fantastical and exaggerated, the basic facts are true. El pla Cerdà (the Cerdà plan) was imposed upon Barcelona by Madrid against the wishes of the city council who favoured Antoni Rovira i Trias’ plan which kept the old city as the centre of the new. In contrast, Cerdà’s grid plan both absorbed and decentred the old city giving it no preference over the new. In November 1859 the Barcelona council chose Rovira’s plan but eight months later Madrid reversed the decision, insisting on the implementation of Cerdà’s plan. This interference caused much resentment in Barcelona. Robert Hughes, *Barcelona* (London: Harvill Press, 2001), pp. 325-7.

⁸⁶³ Saval, p. 77.

It is important to note, as both Saval and Knutson have,⁸⁶⁴ that certain Catalans in *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* do not escape censure for their ineffectual and, at times, outright treasonous behaviour. The nobility of Barcelona are presented as dissolute, irresponsible and snobbish. They are happy to pretend friendship with Onofre to benefit from his vast wealth but in secret they despise him for his humble origins and modes of doing business. While Onofre is undoubtedly an unpleasant character, these attitudes of the upper classes do not make them appear attractive. Moreover they appear to be uncaring of their own land and in league with Madrid and are at times condemned outright in the text. The narrator says of the city's leading figures:

Para ellos el dinero constituía un fin en sí, en sus manos nunca fue un medio para hacerse con el poder, nunca se les ocurrió usarlo para tomar en sus manos las riendas del país, para moldear la política gubernamental conforme a sus postulados. Si a veces habían accedido a entrar en el mundillo de la política central lo habían hecho con renuencia, quizá atendiendo ruegos de la corona; en estas ocasiones habían actuado como buenos administradores, con eficacia, sin designios, en contra de los intereses de Cataluña que antes defendían, incluso en contra de sus propios intereses. Quizá porque ellos siempre se habían considerado en el fondo un mundo aparte, desgajado del resto de España, del que no obstante no quisieron o no supieron o no les dejaron prescindir.⁸⁶⁵

This is a scathing judgement and unlike in the case of the officials working on the redevelopment plan, there is no justification. The city leaders are shown to be weak and prefer to grovel to Madrid than to struggle for their nation's rights. Moreover, they are too foolish to realise that their nation's best interests may also be theirs. There are certain striking similarities to the depiction of the Generalitat officials in *Victus*. Resina goes further and sees the novel as depicting "the Catalan bourgeoisie's

⁸⁶⁴ Saval, pp. 105-6; Knutson, p. 79.

⁸⁶⁵ Mendoza, p. 318. "Money for them an end in itself, not a means to obtain or accomplish anything. It never occurred to them to use it to take the reins of the country into their own hands, to shape the government according to their own theories. If at times they entered the arena of politics, they did so reluctantly. They served Madrid as good administrators, efficiently, with no scheming, even when this worked against the best interests of the Catalonia they had previously defended, or even against their own best interests. Perhaps deep down, though considering themselves separate from Spain, they could not completely do without Spain." pp. 249-50.

betrayal of the revolutionary impulse of Catalan nationalism in exchange for the Madrid government's guarantee of bourgeois class domination,"⁸⁶⁶ in what he describes as "a Faustian pact."⁸⁶⁷ He explains:

In its heroic age, the subject of Mendoza's narrative, the Catalan bourgeoisie created modern Catalan society, manifesting its economic pre-eminence in Spain through the construction of Barcelona's definitive urban structure. Having raised itself to a historical apex from which it could have consolidated its power and itself as a substantial political entity, this bourgeoisie, fearful of the historical forces it had unleashed, entered into a Faustian pact based on the illusion of attained fulfilment.⁸⁶⁸

In Resina's view, the Catalan bourgeoisie are depicted by Mendoza as being cowardly and as undercutting all their achievements as a result. It is difficult to find a counter argument to this. However, I would argue that despite the obvious weakness of its leaders, the main blame for Catalonia's ills in the novel falls on the central government, and on the wider Castilian-dominated Spain.

So in *La Ciudad de los Prodigios*, it is clear that Mendoza sees Catalonia as very different and in some ways separate to the rest of Spain. He presents the central government based in Madrid as repressive and uninterested in Catalan welfare. Davies' representation of the relationship between Wales and England is a little less clearcut and somewhat more implicit in the Rhondda Trilogy but there are some similarities to Mendoza's view. Davies presents Wales as very different to England; as we shall see later in this chapter he depicts industrialisation as being un-Welsh and as stemming from England, in the first novel at least. Moreover, the narrator comments at one point that the Welsh continued to fight "when other peoples would have settled comfortably under the yoke of conquerors obviously superior in numbers and civilized accomplishments."⁸⁶⁹ This suggests the English were more technically advanced than the Welsh. While the wording here seems to be undermining Wales and perpetuating colonial stereotypes of a backward land that needs colonising for its own benefit, I would argue that the word 'obviously' implies irony on the part of the narrator. A page or so earlier he uses 'obviously' to prefix the English soldiers' convictions that Owain Glyndŵr was a "necromancer" and "consorted with spirits" – claims that are clearly ridiculous to the rational reader.⁸⁷⁰ As will be discussed in greater

⁸⁶⁶ Joan Ramon Resina, 'Money, Desire and History in Eduardo Mendoza's City of Marvels', *PMLA*, 109.5 (1994), 951-68 (p. 954).

⁸⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 954.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 954.

⁸⁶⁹ Davies, *Honey and Bread*, p. 52.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

detail later, these claims undercut the supposedly superior English and therefore I feel that by using that same word ‘obviously’ just two pages later, Davies is signalling that it is the English, not he, who feel themselves to be more civilised and accomplished than the Welsh. However, as we will see later, Davies does appear to portray industry as un-Welsh in *Honey and Bread*. This contrast is the reverse of Mendoza’s; in *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* it is the stateless nation that is industrialised and far more developed than the rest of the state, and this is generally shown to be a good thing. This division between industrialised and rural, whichever way it is presented, serves to emphasise the difference between the stateless nation and the rest of the official state and uses the binarism already discussed, if not to the same extent as some of the other authors in this thesis.

Though in many ways Mendoza’s work is more overtly nationalist and radically resistant than Davies’, Davies does present Wales as a separate nation for at least some of its history which is not something that Mendoza does with Catalonia. In a passage in *Honey and Bread* that will be discussed in more detail later Davies describes the persistent attempts of Henry IV of England to defeat Glyndŵr as an “invasion.”⁸⁷¹ The word ‘invasion’ strongly implies an incursion into a separate country – indeed it is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as: “The action of invading a country or territory as an enemy; an entrance or incursion with armed force; a hostile inroad.”⁸⁷² At the very least then, by this definition, Wales is a separate territory to England and I would argue that the implication in the text is that it is a nation in its own right. Interestingly, as we will see in the next section, the coming of industry is also seen in terms of an invasion and is strongly linked with England. The narrator does admit that later “slowly they became a wholly conquered nation,”⁸⁷³ but they are still a nation. In this way, Davies gives more nationhood to Wales than Mendoza does to Catalonia.

It is harder to determine the text’s view of Wales’ status in the time in which the novels are set. Almost nothing is said about Wales’ political status. However, the characters are always referred to as ‘Welsh’ or ‘English’ - never as British - not even in the case of the few characters of mixed Welsh and English blood. (These constant references to ‘blood’ and ‘race’ are typical of Davies and can make his depiction of Welshness somewhat problematic. Daniel Williams has discussed these issues at length,⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷¹ Ibid., p. 50.

⁸⁷² *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, <<https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.bangor.ac.uk/view/Entry/98930?redirectedFrom=invasion#eid>> [Accessed 24 October 2019].

⁸⁷³ Ibid., p. 52.

⁸⁷⁴ Daniel Williams, ‘Withered Roots: Ideas of Race in the Writings of Rhys Davies and D. H. Lawrence’, in *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001).

and they will be considered in the final section of this chapter.) This is more marked than in Mendoza where, although he refers frequently to Catalans as different to the other peoples of Spain, he does not suggest that they are not Spaniards.

In *A Time to Laugh*, set at the end of the nineteenth century Wales' separateness is still emphasised. Britain is barely mentioned and the troops brought in to suppress the rioting are seen as 'invaders,' just as the early mine owners were. When a religious mission comes to the valley the preachers speak in both English and Welsh,⁸⁷⁵ emphasising Wales' cultural difference. Here, interestingly, Wales' difference seems to be defined on linguistic and cultural, not racial, grounds. Little is said about national politics as the focus is on capitalism and the coalowners as the enemy.

The third book, *Jubilee Blues*, does contain references to Britain and here Wales' national status is more complicated. On the one hand, there are references to the British Government as responsible for things like the dole and the Means Test, and it is seen as the enemy; one of the miner activists declares: "We're going to eat into Britain, a consumption or a cancer."⁸⁷⁶ There are also references to miners in England and the text does point out that the General Strike was kept by miners across the UK. The Welsh miners in the text realise the importance of this. Moreover, when the word 'national' is mentioned it clearly means Britain – describing the strike the text states: "This was not a dispute confined to Cymric indignities and ardours, but a national affair occupying as much space in the newspapers as a Test Match or a juicy murder."⁸⁷⁷ The juxtaposition of national to Cymric makes it clear that national here refers to Britain. On the other hand, there are also references to England as "over the border,"⁸⁷⁸ and the people in England are seen as being less politically aware than in Wales. Tudor Morris claims: "England's still too much in the garden state to start a revolution – men there think it would ruin their radish-beds and rose-bushes."⁸⁷⁹ Wales is certainly portrayed as different to England here, more advanced in political consciousness, and the phrase over the border suggests a separate country.

The same thing occurs when a scheme to move some of the unemployed miners and their families to farms in England is discussed. Cassie, though born and raised in the country and a firm advocate of rural life, is horrified and declares: "But the families won't go,"⁸⁸⁰ as she knows "the tenacity with

⁸⁷⁵ Rhys Davies, *A Time to Laugh*, (Cardiff: Library of Wales, 2014), p. 123.

⁸⁷⁶ Rhys Davies, *Jubilee Blues*, p. 131.

⁸⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁸⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

which roots went down into Welsh soil.”⁸⁸¹ Later she thinks that she would like to return to the country: “But perhaps not to England, she thought to herself, where people were as cold as fish.”⁸⁸² While this view is clearly a result of Cassie’s prejudice and is in fact no worse than some of the things she has thought about the inhabitants of the Welsh valleys, it shows the difference that the Welsh feel from the English. Minnie James, one of those chosen to go, is distressed at the thought of “starting all over again in a new *land* among strangers! [my italics]”⁸⁸³ which emphasises the alien nature of England even more forcefully. Wales may or may not be part of Britain but it is certainly different to England. This is perhaps closer to Mendoza’s view of Catalonia as expressed in *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* – part of the larger state (Spain or Britain) but distinct from the dominant culture of that state (Spanish or English). Thus Davies’ presentation of Wales becomes less radical, ceasing to portray it as an independent nation but still maintaining its difference from England and its distinctive identity. While this is not a very active form of resistance, it still claims Wales is a separate nation and therefore resists the British hegemonic discourse that sees the United Kingdom as a culturally homogenous entity.

So both Davies and Mendoza present their nations as different and separate to the wider state. Some of the ways in which they do this are similar; others are different, as is the extent to which they go, but both present a nation with its own identity which is opposed to and abused by its larger and more powerful neighbour. I will now go on to consider the resistance to this abuse, firstly by considering to what extent the two authors represent the national struggle as linked with other struggles such as workers’ and women’s rights.

Linking struggles

As emphasised earlier, an important idea, both of anticolonial thinkers like Fanon and Thiong’o, and of resistance theorists like San Juan, is the need to recognise that all struggles against oppression are linked and that there should be solidarity between resistance movements. Thiong’o speaks of “the need to move the centre from all minority class establishments to the real creative centres among the working people in conditions of gender, racial and religious equality.”⁸⁸⁴ San Juan, meanwhile,

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., p. 164.

⁸⁸² Ibid., p. 212.

⁸⁸³ Ibid., p. 211.

⁸⁸⁴ Thiong’o, *Moving the Centre*, p. xvii.

discusses a “submerged or repressed tradition of revolt,” which “can only be discovered in the current multifaceted struggles of subalterns, a community of victims now undergoing profound radical change.”⁸⁸⁵ This shows how people can be oppressed through belonging to more than one subordinate group and have to struggle for liberation of all parts of their identity. This will be particularly relevant to the Welsh workers and women discussed in the following sections.

In the Rhondda Trilogy, Davies unites movements normally seen as separate,⁸⁸⁶ seeing the industrial struggle as a continuation of the ancient Welsh resistance to English invasion. Stephen Knight writes that:

He [Davies] has an argument found in none of the other writers. He feels a clear sense that the best of the modern Welsh political resistance – from which he seems to exclude riots, looting and such unpleasantness, but not courage, community spirit and collective passion – in some ways goes back to a native Welsh tradition that has been expressed in poetry and music, but has also, crucially, been resistant to the invaders of this anciently self-conscious region.⁸⁸⁷

The textual evidence for this in the Rhondda Trilogy is substantial. Knight cites the narrator’s comment in *Honey and Bread* that has already been partially quoted, that the Welsh “never ceased to fight with a strange tenacity, obeying the wild instinct in their blood, when other peoples would have settled comfortably under the yoke of conquerors obviously superior in numbers and civilized accomplishments.”⁸⁸⁸ (As we have already noted, the latter part of this sentence is likely ironic and is not denigrating the Welsh as it might first appear to.) This establishes the theme of the Welsh as a fighting people, capable of resistance even against great odds. The idea of industrialisation as an alien English concept, meanwhile, is equally clear. At one point the narrative states: “But most of the successful buyers of property [who would profit from the industrialisation] belonged to the old breed of the conquerors...”⁸⁸⁹ This is a definite and distinctly hostile statement. A little earlier in the novel Owen rants:

But it [the coal] doesn’t belong to them. It belongs to us – us. If we wanted coal for our own use, we could have made a hole and taken it of the earth quietly, in our own way. Not these

⁸⁸⁵ San Juan, *Writing and National Liberation*, p. 111.

⁸⁸⁶ As seen in the Harri Webb chapter, the industrial struggles in South Wales were not usually considered national in character though Webb and the Welsh Republican Movement certainly saw them as such.

⁸⁸⁷ Knight, ‘“Not a Place for Me”: Rhys Davies’s Fiction and the Coal Industry’, p. 60.

⁸⁸⁸ Davies quoted in Knight, p. 61.

⁸⁸⁹ Davies, *Honey and Bread*, p. 231.

thieves coming from outside, strangers, foreigners, ugly people who want to destroy. It's as it was in the old days, barbarians come to conquer, only now they do it with money. I can't bear the thought of alien people here, destroying what doesn't belong to them.⁸⁹⁰

He longs to resist what he sees as a foreign invasion:

...I would have roused the villagers and won them over to my side; I would have got them to meet those London men when they arrived and stoned them out of the place. That would have been the way to act. The old way, the tribe fighting for its land. Isn't it still in their blood – isn't it? Why didn't they fight, seeing those thieves come up the valley!⁸⁹¹

Owen appears to see industrialisation as something alien and damaging to Wales. It is possible that industrialisation by the Welsh would have been acceptable as they would have done it in their "own way," and "quietly," in a manner which presumably would not have caused such destruction. The passages quoted above could be seen as anti-English as opposed to anti-industrial per se, but in the context of the rest of the novel they merge to link Welsh resistance against the English with resistance to industrialism.

It should be noted that the depiction of industrialisation is not entirely negative. Dixon points out that in *Honey and Bread* Davies does present "an undeniable attractiveness about the dynamism of the industrial enterprise...Here there is a vitality lacking in the mundane pastoral world which has been so rudely displaced..."⁸⁹² He reveals the excitement of the local people at the coming industry and promised wealth:

Most were in favour of a change. Daniel Davies, who had recently paid a visit to one of the Glamorgan valleys already undergoing its first disembowelment, declared that he couldn't tell of all the enjoyments he had seen. But he did his best. There were long rows of houses fastened like tails to the mountains; there were many shops, one for each kind of goods; there were dozens of beer-houses and chapels, and a hall where you could dance with women and where concerts were given.... Most of his listeners were attracted by the gay-coloured picture Daniel

⁸⁹⁰ Davies, *Honey and Bread*, pp. 201-2.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-2.

⁸⁹² Dixon, p. 43.

drew for them: the young people especially. They knew the world beyond the hills was shifting out of the old habits; why shouldn't they have a little of the glory?⁸⁹³

The attractions are clearly painted here as is the generally favourable attitude of the locals, despite the jarring image of the “disembowelled” valley. However, putting this paragraph back in the context of the passage from which it came, it seems that Davies is implying that the locals are being blinded by the vision of riches and deceived by the words of outsiders. Just before the section quoted above, the narrative states: “Had not one of the visiting men, taking a glass of beer at the inn, said jovially to Ianto Pritchard “Well my man, you’ll soon have a black face every day and a pocketful of money.”⁸⁹⁴ The tone is patronising, that of an adult addressing a child or a halfwit and thus casts serious doubt on the sincerity of the statement. Furthermore, the next sentence states: “Everyone who wanted could have a black face, women not excepted.”⁸⁹⁵ This suggests the complete takeover of the valley and its inhabitants by the coming industry and also the abuses that are likely to follow. Some of these are described later in the novel: people being evicted from their homes, men coming from afar to work only to be poorly housed and charged exorbitant rent; others are mentioned in retrospective reflective passages in *A Time to Laugh*, where Bronwen remembers:

Greedy, demented men had attained power. Since her twentieth year, when the valley had been handed over to the merchants, her progress had been a lucky journey amid other lives that were nothing but squalor, filth and endless toil. .. she could remember the days when girls of seven and eight worked at odd jobs down in the mines, half-stripped because of the heat, when women hauled in coal among the men, and boys of six were labourers with their fathers: they worked for fourteen hours a day, and there had grown in the valley a race of stunted underworld creatures, rat-like of face and deformed of body, who were foreign to the sun and offensive in the daylight.

[...]

the evil period when men were whipped beasts and women were of foul manner, rotted of lung and bone, inhabitants of black slime-dripping corridors where they ate with the rats and consorted in brutal, deformed nakedness...⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁹³ Davies, *Honey and Bread*, p. 179.

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁸⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁸⁹⁶ Davies, *A Time to Laugh*, p. 40.

These memories serve to show the full horror of the early years of industrialisation. While Bronwen acknowledges that things have improved greatly since then, these words in the second book of the trilogy skilfully undercut the excitement of the inhabitants of the valley about the coming of industry in the previous book. Thus, particularly when considered in the context of its sequels, even the passages of *Honey and Bread* that appear to consider the benefits of industrialisation can be read as questioning it. The locals may look forward to change but the omniscient narrator implies that they do not know what they are longing for – the coming of industrialism will destroy people and land.

The desecration of the land is described in detail in *Honey and Bread*:

Tall tree, short tree, sapling, and bush lay strewn beside the cleared way. There was a faint pleasant scent in the air, which rose from the cut bodies of the trees. Up came the roots, the earth was turned over, and stones carted from a nearby quarry stamped thickly into the dark soil. Soon the crystal stream ran white and blue no more; it became turgid, sullen-looking. Dead trout were thrown out amongst the stones. The clear dashing became a sluggish lapping against dirty banks. The gangs of alien men used the stream as a sewer.⁸⁹⁷

This is a vivid and dramatic depiction of environmental destruction and this is just the beginning of industrialisation. In the two later novels there are references to that same crystal stream, nostalgic comparisons to its current polluted state.⁸⁹⁸ Industrialisation is clearly portrayed as negative here and the final sentence with its reference to “alien” men is telling, linking industrialisation and the destruction of the valley with outsiders. The desecration of the landscape also links the struggle against industry to environmental concerns, introducing a connection to a third struggle, one of an ecological nature. This is not a struggle that San Juan or Thiong’o mention but it seems to me to fit well with the national struggle against oppression as it is the nation’s territory that is being destroyed.

Meanwhile, fears for the cost to humanity are also prevalent. David foresees the coming of: “A kingdom of death... an underworld peopled with grimy aborigines who belonged neither wholly to the darkness nor to the light, but lived in a kind of half-life, burying themselves underground and crawling above at intervals to snatch an hour or two of daylight.”⁸⁹⁹ This of course is confirmed in Bronwen’s later memories. When having lunch with the foreman of the mining company, Tudor wonders: “What strange new race of men was going to occupy the new world? Inhuman, cold as iron, machines in their

⁸⁹⁷ Davies, *Honey and Bread*, p. 272.

⁸⁹⁸ Davies, *A Time to Laugh*, p. 41, 100-1; Davies, *Jubilee Blues*, p. 190.

⁸⁹⁹ Davies, *Honey and Bread*, p.186.

heads instead of music and poetry.”⁹⁰⁰ There is an echo here of R. S. Thomas’ views on the machine, particularly as they are expressed in ‘Cynddylan on a Tractor’.⁹⁰¹ Davies is not unaware of the parallel sufferings of the agricultural labourers, particularly under the feudal squire system. Owen and David have several discussions on this matter. However, he makes it clear that industrialisation is not the way to improve the situation of the poor. The material benefits it may bring do not offset the damage it does to the people.

If industrialisation is an alien, un-Welsh phenomenon, then resistance to it could be seen as automatically Welsh. But Davies is more explicit than this. As seen above, Owen’s response to the news of the sale of Glan Ystrad is to regret that he was not there to “rouse the villagers” in the “old way, the tribe fighting for its land.”⁹⁰² His immediate instinct is to fight as the historical Welsh people would have done, to defend their treasured land. For him the battling of the past is what should happen in the present. It does not happen, though he does his best alone, refusing to leave the valley, even as work begins, until he finally dies.

The theme of Welsh resistance to industrialism is taken up in *A Time to Laugh*. This is the novel of the trilogy that most discusses politics and industrial strife. Strikes, riots and political meetings - both mass gatherings and smaller private discussions – constitute a substantial portion of the text. Perhaps the most obvious link between Welsh resistance to the English and workers’ resistance to the owners, and the power of the law that supports them, occurs in an early scene. Troops have been drafted into the valley in response to the growing unrest and plan to break up a meeting of the strikers. The strikers lay an ambush. Luring the mounted soldiers up a steep ravine, they roll boulders down on them, quickly scattering them. Naturally they are triumphant after this and the narrative delivers the telling statement: “They had shown that they had strength and power yet; they had struck successfully at the interfering invaders. Still the mountains were theirs.”⁹⁰³ The forces of law are seen as “interfering invaders,” that have to be battled against and expelled. The phrase “they had strength and power yet,” could simply refer to the fact that they have not been crushed by the long strike, but in the context I believe it also implies that they still have the strength and spirit of their ancestors who fought off invaders. This is the English/British military invading Wales and the Welsh fighting them off as in the olden days. Moreover, mountains are often used as symbolic of Wales particularly by Davies. In his non-fiction work *The Story of Wales* he described the importance of mountains to the image of Wales as a

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 275.

⁹⁰¹ R. S. Thomas, ‘Cynddylan on a Tractor’, *Collected Poems*, p. 30.

⁹⁰² Davies, *Honey and Bread*, pp. 201-2.

⁹⁰³ Davies, *A Time to Laugh*, p. 48.

country.⁹⁰⁴ In the past mountains often hindered invasion as they do here. Thus the line: “Still the mountains were theirs,” firmly links the current industrial resistance to Welsh resistance to the English in times past. They resist as workers and Welshmen in the “multifaceted struggles,” of San Juan’s “subalterns.”⁹⁰⁵

In a further link to Welsh tradition, one of the political meetings ends with “hymns and old Welsh war marches,”⁹⁰⁶ being sung. Again Welsh tradition is linked with resistance in the current context.

Osborne argues that in *A Time to Laugh*: “Whatever ‘complicated industrial strife’... may afflict Davies’s characters, they are always shored up by an abiding Welsh national ‘heritage’.”⁹⁰⁷ Osborne appears to intend this as a criticism, to suggest that this linking of struggles is a failure on Davies’ part. I however agree with Knight that: “He [Davies] saw in the mining world a vitality and a set of attitudes that he believed were authentically, and even traditionally Welsh; in that he saw, or foresaw, a reading of the industrial world that is still too daring for historians and sociologists...”⁹⁰⁸ For Knight, Davies’ interpretation of the Welshness of the industrial struggle is a radical approach. It also expresses the opinions espoused by the later and far more radical Harri Webb. While Davies does not use the nation as a rallying standard for the Welsh people of his age in the way that Webb did, he does acknowledge the importance of Wales and the Welshness of the workers’ struggles, and in this at least he can be seen as a resistance writer.

Knight notes correctly that Davies has limits to his approval of resistance and that he shies away from approving rioting and looting,⁹⁰⁹ unsurprising considering that Davies came from a family of shopkeepers who would suffer in the event of looting. The majority of his main characters: the protagonist of *A Time to Laugh* Tudor Morris, and the miners’ leaders Melville Walters and Beriah Thomas speak against rioting, though the latter seem to see it as inevitable.

It could be argued that Davies tries to evade the unpleasantness of these issues in a somewhat racist manner. Early on the narrative states: “Opinion was that the Welsh gangs stole for food and clothing, but did not wantonly destroy. The Irish revelled in destruction for its own sake, but the Welsh rioted in

⁹⁰⁴ See Rhys Davies, *The Story of Wales* (London: William Collins, 1943), p. 7 where he implies that mountains are a Welsh term for what in England would be called hills, and p. 16 where he argues that the mountains affect the character of the Welshman.

⁹⁰⁵ San Juan, *Writing and National Liberation*, p. 111.

⁹⁰⁶ Davies, *A Time to Laugh*, p. 197.

⁹⁰⁷ Osborne, p. 75.

⁹⁰⁸ Knight, p. 69.

⁹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

the scared cause of belly and pocket.”⁹¹⁰ However, the important word here is “opinion.” Davies is representing the accepted opinion in the valley, not his own view. It is the inhabitants of the valley who are racist, not he. Similarly, when Mildred’s maid Polly expresses the view that the rioters will be mainly those who have come from Bristol and Ireland – “foreigners”, Mildred corrects her: “I believe there is quite a large number of native Welsh among the rioters, Polly...”⁹¹¹ Davies is not subscribing to the belief that the Welsh do not wantonly destroy things; he is merely expressing the view which many of his Welsh characters hold or attempt to hold in order to comfort themselves and feel superior – a tendency found in all people. Davies is not explicitly condemnatory of this attitude but neither is it correct to take it as his own. Much as he clearly disapproves of looting, he does not try to exonerate the Welsh of it, though he does refrain from linking it to traditional Welsh resistance.

One further struggle that Davies touches upon, though not to the same extent, is the struggle of women for rights and recognition. This is begun in *Honey and Bread* with reference to Nest Llewellyn, a far more forceful character than her husband, who “longed for the power to follow him into his male world, where women were treated as fantasies, and damage his vanity with rude blows.”⁹¹² She rages silently against her lot: ““You wait,” she would burst out to herself in silent bitterness “we’ll get the better of you sometime; we *will* wear the breeches.”⁹¹³ She is aware though that she is unlikely to see this happen in her lifetime.

Discussion of the women’s struggle is taken up again in *A Time to Laugh* and a link made to the previous book with a passing reference to Nest Llewellyn.⁹¹⁴ She does not however appear in the text and the main exponents of women’s rights are Tudor’s wife Daisy and two of her friends: Mrs Barnes and, to a lesser extent, Maud Powell. Daisy supports her husband and brother whole-heartedly in the strikes and is also in many ways a ‘liberated’ women, comfortable with her own sexuality, and even teaching the young men who lodge in her house about women: “The others I was willing to talk to about women openly and help them to understand things a bit.”⁹¹⁵ Maud Powell, meanwhile, is not consciously part of any struggle but she is unconventional; she remains unmarried and indifferent to men which, interestingly, is something even the radical Daisy cannot understand: “This offended Daisy’s sense of the fitness of things. Useless for Maud to declare grievously: “Men don’t interest me,

⁹¹⁰ Davies, *A Time to Laugh*, p. 5.

⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁹¹² Davies, *Honey and Bread*, p. 64.

⁹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁹¹⁴ Davies, *A Time to Laugh*, p. 83.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-7.

they leave me cold, I can't get warmed up about them" - Daisy was always trying to put men in her way."⁹¹⁶ Maud also takes on what would have been a man's role in traditional Welsh society by reciting poetry at gatherings.

The most radical woman in the text, however, is Mrs Barnes, who lives with a man not her husband, writes romances under a male pseudonym and is active in the women's rights movement as well as being a fervent socialist. She argues that there is no reason why women should not do men's work, which at first shocks Tudor "who had never devoted any thought to the female aspect of socialism,"⁹¹⁷ but later intrigues and then inspires him, and he decides to ask Mrs Barnes organise mass meetings for the women of the valley.⁹¹⁸ Here the female struggle and the workers' struggle are depicted as sympathetic and complementary although somewhat different.⁹¹⁹ Thus Davies can be seen to be espousing the anticolonial and resistance theory idea that all struggles against oppression are linked.

In contrast, Mendoza says little on women's struggles though he does at times represent them as being abused by men, and while he does discuss and analyse both the struggle for workers' rights and the struggle of Catalan identity in *La Ciudad de los Prodigios*, he does not generally link them in the same way. This may be partly because, as already mentioned, he does not see industrialisation as a force foreign to Catalonia. He is highly aware of the unpleasant aspects of industrialisation, indeed in certain passages, much of his language is reminiscent of Davies; for example "...la locomotora arrojaba pavesas al aire; luego las pavesas caían sobre los transeúntes y tiznaban los muros de los edificios."⁹²⁰ or:

Pero el esfuerzo exigido por este desarrollo había sido inmenso. Ahora Barcelona, como la hembra de un especie rara que acaba de parir una camada numerosa, yacía exangüe y

⁹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 308.

⁹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 160.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 229.

⁹¹⁹ While predating most Marxist anticolonial thought, this view contains a great deal of similarity to it. Thomas Sankara stressed the importance of women's involvement in the revolution and transformation of the nation: "...nothing definitive or lasting can be accomplished in our country as long as a crucial part of ourselves is kept in this condition of subjugation—a condition imposed over the course of centuries by various systems of exploitation." (Sankara, p. 22) He also saw parallels between the class and female struggles: "In fact, throughout the ages and wherever the patriarchy triumphed, there has been a close parallel between class exploitation and women's oppression." (Sankara, p. 28.).

⁹²⁰ Mendoza, p. 94. "...a narrow-gauge train passed, spewing cinders on the passers-by and blackening the walls of the buildings. People had soot on their faces..." p. 68.

desventrada; de las grietas manaban flujos pestilentes, efluvios apestosos hacían irrespirable el aire en las calles y las viviendas.⁹²¹

These depictions are as unpleasant as anything Davies describes. However, industry and innovation are not condemned in and of themselves. Mendoza abhors progress' lack of care for those who do not share in its riches, particularly those like the workers who are integral to it, but, unlike Davies, he does not see it as a foreign force that must be resisted. As we have already seen, he takes pride in asserting the progress of Catalonia in contrast to the rest of Spain. Consequently, the workers' struggles on which the novel focuses are primarily struggles for better living and working conditions, unconnected with the Catalan struggle which is primarily dealt with through the recounting of historical events and the argument over the funding of the World Fair.⁹²²

However, I think it is possible to argue that Mendoza is criticising the Catalan upper classes for their lack of interest in the problems of the workers in much the same way that Webb criticised members of the Welsh elite in 'The Welsh Establishment'.⁹²³ Saval claims that Mendoza condemns the failure of the Catalan upper class to recognise both the similarity of their situation with that of Cuba, the colony struggling to free itself from Spanish rule, and its deliberate disregard of the quasi-civil war fought by workers and anarchists on the streets of Barcelona, as they are mainly motivated by the desire to hang on to their money.⁹²⁴ It is possible, in my opinion, to take this argument one step further and claim that Mendoza is suggesting that the Catalan struggle would have been stronger had the upper class joined forces with the workers and anarchists, who had a strength and vitality they lacked, rather than relying on the Madrid government to protect their money, property and business interests. In doing this they are effectively betraying their nation and consequently must be censured.

This is admittedly an interpretation based on slightly tenuous ground. Mendoza could be arguing here for a connection between the workers' struggle and the Catalans' national struggle but it is by no means as clear as Davies' linking of the struggles. Even this tenuous link is interesting however, as the

⁹²¹ Ibid., p. 27. "But all this progress had demanded a colossal effort. Barcelona, like the female of some giant species who had just given birth to numerous offspring lay drained, exhausted. Foul emanations seeped from cracks, rancid exhalations rendered unbreathable the air in the streets and homes." p. 12.

⁹²² Resina does note that when Primo de Rivera becomes dictator middle and lower class Catalan nationalists head underground in the same way as the socialists and anarchists do, suggesting at least a common enemy. However, this is merely a passing reference and no extended treatment is given to the situation of these activists in the novel. Resina, p. 965.

⁹²³ Harri Webb, 'The Welsh Establishment', in *No Half-Way House*, pp. 147-8.

⁹²⁴ Saval, pp. 105-6.

workers' movements in Barcelona were never really associated with Catalan nationalism. In the same way, the industrial struggles in South Wales have not usually been seen as Welsh in character. Thus, even to hint at these links involves a radical re-understanding of their nations along the lines of resistance theory which states that all struggles are linked. I now want to consider one other specific technique that is used by Davies to link different struggles – figures of resistance.

Figures of resistance

One specific form of resistance that links national and industrial resistance is the phenomenon that I will call figures of resistance. This is not a term I have found in the work of resistance theorists but one that I have coined to denote individuals that mount a solitary resistance to the forces that confront their people. This resistance need not be successful – indeed frequently it is not – what matters is the willingness to undertake it, and the subtler ongoing effects that it may have. Unaided, at times despised or ignored by their own people, these figures nevertheless continue to resist, even when it seems hopeless. They are a feature of Davies' work rather than Mendoza's; while resistance is mounted in Mendoza it is generally enacted by a mass of people rather than individual figures. Certain of Davies' individuals, however, mount a combined struggle for the rights of the Welsh people, the workers and the land of Wales itself, resembling the “multifaceted struggles,” of San Juan's “subalterns.” They appear primarily in *Honey and Bread* and are characters that represent the old Welsh rural way of life and in doing so resist the industrialisation of the valley. They all instinctively dislike the changes that it brings and cling tenaciously to their traditions; they are prepared to fight to defend them. Again Welshness is linked with resistance to industrialism.

The first of these figures is Robert ap Gruffydd, whom Dixon describes as “the only serious opposition,”⁹²⁵ to foreman Jeremiah Clark's work of industrialising the valley. He is an eighty year old man who lives a hermit's life on the mountainside and sometimes gives prophecies to the locals for which he demands payment in food. Though most of his prophecies have been wrong, the local people still respect him; they “suspected he possessed a wisdom denied to others.”⁹²⁶ He is one of the few outside the Squire's family who can read and write, and he is well aware of what the coming industry could mean for the local people. He warns them:

⁹²⁵ Dixon, p. 44.

⁹²⁶ Davies, *Honey and Bread*, p. 179.

When the may-blossom is on the boughs, this place will be swallowed into the mouth of hell like an apple in the jaw of a wild boar. If you would save yourselves, take up your tables and chairs and flee, or your backs will be broken, and your legs and your arms, on the chariot wheels of the new Romans.”⁹²⁷

None of his listeners really pay attention, however; one young man going as far as to state that “when the new times had arrived, such as ap Gruffydd would be put in chains and locked up,”⁹²⁸ and he returns to his mountain home. It is notable that here he is advising his listeners to flee rather than fight. His tone changes later however; he cries: “Shift yourselves! Strike against him [Jeremiah].”⁹²⁹ Later in this speech his words combine the evocation of a glorious Welsh past of fighting and resistance with the need to fight today:

“Let not Cadwgan of the Battle-Axe be deserted of his people in Glyn Rontha! Remember now that Owain Glyndwr still cries to his captain, ‘Cadwgan, whet thy battle-axe!’ and listens for the men and women to raise their battle-shout as they assemble in army. Yea, Cadwgan is whetting his axe now. Prepare then for battle.”⁹³⁰

The past is used as a call for arms in the present day against a new type of invader. Thus, again, Welsh resistance is connected to industrial resistance. And this time, his words have some effect: “The people, stirred but still cautious, went home chewing Gruffydd’s words slowly on their tongues.”⁹³¹ There is no immediate action but many begin to rethink their opinion of Jeremiah.

Ap Gruffydd also defies Jeremiah in person. Enraged at the prophet’s defiance – which tellingly he hears of from one of the immigrant workers described as “alien” in the text,⁹³² Jeremiah goes to confront the man in his own home. After a trade of insults, ap Gruffydd emerges and greets Jeremiah with surprising politeness, bowing and offering him a cup of water.⁹³³ This courtesy shows up the rudeness of Jeremiah’s response: “‘Notice,’ snapped Jeremiah, “of one day I give you. This land is mine. You go out off it.”⁹³⁴ His opponent responds in biblical language: “The land is the Lord’s and all

⁹²⁷ Ibid., p. 180.

⁹²⁸ Ibid., p.180.

⁹²⁹ Ibid., p. 327.

⁹³⁰ Ibid., p. 329.

⁹³¹ Ibid., p. 329.

⁹³² Ibid., p. 329.

⁹³³ Ibid., p. 331.

⁹³⁴ Ibid., p. 331.

the fruits thereof...”⁹³⁵ which gives him a gravity and authority that is hard to gainsay. This is slightly undercut by his spitting at Jeremiah but this in itself is an act of defiance that Jeremiah has no real answer to. He threatens to have ap Gruffydd’s house burned down the following day but ap Gruffydd simply responds that he will have left by then. His final words are ominous: “But I am of this land and I will not cease to direct the minds of its people.”⁹³⁶ Dixon comments that ap Gruffydd “takes on the mythic role of an exile, a latter-day Glyndŵr figure who poses an unseen, and threateningly permanent, challenge to Jeremiah Clark and his kind.”⁹³⁷ Ultimately “his main function in the text is to symbolize the original ethos of the valley, and the spirit of resistance, rather than to lead a full-blown revolt.”⁹³⁸ He delays the work somewhat and makes the locals rethink their opinions of Jeremiah and the coming industrialisation, but ultimately his resistance appears to be unsuccessful. However, the unrest and protest in *A Time to Laugh* and *Jubilee Blues* suggests that the spirit of resistance that he helped inspire lives on. This idea of resistance inspiring future generations is frequently found in Webb’s work and in both *Victus* and Sánchez Piñol’s statements in interviews.⁹³⁹

Dixon notes that ap Gruffydd is based on the real life figure of Dr William Price of Llantrisant,⁹⁴⁰ a figure hugely admired by Davies. As well as traditions, Price was concerned with the workers’ rights and well-being, and in *Honey and Bread* ap Gruffydd urges the locals to see what is coming and to form something like an early version of a union: “Preach among yourselves, make yourselves a bond, give out of your wages a small coin in every week for a bank that will help you in adversity.”⁹⁴¹ He urges the men to unity; stressing that they cannot fight or survive alone. Ap Gruffydd’s advice can be seen to provide a forerunner of the more politicised events of *A Time to Laugh* and thus a link between traditional Welsh resistance to invasion and latter day industrial resistance.

It is important to note that, like the protagonists of the trilogy, ap Gruffydd is far from an idealised figure. He is described as physically filthy “...at eighty, he was unaware of dirt, the need to wash occasionally, or the shame of being a pariah...”⁹⁴² Worse, he is an unpleasant character; he demands food from the locals, threatening them if necessary.⁹⁴³ When challenged on this he responds that he has

⁹³⁵ Ibid., p. 331.

⁹³⁶ Ibid., p. 332.

⁹³⁷ Dixon, p. 44.

⁹³⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

⁹³⁹ See the earlier chapters on these authors’ work for examples.

⁹⁴⁰ Dixon, p. 44.

⁹⁴¹ Davies, *Honey and Bread*, p. 328.

⁹⁴² Ibid., p. 179.

⁹⁴³ Ibid., pp. 179-80.

earned the food by putting food in people's minds,⁹⁴⁴ a somewhat dubious claim. Dixon claims that he represents "the permanence and rebellious potential of the old *gwerin*," but he is hardly the idealised *gwerin* figure – self-educated, religious, tied to the land, courteous and hospitable – that appears in the work of Welsh cultural nationalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century like O. M. Edwards.⁹⁴⁵ Consequently, this detracts a little from his effectiveness as a figure of resistance but he is still an impressive presence.

The second figure of resistance that I wish to discuss is the old woman called Rebecca. Like ap Gruffydd, she is an unpleasant figure: filthy, living in squalor, and frequently sullen or flying into rages. Locals call her a witch and shun her. The squire keeps her provided with food and is a little scared of her. However it is she who mounts the most active resistance to the coming tide of industrialisation. The name Rebecca is of course significant with its link to the Rebecca Riots, another highly effective example of Welsh resistance. Her cottage is scheduled to be demolished to make way for the new road that is being built but she refuses to leave, barricading herself inside. She ignores all warnings, spitting at Jeremiah and threatening him with a cauldron of boiling urine if he returns. Finally Jeremiah is forced to use a battering ram to break in. Men volunteer eagerly to help at first, glad of the diversion, but when she begins to curse they are taken aback and stare at the ground. When they begin to charge with the ram, she hurls everything she can at them: "pieces of old pots and pans, flints, rank old garments, clods of earth, the innards of poultry, foul rabbit skins, clots of stale milk, and finally some volumes of Welsh poetry she had taken from the Glan Ystrad rubbish-dump."⁹⁴⁶ This last item is the most significant. Rebecca has first rescued these objects of Welsh tradition from where they have been cast aside and then used them in the fight against the alien forces that are seeking to destroy her home. Here a part of Welsh tradition is quite literally used as a weapon of resistance. It is significant too, that Rebecca is the only character in the text that is specifically described as speaking in Welsh.

Also interesting is Jeremiah's reaction to her resistance. He is furious: "Never had he been so annoyed." He curses her in ugly language: "A stake in your stomach!... And spikes in your paps!"⁹⁴⁷ "you black bad sow."⁹⁴⁸ Much of this is female related. It could be argued, therefore, that Rebecca is resisting not only English dominion as a Welsh person, but also male dominion as a woman, again

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 328.

⁹⁴⁵ For a discussion of the myth of the *gwerin* as created by O. M. Edwards and others see, Prys Morgan, 'The *Gwerin* of Wales: Myth and Reality' in *The Welsh and Their Country* ed. by I. Hume & W. T. R. Pryce (Llandysul, Dyfed: Gomer Press, 1986), pp. 134-52.

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 299.

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 299.

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 297.

linking the two struggles (or three if the resistance to industry is included) and seeing them as facets of the same fight, showing similarity to San Juan and the Marxist anticolonialists with their concept of linked struggles once more, though of course this text predates them by several years. It is this triple resistance that so enrages Jeremiah. Most telling though is his feeling that: “Her defiance was a crime.”⁹⁴⁹ A crime implies illegal behaviour, an action against the state, and could thus suggest a colonialist outlook on the part of the mining company. The Welsh feel that the industrialisation is an alien invasion but the English see it simply as a development of progress in part of their domain. For Jeremiah therefore Rebecca’s resistance is seen as defying the law rather than defending her home and land.

Despite her best efforts, Rebecca is finally forcibly ejected in an extraordinary, somewhat farcical, scene where she is gagged, tied to the battering ram, carried up to the Glan Ystrad mansion and left on the doorstep. The gagging is particularly telling as it represents the silencing of an oppressed people by the dominant power. Moreover Rebecca’s supposed power as a witch is felt to come from her voice; she curses people or at least is believed to, so gagging her renders her impotent as well as silent. It seems to be the final victory of the invading power. Rebecca has fought hard, a struggle described in quasi-epic terms: “Even on her back Rebecca magnificently crashed her two fists into the swarthy face above her,”⁹⁵⁰ but ultimately she is beaten. The industrialisation will continue and cannot be stopped by anything Rebecca or Robert ap Gruffydd can do.

Dixon writes that: “If the figure of ap Gruffydd represents the permanence and rebellious potential of the old *gwerin* [as, I would argue, does Rebecca], then a residual trace of the old gentry, in its more spirited aspect, also remains.”⁹⁵¹ He cites Owen Llewellyn’s relationship with the peasant girl Bronwen whose child continues the line of the Llewellyns’ in later novels. Osborne, meanwhile, sees that relationship as part of that resistance, recognising Bronwen’s symbolic value to Owen.⁹⁵² For me, Owen and Bronwen can both be seen as figures of resistance but in slightly different ways. Owen longs to provide outright resistance, more even than Rebecca or ap Gruffydd do. He alone seems to recognise what the land means to his people and to be willing to fight for it. Osborne notes that it is surely not coincidental that he shares his name with Owain Glyndŵr,⁹⁵³ the great defender of Wales who is mentioned several times in the novel. However Owen’s resistance is unsuccessful. Ultimately all he can

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 299.

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 300.

⁹⁵¹ Dixon, p. 44.

⁹⁵² Osborne, pp. 71-2.

⁹⁵³ Ibid., p. 71.

manage is to refuse to leave his home and he dies of tuberculosis as the industrial progress continues unabated.

Bronwen, however, is different. Her resistance lies not in direct opposition – she would not feel that it was her place to oppose the sale of the estate directly – but in the values she embodies and her continued survival. Osborne writes that Bronwen is “representative of the Welsh folk,”⁹⁵⁴ and that Owen’s relationship with her “is a continuation of this noble resistance to the inevitable conquest of his lands.”⁹⁵⁵ She also has “a primordial link to the land,”⁹⁵⁶ the land that is being desecrated by industrialisation. Thus her continued survival can be read as the survival of the land and the old ways that she represents. She survives to pass down Welsh traditions; as Osborne notes she likes to hear her grandson sing old Welsh songs which she has presumably taught him.⁹⁵⁷ She survives to oversee the new age of *A Time to Laugh*, to help those suffering where she can and to pass on these traditions, and of course to give birth to her son who in turn fathers the activist Tudor Morris. Moreover, she teaches classes at Sunday School thus passing down values and assuming some responsibility for the morals of the next generation. By passing on pre-industrial traditions and history she resists the totalising effect of the alien industrialisation. It is a more passive resistance than that of ap Gruffydd or Rebecca and certainly not the type of which her lover Owen dreamed, but in its own quiet way it is more effective, as we shall see.

Bronwen could theoretically be accused of complicity with the new order because of her lack of active resistance and because she adapts to the new world reasonably well, marrying one of the incomers – Ben Morris a young foreman working on the new railway who raises hers and Owen’s child as his own. However, crucially, Morris is Welsh and specifically mentioned to be so: “But he was Welsh, though of the border, and with a streak of the gay Saxon in him.”⁹⁵⁸ Despite his involvement with the coming industry, he is shown to be a good man – redeemed perhaps by being Welsh! – and he accepts Bronwen and her unborn child unreservedly.⁹⁵⁹ He is thus instrumental in allowing the Llewellyn line to continue, albeit illegitimately, and provide future resistance in the valley. Dixon notes that Bronwen and Ben’s marriage “could be read as the conciliation of the old native order with the new *status*

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 72.

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 72.

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 73.

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 74-5.

⁹⁵⁸ Davies, *Honey and Bread*, p. 335.

⁹⁵⁹ Again this touches on the issues of blood and race in Davies’ work which will be discussed in the last section of the chapter.

quo,”⁹⁶⁰ though it is of course Owen’s line not Ben’s that is perpetuated. However, Ben helps raise the son who will in turn give birth to the next generation of activists and so it is perhaps more correct to say that the three representatives of very different Waleses, Owen from the gentry, Bronwen from the gwerin and Ben from the border and industrial area combine to produce Tudor and thus ensure that resistance is continued and that it is Welsh in nature and tradition. So despite Bronwen’s apparent compromise with the new industry, her adaption is merely part of her continuing resistance as it allows her to bring up her son in the ancestral land of his father. It seems therefore that this adaptive resistance and survival is more effective than the outright fighting of Owen, Rebecca and ap Gruffydd, though it could be argued that ap Gruffydd also has some of this surviving resistance through his influence on the people even after his departure. The series however does not make clear the strength of his lingering influence and thus his resistance is mainly limited to his actions in the text of the first novel.

Historical Passages

This section will focus on only one of Davies’ trilogy – *Honey and Bread* – as it contains the best example of the feature I wish to discuss, a feature found also in *La Ciudad de los Prodigios*. Mendoza’s text is heteroglossic, including features like headlines from newspapers and anecdotes. The main narrative is broadly linear but is interspersed with incidents from the past and occasionally even from the future. These insertions come in a variety of forms: memories of the characters told directly by the narrator, anecdotes from the characters themselves recounted in the text, and narrative accounts. It is this last I wish to focus on here, as this is a vital part of Mendoza’s project of providing an alternative history of Catalonia. Moreover, these passages find a striking parallel in *Honey and Bread*, where a section virtually separate from the rest of the text recounts the history of Owain Glyndŵr, one of the great Welsh heroes and resistance fighters.

In some ways, these passages read a little like extracts from a history text book. This genre would be suitable for the work of an author attempting to write a history of a marginalised people; it could be seen as a reappropriation of a genre traditionally controlled by the dominant powers. By imitating the style but changing the content, authors could be subverting a dominant genre and turning it to the purposes of resistance. However, while both passages resemble an account from a history book in some ways, they are not perfect imitations. On closer examination, the tone frequently slips and there are

⁹⁶⁰ Dixon, p. 44.

both insertions and omissions that are untypical of the genre. As a result, they could be said to be satirising the traditional historical narrative written by the victors and, consequently undermining it.

At the start of the second chapter of *Honey and Bread* a brief and selective account of the history of Glan Ystrad is relayed, which both gives the history of the Llewellyn family and links it to the wider history of invasion of Wales by England. It begins with Glyndŵr, describing how Henry IV's army had passed through Glan Ystrad "after being sadly routed by Owain Glyndwr [sic] in September 1405."⁹⁶¹ It also refers to the "proud valley where Cadwgan, Owain's henchman, had whetted his battle-axe in response to the chieftain's call."⁹⁶² Thus the valley is immediately linked with historical resistance against English invaders. Cadwgan is later invoked in Robert ap Gruffydd's speeches when he is attempting to rouse the workers; he acts as a reminder of the heroic past of the valley and its people and, through his link to Glyndŵr, of the whole of Wales. This is another example of Davies' linking of the Welsh and anti-industrial struggles. The fact that this is described as the fifth invasion by Henry IV's army adds strength to the idea of a tradition of fierce resistance – a highly successful one, moreover.

Interestingly, the passage at first almost seems sympathetic to the perspective of the English. The army has been "sadly" defeated, Owain is described as a "necromancer" who has called forth storms against the invaders, and a little later the narrative voices the belief that "there was no doubt, Owain Glyndwr [sic] consorted with evil spirits and probably was Satan himself."⁹⁶³ Later the Welsh are described as being "of a damnable nature."⁹⁶⁴ However, this is quickly followed by a list of the injustices imposed against the Welsh:

Had not Henry decreed that a Welshman marrying an Englishwoman was to be subjected to severe penalties, and all Englishmen marrying Welshwomen were to be disenfranchised in the boroughs! And no Welsh child was to be brought up as a scholar nor permitted to be apprenticed to any trade in any town in the kingdom; nor was there to be any assembling of bards and minstrels; nor could an Englishman be convicted at the suit of any Welshman. Obviously the Welsh were of barbarous temperament: their savage mountains, gigantic black

⁹⁶¹ Davies, *Honey and Bread*, p. 50.

⁹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

beasts that rode through the storms to the sounds of unholy chanting, were fit companions for them. The troops were glad to turn their backs on the menacing landscape.⁹⁶⁵

This neatly undercuts any sympathy readers might have had for the English. The above list is a stark indictment of the English monarch's behaviour towards the Welsh people and turns the passage on its head. Suddenly the image of the Welsh as "damnable" appears to be the view, not of a reasoned people, but rather a biased and oppressive one. This passage reveals the classic colonial device of othering and inferiorising a people to convince colonisers of the rightness of their mission. Following the list of prohibitions imposed upon the Welsh with: "Obviously the Welsh were of barbarous temperament,"⁹⁶⁶ exposes the colonising mentality, which is the first step to opposing and rectifying it. Furthermore, it satirises the mindset, showing that it is coloniser not colonised that is barbarous. The belief that Glyndŵr used magic and consorted with the devil can be read as further undermining the English authority. They are suffering from superstitions of a kind that would normally be expected of the 'barbarous colonised' rather than the 'civilising colonisers.' This undercutting has a similar effect to Mendoza's assertion that the Spanish will not allow Catalonia to secede because that would lower the national average height and to the description of King Philip V which will be discussed shortly. The dominant state is made to look ridiculous, rendered risible by the authors' straight delivery of ludicrous claims.

Davies' descriptions of the landscape are also interesting here. The Welsh are strongly linked with their environment: "Up in the fastnesses of the thick dark hills the natives rode in triumph; let the winds scream out of the valley's deep throat, the rains lash in torrent, they were made stronger in the storms, they could sing in wild unison with the winds and delight in the torn heavens."⁹⁶⁷ The mountains, as we have already seen, are also important to the resistance in *A Time to Laugh*. The hills take an active part in resisting the invaders; they are "fastnesses," which shelter and defend their people. Equally important is the sense that the Welsh are at home in this land and these conditions; they are "made stronger" by them. The English, in contrast, "hated the mountainous alien landscape."⁹⁶⁸ The word "alien," used numerous times in the Rhondda Trilogy, here shows that the English are out of their place and out of their depth in a land that is not theirs. The conditions, the land and the people unite to expel them.

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 51.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 51.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 50.

⁹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 50.

The passage then moves abruptly from Glyndŵr back to the time of the Normans. It tells of the betrayal of Rhys ap Tewdwr by rival Welsh princes who allied with the Normans to destroy him. It then proceeds to describe briefly the ongoing struggle against the English, covering some four hundred years in the space of two paragraphs. Details and dates are not given; rather the emphasis is on the refusal to surrender and the inevitable forcing back of the local people:

Though conquered again and again, they never ceased to make rows within the steep confines of their miniature but cantankerous land, never ceased to fight with a strange tenacity... Often they obtained small, gallant successes. But slowly they became a wholly conquered nation, and all that remained to them were their bloodstained hills and mountains, their secretive language, and their urge to sing sad, hymn-like songs.⁹⁶⁹

The next paragraph emphasises the role of the bards in Welsh resistance to the English. They “met and chanted to the restless people.”⁹⁷⁰ Their: “rough tracts of poetry were wound over the history of the race like the rugged paths over the mountains.”⁹⁷¹ The words of the bards remind the beleaguered people of their history and give them a sense of their identity and thus “in spite of interference from without, invasions, stern decrees from powerful kings, the people kept intact in their dark hearts their sense of proud isolation, which was valuable to them beyond all other ideas.”⁹⁷² Thanks to the bards, the Welsh keep resisting in spite of everything arrayed against them. This idea is central to Emyr Humphreys’ non-fiction work *The Taliesin Tradition* and is also expressed in several of Webb’s articles.⁹⁷³ It is ironic to note therefore that the seemingly conservative and non-nationalist Davies voiced those ideas before the two more committed Welsh writers mentioned above.⁹⁷⁴

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 52.

⁹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 52.

⁹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 52.

⁹⁷² Ibid., p. 52.

⁹⁷³ “In the Welsh context, from the very beginning, this also involved the poet as the voice of resistance, the tireless mouthpiece of the endless process of defending a realm under siege.” Emyr Humphreys, *The Taliesin Tradition* (Bridgend: Seren, 2000), p. 6. Webb, meanwhile, emphasises how ‘Hen Wlad fy Nhadau’ (Land of my Fathers) - the Welsh National Anthem – links the role of warriors and poet/songwriters: “The virile warriors, lovely in the love of their land, are not directly or explicitly compared with poets and singers. They stand shoulder to shoulder with them...” “The bards and warriors are alike defenders of the land...” Harri Webb, ‘Our National Anthem’, in *A Militant Muse*, pp. 55-70 (pp. 60, 62).

⁹⁷⁴ Webb’s work has already been discussed while Humphreys has been mentioned in comparison with R. S. Thomas as one of the few English-language writers that the Welsh-language community accepted as their own. Humphreys was committed to Wales in both his writing and actions – most of his work deals with Wales in some way and he was sent to prison for refusing to pay for his television licence as

The narrative then ties the nation's history to that of the Llewellyn family, describing how an ancestor of theirs had lost his land as a result of his support for Glyndŵr. This immediately links the Llewellyn family to the idea of Welsh resistance against the English. Admittedly the pride involved in this claim a little undercut by the description of how this poverty stricken ancestor raided a village in Gloucestershire and the admission that "Tudor was a little ashamed of this ancestor."⁹⁷⁵ However, given the portrayal of Tudor as an example of the Welsh gentry in decay, the narrator may well not be endorsing his judgement.

The family lands are restored under Henry VII and from there onwards the narrative is primarily that of the Llewellyn family, though they can be read as standing for the whole of Wales. Their history is played out against the wider backdrop of events in Wales as a whole; the eighteenth-century growth of Nonconformity in particular. On reaching the present of the novel, the historical narrative blends seamlessly into a description of Glan Ystrad and the life of Owen and David, continuing the narrative of the Llewellyn family, thus providing some justification for the inclusion of the passage in the novel.

This passage is notable not just for its textbook style or for its general recovery and retelling of history, but for the events and attributes it has chosen to emphasise. As with Webb, the Welsh are depicted as a people who resist and this will be important for the self-image of the contemporary Welsh people. While Davies, unlike Webb, was not working for Welsh independence, he portrays the Welsh as a people who will fight to keep their land and customs, recounting the history of resistance as encouraged by resistance theorists like San Juan, Soyinka and Thiong'o.

The passage from *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* that I want to examine recounts oppression rather than resistance. Reference is made to resistance as it describes the aftermath of the fall of Barcelona in 1714, but it does not narrate the struggle that preceded that date. It begins by explaining that Catalonia, "celosa de sus libertades, que veía amenazadas..."⁹⁷⁶ supported the losing side in the War of Spanish Succession and was heavily penalised by the new Bourbon monarch Philip V. Then comes a grim and graphic account of what followed, similar to the descriptions in *Victus*. Firstly the invading army laid

part of the campaign for a Welsh-language television channel, see M. Wynn Thomas, *Emyr Humphreys* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018), pp. 19-20. Humphreys would have been discussed in this thesis had space permitted.

⁹⁷⁵ Davies, *Honey and Bread*, p. 53.

⁹⁷⁶ Mendoza, p. 48. "...jealous of her liberties and feeling them to be under threat..." p. 30.

waste the land, confident of official approval while their commanders looked away. Then came what Mendoza calls “la represion oficial.”⁹⁷⁷ First comes the effect on the people:

...los catalanes fueron ejecutados a centenares; para escarnio y lección sus cabezas fueron ensartadas en picas y expuestas en los puntos más concurridos del Principado. Millares de prisioneros fueron destinados a trabajos forzosos en lugares remotos de la península e incluso en América; todos ellos murieron con los grilletes puestos, sin haber vuelto a ver su patria querida. Las mujeres jóvenes fueron usadas para solaz de la tropa; esto provocó una carestía de mujeres casaderas que aún perdura en Cataluña.⁹⁷⁸

In addition to the obvious brutality, two things in this quotation stand out. One is the fact that this repression has effects that are still felt some two hundred years later. It has crippled the Catalan people, dealing them a blow from which they have yet to recover. The scarcity of marriageable women is particularly crippling to an oppressed minority as women are essential to the continuation of the people. Moreover this is an attack on the whole nation, not just the individual women. Several critics have noted that mass war rapes are often seen as “an actual assault on women, on a nation’s honour and on men’s capacity to protect their women.”⁹⁷⁹ Women “are the gift of the warrior and his trophy, the proof of his victory over enemy males...”⁹⁸⁰ Thus while it is the Catalan women who suffer the attacks, the entire nation is affected, as the conquerors use this vile method to reinforce their victory. The other striking feature is the emotive image of Catalans dying as prisoners far from home. Indeed, the original Spanish could perhaps be better translated as “without ever seeing their beloved homeland again.” In some cases, as in *Victus*,⁹⁸¹ exile is seen as a worse punishment than death as it involves separation from the homeland. Thus the cruelty of the actions of the Spanish state are emphasised.

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 48-9. “...the official punishment.” p. 30.

⁹⁷⁸ Mendoza, p. 49. “Catalans were executed by the hundreds, and their heads were put on lances and exhibited at prominent points up and down the principality. Thousands of prisoners were sent to do hard labour in remote regions of the peninsula and even in the American colonies; they died in their chains, far from their native land. The younger women were used for the pleasure of the soldiery, which resulted in a scarcity of marriageable ladies still felt in Catalonia.” p. 30.

⁹⁷⁹ Sarah Benton, ‘Founding Fathers and Earth Mothers: Women’s Place at the Birth of Nations’, in *Gender, Ethnicity and Political Ideologies*, ed. by Nickie Charles and Helen Hintjens (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 27-45 (p. 38).

⁹⁸⁰ Mirjana Morokvasic, ‘The Logics of Exclusion: Nationalism, Sexism and the Yugoslav War’, in *Gender, Ethnicity and Political Ideologies*, ed. by Nickie Charles and Helen Hintjens (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 65-90 (p. 79).

⁹⁸¹ ¿Puede existir una ignominia superior a la de Moragues? Sí, quizás la de Manuel Desvallés. Y no porque sufriera el tormento del cuerpo, sino porque el tormento que sufrió no lo llevó a la muerte...

Then the land of Catalonia itself is ravaged: “Muchos cambios de cultivo fueron arrasados y sembrados de sal para volver la tierra estéril; los frutales fueron arrancados de raíz. Se intentó exterminar el ganado y en especial la vaca pirenaica, tan apreciada...”⁹⁸² Territory is sacred to any nation and the destruction wreaked upon it here shows the brutality and the desire for vengeance of the Bourbon forces that goes far beyond common sense. Just as Martí in *Victus* cannot understand the destruction of the town of Játiva, so here the destruction renders the ‘conquered’ territory useless and is therefore illogical. Consequently it is most likely due either to vengeance or to a desire to ensure that the Catalans are utterly defeated.

Public buildings are the next targets:

Los castillos fueron derruidos y sus sillares utilizados para cercar de murallas algunas poblaciones: de este modo las convertían virtualmente en presidios. Los monumentos y estatuas que adornaban los paseos y las plazas fueron triturados, reducidos a polvo. Los muros de los palacios y edificios públicos fueron recubiertos de cal y sobre este revestimiento fueron pintadas figuras obscenas y fueron grabadas frases procaces u ofensivas.⁹⁸³

The destruction of castles is important as it leaves Catalonia defenceless, while the assault on monuments and public buildings strikes at the symbols of the Catalans’ sense of nationhood. Last of all comes the assault on culture and learning – the closing of Barcelona University and the conversion of many schools into stables. Every single facet of the life of the Catalan people is suddenly and brutally affected.

Cuando se dirigió al exilio no podía saber que pasaría en él el resto de su vida. Lo extraordinario de su caso es que vivió hasta los cien años. ¿Pueden imaginarlo? Más vida fuera de casa que dentro, el retorno al hogar negado hasta el fin de los tiempos.”Sánchez Piñol, *Victus*, p. 586. “Could there be any greater ignominy than that of Moragues? Yes, perhaps that of a man named Manuel Desvalls. And not because his body was subjected to torments but because he didn’t die from his treatment... When the victors exiled him, he couldn’t have had any idea what the rest of his days would hold. Remarkably, he lived to a hundred. Can you imagine? A larger proportion of his life spent outside his home than in it, his return never allowed.” p. 527.

⁹⁸² Mendoza, p. 49. “Large areas of farmland were devastated and strewn with salt to render the soil infertile; fruit trees were torn up by the roots. An attempt was made to wipe out livestock, especially the much-prized Pyrenean cow.” p. 30.

⁹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 49. “Castles were pulled down, the hewn stone used to wall in certain towns, making them penitentiaries in all but name. Monuments and statues adorning boulevards and squares were smashed. The walls of palaces and public buildings were first whitewashed and then covered with obscene illustrations and offensive expressions.” pp. 30-1.

For the most part the tone of this account is that of a factual report. It recounts the events that happened and does not venture an explicit opinion on them. The majority of it could have come from an official report or a textbook. It is in fact far less emotive than the account of Glyndŵr's revolt in *Honey and Bread* which, while factual, at times takes on an almost epic quality. However, the objective voice of the narrator slips occasionally, allowing emotive phrases like "sin haber vuelto a ver su patria querida,"⁹⁸⁴ to enter the text. This clearly reveals that the narrator's sympathy is with the Catalan people even if this is not explicitly stated. It also moves the text away from what otherwise could be a passage from a textbook. In some ways this could be seen to undermine Mendoza's project of writing a history of Catalonia from the Catalan perspective; however it is effective at conveying the horrors suffered by the Catalan people and bringing these to the attention of a wider audience, both inside Catalonia and further afield in the rest of Spain.

It is interesting to note that both passages contain an almost complete absence of dates – a staple of history books. There is only one in the Mendoza passage – 1701 – the beginning of the War of Spanish Succession. This is placed right at the start. Not even the date of the fall of Barcelona is given despite its huge significance to the Catalan nation. In the passage from *Honey and Bread* only two concrete dates are given: 1405 – the occasion of one of the attempted invasions of Wales and 1785 - Tudor Llewellyn's birth date, though there are references to various centuries. It is also notable that one of those dates is the birth date of a fictional character rather than an actual historical event. Mendoza's date is a genuine historical one but the lack of subsequent dates detracts from the impression of the passage as an excerpt from a history textbook. Elsewhere in the novel Mendoza includes numerous dates and figures, including the total cost of 1888 World Fair, though the accuracy of some are questionable.⁹⁸⁵ However, in his most historical passages he generally, like Davies, refrains from including dates which detracts from the textbook feeling of the passage. This has the effect of creating a very different type of historical narrative – different in style as well as content - to that created by the dominant culture and is thus a further act of resistance.

Mendoza also disrupts his historical account through the use of humour and satire.⁹⁸⁶ He includes details that would not normally be found in such accounts. These details are frequently amusing in their own right and also in their incongruity. For example, in describing the attempt to eradicate the livestock of Catalonia, he notes that particular attention was paid to the Pyrenean cow. This is a surprising detail

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 49. "...far from their native land." p. 30.

⁹⁸⁵ See Saval, pp. 54, 77, 189-90, for a discussion of Mendoza's use of facts and figures and their veracity.

⁹⁸⁶ Mendoza's use of humour has already been touched upon.

in what is otherwise a very general account; it mentions people rather than particular individuals, buildings and statues rather than specific landmarks. The account then goes on to say that the attempt was unsuccessful as a few cows escaped to the mountains though they were pursued. The image of the soldiers pursuing the cows with weapons is a comical one, as is the idea that the powerful invading army is unable to defeat a few cows. It could be argued that the survival of the cows is a triumph for Catalonia, particularly as the Pyrenean cow could be seen as symbolic of Catalonia – a nation long associated with the Pyrenees. The defeat is not total. But it is a very small triumph and it is not stressed in this way. In my opinion, the overall effect is slightly comical rather than defiant, although the description of “las cargas feroces de la caballería, de las descargas de la artillería y de las bayonetas de la infantería,”⁹⁸⁷ gives a decidedly uncomical view of the power of the invading army. It undermines the serious reporting tone that has been used thus far in the passage.

A second slippage in tone comes a little later with the mention of another incongruous detail – an even more incredible one. The narrator mentions that the port of Barcelona was deliberately made dangerous to shipping, by importing sharks from the West Indies in tanks and dumping them in the sea. This measure however failed as the sharks couldn't cope with the climate and those that didn't die swam south to warmer seas.⁹⁸⁸ This, even more than the image of the army chasing cattle, gives the passage a farcical feel and undermines the serious tone that has hitherto been adopted. This cleverly undercuts the quotation that follows on the new king Philip V: “roi fou, brave et dévot,”⁹⁸⁹ meaning that the reader does not feel that they can take it at face value. As with the comments by the English on the Welsh in the passage from *Honey and Bread* discussed above, it renders ridiculous and even satirises figures of power. As we have already seen, Saval argues that Mendoza's use of humour is, at least in part, a device to make the reader question everything. Thus the tone of this apparently historical account is undone in places by the insertion of unusual details that create humour by their incongruity.

The inclusion of these historical passages in their respective novels is somewhat jerky and done on very little pretext, particularly in the case of Mendoza. They are by no means essential to the structure of the novel and this, I would argue, adds to both writers' claims to the status of resistance writer as they are including artistically unnecessary and even unsound techniques in order to draw attention to a recovered history of their nation. They are thus making the form of the text secondary to its message. In producing alternative histories of their respective nations they are informing their own people of a

⁹⁸⁷ Mendoza, p. 49. “That extermination – by artillery and bayonets...” p. 30.

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 49-50.

⁹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

history that they will not have learned at school and are speaking truth to power to their wider audiences in the English/Spanish-speaking world. Davies, in particular, focuses on a history of Welsh resistance, adding another dimension to his work as resistance literature. While Mendoza discusses oppression not resistance, the oppression follows resistance and it is still something that it is important for the Catalan people to know about. San Juan writes of the Philippines that "...this sense of affirming our identity as a distinct, historically evolved community can only come about through the people's awareness of a common plight – shared sufferings, shared struggles, shared defeats and victories,"⁹⁹⁰ and I would argue that this is the case for all oppressed peoples. Through use of the passages discussed above, these texts seek to make the authors' compatriots aware of these shared things. Thus, while they are not as nationalist or thorough as *Victus*, they can be seen as resistance texts undertaking one of the same projects.

Types of Resistance

Having established that both *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* and the Rhondda Trilogy are, at least partially, resistance texts, I will now examine the type of resistance both texts espouse and how it relates to the authors already discussed in this thesis. There are two major issues that I would like to consider regarding this: the use of race as a category and the view of their nation that the authors create in the texts. I will begin with the former.

Various critics have commented on Davies' tendency to represent the world and particularly the Welsh in racial terms.⁹⁹¹ The most extended treatment of the subject comes in Daniel Williams' essay cited above. Williams claims that: "The Welsh in Rhys Davies's writings are represented in racial, primitivist, terms..."⁹⁹² some of which he later lists: "bucolic and simple," "beautifully child-like," "primitive shine."⁹⁹³ Consequently, Williams argues: "Welshness [in Davies] is not defined by a consensual engagement in a historically developing culture, but rather is pre-programmed 'into the

⁹⁹⁰ San Juan, *Only By Struggle*, p. 16.

⁹⁹¹ Daniel Williams, 'Withered Roots: Ideas of Race in the Writings of Rhys Davies and D. H. Lawrence', in *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 87-103; Kirsti Bohata, 'The Black Venus: Atavistic Sexualities', in *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 231-43.

⁹⁹² Williams, 'Withered Roots', p. 88.

⁹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-9.

blood’ of characters.”⁹⁹⁴ If this is the case, and Williams’ argument is convincing and well illustrated, then this treatment of race is a major obstacle to seeing Davies as espousing the kind of open resistance found in Webb and Sánchez Piñol. As shown in the introduction to the thesis, Williams has elsewhere argued cogently that depicting the Welsh as a race or ethnicity – a category defined by blood that one is born into or outside of and cannot elect to join – is potentially disastrous for a minority culture struggling to survive in the age of multiculturalism and globalisation. Representation of the Welsh people or of Welsh-language speakers as a closed group is almost certain to hasten their extinction. Thus, if Davies can be seen as presenting the Welsh people as a race in the texts under discussion, it is difficult to argue that his resistance is of the open inclusive sort found in some of the other authors in this thesis.

It is important first to consider though, whether Williams’ arguments are as true of the Rhondda Trilogy as they are of the work discussed in the essay cited above. Williams makes no reference to these particular novels and, as already noted, Davies often made contradictory statements within his huge body of work. However these texts too, particularly *Honey and Bread*, represent the Welsh in terms of race and blood. As mentioned earlier, Knight draws attention to the statement “obeying the wild instinct in their blood,”⁹⁹⁵ and blood (denoting descent or race) is used in numerous other places. Those coming from the border, like Ben Morris, are seen as having ‘mixed blood’; “he was Welsh, though of the border, and with a streak of the gay Saxon in him.”⁹⁹⁶ There are also numerous references to races and racial types; David the younger Llewellyn son is described as having “the dark, almost swarthy mintage of the typical Celt, ancient inhabitant of shadowy cave, underwood, and solemn forest.”⁹⁹⁷ The other two novels have less of this type of racial representation but *A Time to Laugh* does discuss the different races in the context of the South Wales coalfield at the end of the nineteenth century, seeing the various peoples who have emigrated there as still racially separate:

The sprinkling of raw Irish who had arrived in the coalfields from dark barbarous bogs and isolated pre-Christian villages often shocked the Welsh, though they were accepted with a deeper sense of familiarity than the quiet English, who had settled in sprinklings also. The

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 88.

⁹⁹⁵ Davies quoted in Knight, p. 61.

⁹⁹⁶ Davies, *Honey and Bread*, p. 335.

⁹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

English seemed not to riot or agitate at all: they were able to ignore their empty stomachs and ill-clad backs, causing a sniffing wonder.⁹⁹⁸

As discussed earlier with reference to the rioting, this is not necessarily Davies' view; he may simply be expressing opinions held in the valley. However, there is no disqualifying phrase such as "opinion was," in this instance. Consequently, it appears that the Rhondda Trilogy does depict the Welsh, and nationalities in general, in racial terms, though the latter novels do express the importance of unity among all the workers no matter their origin or occupation.

La Ciudad de los Prodigios also expresses the importance of worker unity, or at least has some of its characters express it, and generally Mendoza focuses less on racial depictions than Davies does. He recognises that a large percentage of the workers in Barcelona, particularly during the time of the novel, came from parts of Spain outside of Catalonia but he still sees them as part of Barcelona. The novel draws attention to the appalling conditions in which these newcomers lived and sympathetically portrays their struggles for improvement. During larger struggles the workers are portrayed as a class rather than as distinct races.

However, Mendoza does at times represent the Catalans as a race. As Knutson notes: "En las páginas iniciales de *La ciudad de los prodigios* los [los catalanes] distingue como una raza aventajada frente a los otros pueblos españoles."⁹⁹⁹ As Knutson also notes, this depiction is primarily humorous which perhaps lessens the impact of the assertion but the Catalans are certainly called a race "una raza alta, fuerte y enérgica..."¹⁰⁰⁰ While, as discussed with regards to *Victus*, many of the characteristics attributed to peoples can be seen as learned behaviour, those listed above are primarily physical and so more what would be expected of a racial typing of people. A little later Mendoza goes on to distinguish between the different inhabitants of Catalonia; the hill people of the Pyrenees from which Onofre proceeds are "rudos y ariscos,"¹⁰⁰¹ and "aún usaban pieles como parte de su indumentaria,"¹⁰⁰² while: "Las gentes del valle eran más civilizados...Comían bien... por consiguiente era una raza alta, fuerte y enérgica..."¹⁰⁰³ Again, the terminology employed is not so different to that used by Davies to describe the Welsh. At other times in the novel, however, the term Catalan is used more sweepingly, in ways

⁹⁹⁸ Davies, *A Time to Laugh*, p. 5.

⁹⁹⁹ Knutson, p. 76. "In the first pages of *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* they [the Catalans] are presented as a race with advantages over the other peoples of Spain.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 76. "...a tall, strong and energetic race."

¹⁰⁰¹ Mendoza, p. 21. "...rough and surly," p. 7.

¹⁰⁰² Ibid., p. 21. "...still wore skins as part of their dress," p. 7.

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid., pp. 21-2. "The valley dwellers were more civilized... as a result of balanced diet were a tall, strong, and energetic race." pp. 7-8.

which could be seen as representing a people based on location and choice as opposed to race. Therefore, there is perhaps the beginnings of a more inclusive Catalan identity in *La Ciudad de los Prodigios*, and thus the possibility of a more open resistance germinating. However, both authors' use of race as a category hinders the development and expression of this kind of resistance, though more so in the case of Davies than Mendoza.

I will now move on to discuss the second issue that reveals the kind of resistance these texts espouse. As shown in the chapter on R. S. Thomas, the way in which a writer portrays their country is an important indicator of the type of resistance that they are espousing. It is particularly interesting in this context to examine Mendoza's portrayal of Catalonia and Davies' of Wales which, as already noted, vary greatly.

Tony Brown argues that Davies constructs,

...an older 'Wales'... out of his own emotional and imaginative circumstances. It is a 'Wales', a 'home culture', which supposedly existed before the coming of industrialization and Nonconformity, a Wales from which Davies feels not only himself but contemporary Wales to have been displaced.¹⁰⁰⁴

Brown argues that Davies constructs an older freer Wales where people are closer to their bodies, as a counter to the oppressive environment in which he grew up. This essay does not examine the Rhondda Trilogy but much of what Brown says is also true of these texts. Osborne has noted that in *Honey and Bread*, the peasant girl Bronwen is both linked to the land and comfortable in her own body.¹⁰⁰⁵ Advancing society is already having an effect on the people of Wales but some like Bronwen still hold that link to the past, to Davies' 'constructed' Wales.

Mendoza also invents or 'constructs' Barcelona to a certain extent. Knutson notes that the author chronicles the history of his city "de forma verdadera e inventada casi al mismo tiempo."¹⁰⁰⁶ The Barcelona of *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* is both a city based on reality and an invented and fantastic city where supernatural beings mingle with real historical characters.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Tony Brown, "The Memory of Lost Countries': Rhys Davies's Wales", in *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 71-86 (p. 72).

¹⁰⁰⁵ Osborne, p. 78.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Knutson, pp. 75-6. "...by means of true and invented forms almost at the same time."

Constructing a Barcelona or Wales of their own is not a barrier to being a resistance text – as Rhys Davies pointed out in an interview, every Welsh author will construct their own Wales,¹⁰⁰⁷ and as we have already seen, authors like Webb at times depicted the country they would like to see rather than the country that actually existed. What defines the presence and type of resistance is not the construction of an ideal area but what that construct then implies.

In the chapter on R. S. Thomas we saw that the majority of his work depicted an ideal Wales as rural, remote, free from technology, and Welsh-speaking. With the exception of Welsh-speaking Rhys Davies' ideal Wales is very similar. Brown claims that in addition to being less constricting, Davies' constructed Wales is rural and notes the similarity with Plaid Cymru's 'Ten Points of Policy,'¹⁰⁰⁸ published in their paper *Y Ddraig Goch* in 1933 (just two years before the publication of *Honey and Bread*). In Brown's words this document "not only includes a rejection of *laissez-faire* capitalism but also advocates, as the eighth point, the 'de-industrialization of South Wales', replacing it with an economy based on light industry and, above all, farming..."¹⁰⁰⁹ Although, as Brown notes, Davies expressed hostility towards Welsh nationalism at times,¹⁰¹⁰ the ideas are strikingly similar. Davies longs for a return to a beautiful, rural Wales.

Much of the Rhondda Trilogy supports the idea of a return to the pastoral. In *Honey and Bread*, as we have already seen, industrialisation is depicted as a profoundly un-Welsh phenomenon and the damage that it does to people and landscape is well documented. The rural is presented as a far more attractive option. In the later books, people think wistfully of the beautiful valley with its clear stream full of fish and abundant trees. Dixon is right to note that Davies does depict a dynamism and vibrancy in his portrayal of the new industrial world in *Honey and Bread*,¹⁰¹¹ and this a repeating image in the other two novels. In *Jubilee Blues* Tudor Morris walks through the town and muses on this: "The raw gloom never oppressed Tudor. He knew the vigour with which life was lived within those stony blocks. There was often weariness, but it was usually the weariness of temper having had its say. Not the weariness of stagnancy."¹⁰¹²

Davies certainly recognises the strength and goodness of the industrial workers in the later novels and the vibrancy of their way of living. It is unsurprising that Tudor is drawn to them rather than to his own

¹⁰⁰⁷ Davies quoted in Brown, "The Memory of Lost Countries", p. 84.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Brown, p. 83.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁰¹⁰ Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁰¹¹ Dixon, p. 43.

¹⁰¹² Davies, *Jubilee Blues*, p. 64.

respectable repressed middle class. Dixon is also correct in his claim that there is a shift in Davies' treatment of industrialism within the trilogy "from a rather hostile perspective towards his subject-matter in *Honey and Bread* to a position encompassing a seemingly more empathic scope in *A Time to Laugh* and *Jubilee Blues*."¹⁰¹³ However, even this 'more empathic scope' remains suspicious of industrialisation. The ugliness of the surroundings and the at times uncouth behaviour of the men are a common motif, even as their increasing awareness and organisation are praised. And while Davies appears to accept, through Bronwen, that industrialisation had to happen, the view given is still not positive. Bronwen tells Tudor: "But they had to come: the world belongs to the people and it seems to me that they will tear it up and stamp and spoil wherever they choose to go."¹⁰¹⁴ Bronwen may accept that industrialisation was inevitable, even necessary, but she does not see it as a wholly positive thing – the imagery in her words is reminiscent of the language of invasion and destruction used to describe the industrialisation process in *Honey and Bread*. Moreover, as Dixon also notes, the trilogy ends with Cassie Jones, the heroine of *Jubilee Blues*, escaping from the mining valleys and returning to her beloved countryside.¹⁰¹⁵ The farm that is her destination is described in idyllic terms:

Brynsiriol! It was a white farm sitting on top of a hill under the sky. She knew it well. Meadows sloped up to it as smooth as quilts. Front of the house was a cedar-tree hundreds of years old... From the house was a view that went for miles up and down a wide valley, bottom of which was a blue river.¹⁰¹⁶

The description of the farm creates an impression of rural beauty, space (the wide valley) and aged rootedness (the cedar-tree), in contrast to the cramped, dirty and much more recently constructed mining valley communities. Davies may acknowledge that the mining areas have some good qualities but the rural areas are still the ideal.

This construction of the ideal Wales as rural and in the main non-technological (though there is a reference to Brynsiriol farm obtaining a modern separator)¹⁰¹⁷ is another barrier to the espousal of the kind of open resistance for which this thesis is searching. The rural areas of Wales become, like R. S. Thomas' 'enclaves of resistance', places to which the Welsh culture and people can retreat and barricade themselves, but also places where they stagnate through lack of ability to grow or develop. A desire to retreat completely to the rural is also unrealistic in the current age – no country can survive

¹⁰¹³ Dixon, p. 41.

¹⁰¹⁴ Davies, *A Time to Laugh*, p. 94.

¹⁰¹⁵ Dixon, p. 52.

¹⁰¹⁶ Davies, *Jubilee Blues*, p. 272.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

now without some industry and commerce. Thus, while they are a form of resistance, they are not one that will help the nation move forward.

This is not a charge which can be levelled at Mendoza. As already argued, in *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* Mendoza presents industrialisation as generally a force for good, although he is quick to recognise and decry the suffering that rapid expansion can cause. However, he celebrates Barcelona, and Catalonia more generally, as a highly industrialised country and consequently superior to the rest of Spain. While Davies sees industrialism as decidedly un-Welsh, Mendoza celebrates the invention, ingenuity and industry of his people, portraying Catalonia as an enlightened and progressive country. This is a more productive approach in terms of resistance as it lacks the anti-modernity of Davies' vision. Rather than wishing to withdraw Catalonia from contact with the outside world, it encourages it to place itself on the world stage by emulating the World Fairs (Saval has commented at length on the parallels between the novel and the period in the lead-up to the 1992 Barcelona Olympics during which it was written).¹⁰¹⁸ Consequently, Mendoza's ideal for his nation is far less introspective than Davies' and consequently more likely to encourage an open, productive resistance. Like Davies, his use of racial types is an obstacle to this but less so than in the case of the Welsh author.

I would conclude therefore that Davies' resistance is very conservative and insular, even more so than R. S. Thomas', and thus far less radical and effective than the other authors already discussed. Mendoza is less conservative and more open though he too could be more radical if he were to clarify and extend his definition of the Catalan people and portray them definitely as a civic nation bound by choice rather than as a race.

Conclusion

So, as we have seen, *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* and the Rhondda Trilogy can be read as attempting to resist Spanish/English hegemony by rewriting their nations' histories as accounts of oppression by the dominant power and resistance to that oppression. In doing this, they make their own people aware of their history which will in turn encourage them to rethink their current circumstances and – perhaps – work for change. Making use of their wider audience they also speak truth to power, educating the Spanish/English about the oppression their ancestors committed.

¹⁰¹⁸ Saval, pp. 13, 159, 189.

It is true that the texts do not commit as fully as some others to this project – at times the behaviour of Onofre Bouvila, the digressions and the use of different genres detract from the message of *La Ciudad de los Prodigios*, as can the use of humour and surrealism, although, as already discussed, these last can be seen as serving a different part of the resistance project. Meanwhile, the use of racial types in Rhys Davies’ work and the idealisation of the rural are barriers to an open, inclusive resistance. Certain of Davies’ characters are closer to caricatures, making it harder to deny the accusations that he depicted the Welsh as figures of fun for the benefit of his largely English audience. However none of these issues can negate the fact that these novels can be read, at least partially, as resistance texts, and that they contain seeds of the ideas expressed in the more radical writers already discussed in this thesis. Mendoza’s treatment of the repression that followed 1714 is similar to Sánchez Piñol’s in that it seeks to both educate and horrify Catalan and Spanish readers alike. Davies’ recognition of the traditional Welsh values displayed in the industrial communities and their resistance to capitalism, his assertion that the mining valleys are an important part of Wales, finds its echoes in Webb. When considered in the light of the authors of previous chapters, neither Davies nor Mendoza can be so lightly dismissed as non-resistance writers. Moreover, it is harmful to Welsh and Catalan culture to do so. While the resistance of these authors may be only a shadow compared to some of the others, they are taking a step in the right direction and an important one at that.

Conclusion

Resistance Literature in Wales and Catalonia

This thesis has demonstrated that it is possible to consider certain Spanish-language Catalan authors and English-language Welsh authors as resistance writers despite, or sometimes because of, the language in which they write. In very different ways they conform to the broad paradigm of resistance literature, found in the work of theorists like Harlow, San Juan and Parry as outlined in the thesis introduction, and by means of these techniques assert the value of their nation and resist central Spanish or British/English hegemony.

Despite their different methods, it has also been shown that there are similarities in both their projects and their techniques. As already seen, *Victus* contains many ideas that are similar to those found Webb's articles, in particular the emphasis on the nation people as the agent for resistance and change. Sánchez Piñol, Webb and Thomas share an apparent preoccupation with defeat that sometimes risks masking their more hopeful and defiant messages, while Mendoza and Davies insert historical passages into their narratives in order to imitate and subvert the style of a history textbook. All the authors are preoccupied with recovering history in some way. There are similarities that cross national borders and this reinforces the resistance theory tenet that all struggles are linked in some way. The situation may be different in Wales and Catalonia but some of the methods they adopt to resist and to mobilise people for change are the same. It would be interesting therefore to look further at these two literatures through the lens of resistance theory and perhaps to extend the comparison to literature written in the language of the state in other stateless nations such as Brittany, the Basque Country and Scotland.

This thesis has also demonstrated that there are two main types of resistance. The first, drawing on both San Juan's work on the nation and Daniel Williams and Albert Sánchez Piñol's work on the need for inclusivity in their nations, is open and welcomes all who wish to commit to the nation. The second type presents the nation as closed and possesses something of a fortress mentality, forming Sánchez Piñol's 'watertight enclaves' in a desperate attempt to protect the nation and culture. Frequently, though not invariably, those texts displaying the latter type present the nation as a racial entity and/or equate the national language with race which, as we have seen, is problematic. However, we have also seen that even those writers that espouse this type of resistance contain hints of a more open view of the nation.

With the exception of Webb, who is the most radical author of all those discussed in this thesis, the Catalan writers tend to portray a more inclusive resistance than their Welsh counterparts. As reiterated in the chapter on *Victus*, this novel seeks to depict Catalonia as a multicultural society that is proud to be so – a nation that welcomes incomers as long as they are prepared to work for the benefit of their new home. Mendoza, meanwhile, though sometimes appearing to portray the Catalans as a race, also discusses the waves of immigration from other parts of Spain that occurred during the time period of his novel and shows both the hardships these newcomers underwent – thus evoking sympathy for them – and the contribution they made to the 1888 World Fair which, as already discussed, was extremely important to Barcelona, and to Catalonia as a whole. On the Welsh side, however, Davies depicted the Welsh in racial terms, while R. S. Thomas appeared to have a closed and limited view of Wales, though as shown in the respective chapters the situation in each case is more complicated. It certainly seems fair to say though, that their views of the Welsh nation are more restricted than Mendoza's and Sánchez Piñol's of the Catalan nation, and far more so than their compatriot Webb's vision of Wales. While too few authors have been considered in this thesis to draw any definite conclusions as to whether this reflects a difference between Wales and Catalonia, I would like to suggest a couple of reasons for the greater tendency towards an open resistance in the Catalan authors examined in this thesis.

I would argue that part of this difference can be attributed to the slightly different times in which the various authors were writing. As discussed in the introduction, the authors included in this thesis cover almost a century. Davies produced the Rhondda Trilogy fifty years before *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* and nearly eighty before *Victus*. The majority of R. S. Thomas' work examined here had been completed by the end of the 1960s. Even the 'Abercuawg' lecture was given in 1976, around the time Mendoza began writing but still a decade before the publication of *La Ciudad de los Prodigios*. While this is not an issue when using a resistance theory model, it inevitably means that the later writers may experience different influences to the earlier, and vice-versa. It is therefore not too surprising that the Catalan authors, writing in a time of global expansion and mass movements of people should have a more positive attitude to immigration, although continuing and indeed growing distrust of immigrants in numerous countries today might suggest otherwise. In addition, Mendoza's work was published only a decade after Franco's death and under the dictatorship there had been policies of forced migration to Catalonia in an attempt to dilute or even erase the Catalan identity. Such things are not easily forgotten and it would be understandable therefore if Mendoza's work displayed suspicion of immigrants and attempted to depict Catalonia as a closed society. Yet on the whole, as seen, he does not. Equally, Webb was writing at a similar time to R. S. Thomas and earlier than either Catalan author, and yet

managed to portray Wales as an inclusive welcoming society. Therefore timeframe alone cannot explain the disparity between the other Welsh authors and their Catalan counterparts.

I would suggest this disparity may stem from differences between the two nations, in particular their security in their national language and culture. Catalan is spoken by a far higher percentage of the population of Catalonia than Welsh is in Wales. While the language was banned in public under Franco, it was kept alive by the determination of its speakers and has since experienced a resurgence. Welsh, while never officially banned, has come far closer to dying out and is still spoken only by a minority within the country. It is therefore under far greater threat from incomers than is the Catalan language. Consequently, Welsh nationalists are likely to be warier of non-Welsh-speaking incomers and thus more inclined to portray Wales and the Welsh language as a closed culture for defensive purposes.¹⁰¹⁹ It is a natural reaction and I would argue that the precarious status of Welsh-language culture is partly responsible for the way in which even the English-language Welsh writers (Webb excepted) depict their society as far more exclusive than the Catalan writers do. Ultimately however, as we have seen, this is harmful as it excludes those who wish to join the nation and learn its language. This can lead only to dwindling numbers and the likely eventual death of the culture. Therefore, as this thesis has argued throughout, it is writers like Webb and Sánchez Piñol that mount the most effective resistance and provide the best example for others to follow.

¹⁰¹⁹ There are numerous examples of suspicion of, concern about, and even hostility to, English incomers to Wales in the last fifty years, particularly regarding buyers of second homes. Some of the concerns raised were economic – wealthy buyers from England driving the cost of housing beyond the reach of local people. Others were cultural and linguistic – incomers who only spent part of their time there were unlikely to learn Welsh and involve themselves in the local culture, while lack of housing meant Welsh speakers had to move, breaking up the community. Several organisations were formed in response to this. The extremist Meibion Glyndŵr that burned down empty second homes in the 1980s have already been mentioned but there were other groups like Cymuned (founded 2001) which campaigned on behalf of Welsh-speaking areas threatened by demographic change. According to John Davies, Cymuned, “opposed, not immigration in itself, but that form of in-migration which could be seen as colonization. The population influx was one of the chief issues discussed by the Welsh-speakers of the rural areas...” John Davies, p. 689. The same could be said of the motivation of Meibion Glyndŵr. Crucially, however, Cymuned has always used peaceful and constitutional means to pursue its ends.

Strength and Weaknesses of a Resistance Literature Approach

In this section I want to consider briefly the advantages and disadvantages of a resistance literature approach, and in particular of the way I have employed such an approach with regards to Wales and Catalonia in this thesis.

As discussed in the introduction, resistance literature provides a new focus and purpose for texts, acknowledging their power as part of a struggle for independence, freedom or hegemony. It dismisses the idea, largely influenced by New Criticism, that ‘good’ literature must be transcendental rather than being specific to a single time and place. Texts that are grounded in the circumstances of their production have often been labelled as ‘narrow’ or ‘provincial.’ Resistance literary theory argues that they are not. This is particularly valuable in the case of small nations such as Wales or Catalonia that are struggling against dominant cultures that may ignore or devalue their own. Resistance theory tells them that texts that relate to their circumstances are valuable in spite of what established criticism might say.

Resistance theory also stresses the importance of politics in a text. As shown in the introduction, San Juan argued that politics has traditionally been dismissed as an unfit subject for literature by the Western literary establishment. He claims, however, that this is not the case in Third World countries, citing numerous examples of writers from Asia and Latin America to support his claim. In their situation, resistance politics is an essential part of life and therefore cannot be excised from their literature. I would argue that the same is true for many Welsh and Catalan writers. Those who write in Welsh and Catalan are constantly aware of writing in a minority language and therefore even the act of choosing that language is political. This is not the case for those who write in Spanish or English but that does not mean that their work is not political. They too are frequently aware of living in a nation that has had to struggle for cultural survival and this can be reflected in their writing. Therefore resistance theory’s insistence that politics and ‘good’ literature are not incompatible can lead to a valuable reassessment of the work of many Catalan and Welsh authors. It can encourage the study of neglected authors like Harri Webb, the discovery of a resistance agenda in texts like *Victus*, and the re-evaluation of authors like Eduardo Mendoza and Rhys Davies who have not been considered as nationalist writers. This process of re-evaluation can expand the canon and, perhaps, even question the whole concept of a literary canon and how it is formed, overturning values that have become so enshrined that they are barely recognised as such. It may help Catalonia and Wales form their own standards rather than those based on Spain’s or England’s.

However, as with any theory or approach, there are drawbacks to resistance literature. The focus on the political content and purpose of the text can easily lead to the critic completely ignoring the literary and aesthetic qualities of a text, even those that support the text's purpose, to the detriment of analysis and text. While the text's purpose and message are of primary importance, care needs to be taken not to ignore completely those literary features that assist that purpose. In this thesis, I probably focused too little on such features – for example failing to consider the effect of Webb parodying Kipling's imperial poem 'Mandalay' in 'Imperial Hymn'. This is clearly part of his anti-imperial agenda but it is not something I discussed in the chapter, focusing instead on the message of the poem and the words used to convey it. This is a tendency that I think needs to be guarded against when employing resistance theory.

The other major problem with resistance theory is that, like any other theoretical approach, it is not suitable to apply to all texts. It should not be used to devalue those texts that do not possess a resistance agenda. Even the highly committed Harri Webb argued against insisting that all literature should be political. While acknowledging that he himself had never been able to distinguish between political and literary activity, he added "I do not claim that all writing should have an explicit social programme. Such dogmatism is the prerogative of the thought-police, the critics."¹⁰²⁰ Resistance theory must be careful not to assume the role of Webb's thought-police. It must not say that all work should be political, simply that politics is not an unsuitable subject for great literature.

On the whole, though, I feel that a resistance literature approach, applied with care, is valuable in the Welsh and Catalan cases. I will now go on to discuss the contribution this approach and this thesis have made to the academic field.

¹⁰²⁰ Harri Webb, 'Webb's Progress (II)', *A Militant Muse*, p. 198.

Contributions to the Literary Field

In this section I want to consider the contribution I feel that this thesis has made to the fields of Welsh Writing in English, Catalan Writing in Spanish and Comparative Literature and also the benefits of introducing resistance literary theory into these fields. Benefits outside of academia will be discussed in the final section.

As mentioned in the introduction, there have been few comparisons between the literatures of Wales and Catalonia and, to the best of my knowledge, none on the English-language and Spanish-language side. This thesis therefore hopes to start a new area in Comparative Literature by showing that these two literatures have much in common and that comparing them can highlight traits that might otherwise be overlooked.

Using a resistance theory approach to make that comparison continues the work of resistance theorists who frequently compare writers from all over the Third World. It stresses that political situations can be valid grounds for a comparison and, by focusing on literatures from small nations, seeks to move away from the dominant trend of comparing large well-established literatures. Equally it insists on the literature in question's difference from mainstream Spanish or English literature, helping it to establish its own importance and identity.

While some critics like Bohata, Knight and Green have mentioned resistance in conjunction to Welsh Writing in English (see the Existing Approaches section of the thesis introduction) they have not fully developed the concept of resistance or referred to critics like Benita Parry and San Juan, though there has been some use of anticolonial theorists like Fanon. However postcolonial approaches in Welsh Writing in English have been heavily influenced by the work of Homi Bhabha. Resistance theory and its critics bring a new approach to the field, encourage the study of some authors that have hitherto been neglected, and provide a possible new angle on writers that have already been studied.

Despite its relative newness, Welsh Writing in English is an established academic field. It is harder to say the same definitely of Catalan Writing in Spanish. Therefore I would hope that this thesis will help with the process begun by King and Cramer - that of establishing it as an area of importance within Catalan literary studies and as a distinctly Catalan literature in spite of the language in which it is written. In addition, I hope that it will show the value of a resistance theory approach to Catalan literature in both languages, as I hope it will do in the Welsh case. I now wish to consider why encouraging a resistance approach might be important for the two nations in practical terms.

A Growing Need for Resistance

I now want to turn to some of the wider implications for the findings of this thesis. Catalonia has been agitating for independence for a decade now and, as noted in the thesis introduction, much has happened in that period to sour relationships between Catalonia and the central Madrid government further. It is impossible to predict what will happen next but full reconciliation is unlikely and so the push for Catalan independence seems set to continue.

In Wales meanwhile there is growing talk of independence particularly as the implications of Brexit begin to sink in. The non-party group ‘Yes Cymru’ was formed in 2014 to campaign for Welsh independence.¹⁰²¹ Adam Price, the leader of Plaid Cymru since 2018, has talked about the need for an independent Wales in several of his speeches,¹⁰²² and, as already noted, Plaid’s manifesto for the 2019 General Election included working for independence. This may have lost them some votes as many of the inhabitants of Wales do not support independence either for ideological reasons or because of concerns that the country would not be financially sustainable if separated from Westminster. However, there are also growing concerns that if Scotland were to seek independence and Northern Ireland to unite with the Republic, then Wales would be left as the sole non-English member of the UK and would suffer due to the disparity in population size and wealth. As a result, support for Welsh independence is rising and may well continue to do so. Therefore, Wales too may soon be battling for independence in earnest. If that is the case then resistance literature will become a crucial part of that struggle. It will thus be vital to read existing writers through the lens of resistance theory as this may help to draw attention to writers like Webb who have not been recognised as sufficiently literary to be worthy of serious study, but whose work can rouse people to fight for their nation in whatever way necessary. It may also allow Welsh culture to reclaim authors like Davies who have been dismissed as writing for the English by showing that their works can be read as a contribution to Welsh resistance. This in turn will hopefully inspire current writers to produce literature that resists English hegemony and asserts the right of Wales to nationhood and, additionally, encourages the Welsh people to work for independence. Some may have already been produced but a study of this is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis.

¹⁰²¹ <https://www.yes.cymru/> [Accessed 25 February, 2020].

¹⁰²² See Adam Price, *Wales: The First and Final Colony: Speeches and Writing 2001-2018* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2018).

This process has certainly begun in Catalonia. I have argued that *Victus* can claim to be a novel of the independence movement, written to support the ongoing Catalan struggle. The Catalan-language novel *Lliures o Morts*,¹⁰²³ published within a few weeks of *Victus* and also set during the War of Spanish Succession, is another example – in her comparison of the two novels Cramerí has identified many similarities in their depiction of Catalan resistance.¹⁰²⁴ There are almost certainly further examples but researching them has also been beyond the limits of this study. In the Catalan case as well, studying existing literature through the lens of resistance theory will be beneficial as it will provide examples for contemporary authors and, as in the Welsh case, may allow for the reclamation of authors previously dismissed as ‘un-Catalan’ in their writing.¹⁰²⁵

The argument of this thesis – that it is possible to have English-language Welsh and Spanish-language Catalan resistance literature - will also be crucial to any independence movement, especially in Wales where the percentage of Welsh speakers is comparatively low. The message must reach and appeal to everyone. In both nations, it is vital that every person feel included no matter what their language or origin. Such small nations cannot afford serious divisions – if independence is to come the vast majority of people must support it. Resistance literature in both the nation’s major languages will be a crucial influence on whether that happens. As we have seen in this thesis, the most radical writers, Webb and Sánchez Piñol, work hard to make everyone feel part of their vision of Wales/Catalonia. Equally, while the other writers are less explicit in this regard, the very fact that they are writing resistance literature in Spanish/English implies that these languages and their speakers are an integral part of their nations.

The links and similarities between the two stateless nations discussed here are also important, as is resistance theory’s emphasis on all struggles being linked. If small stateless nations like Catalonia and Wales are to succeed in gaining any measure of sovereignty (whether that be independence or more

¹⁰²³ Jaume Clotet Planas and David de Montserrat Nono, *Lliures o Morts* (Barcelona: Columna Edicions, 2012).

¹⁰²⁴ Cramerí, *Goodbye Spain?* pp. 82-93.

¹⁰²⁵ An interesting example of this type of author that had to be omitted from the thesis due to lack of space is Juan Marsé. Marsé was one of the signatories of the notorious Foro Babel (see introduction) and has often been criticised by the Catalan literary establishment for satirising the Catalan bourgeoisie, and, worse, for doing so in Spanish. Yet both Cramerí and King have argued that Marsé’s work is distinctly Catalan in character and that he cannot be dismissed so lightly from a consideration of Catalan culture. King, *Escribir la Catalanidad*, pp. 56-7; Cramerí, *Language, the Novelist and National Identity in Post-Franco Catalonia*, pp. 181. Moreover, I would argue that at times Marsé expresses a kind of Catalan resistance to oppression, particularly through his use of the Catalan language. There is no space here for further examination but it is a study that I believe would prove interesting and instructive.

control over their own affairs) then they will need to support each other and to reach out to other nations in similar situations. This has happened already to some extent; there has been much support for Catalonia in both Wales and Scotland, with Scottish MPs turning out in support of Catalonia ahead of the 2017 referendum,¹⁰²⁶ and demonstrations on the Catalans' behalf in Wales.¹⁰²⁷ The chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Catalonia – a group that has persistently pushed for enquiries into the actions of the Spanish state surrounding the referendum - is the Plaid Cymru MP Hywel Williams.¹⁰²⁸ There have also been hints of a more formal political alliance. In 2015, Catalan MEP Ramon Tremosa called for Scotland and Catalonia to coordinate their independence referenda,¹⁰²⁹ while in the Scottish paper *The National*, George Kerevan argued that in the wake of EU silence on the jailing of Catalan leaders, Catalonia must ally with the Basque Country, and Scotland with Northern Ireland and Wales to break apart the Spanish and British states that seek to dominate them.¹⁰³⁰ However, so far, little more than these tentative suggestions has occurred in the way of a formal political alliance between stateless nations striving for their independence. It needs to be encouraged and resistance literature is a useful tool for doing this as it emphasises that all struggles against oppression are linked. This should help the Welsh and Catalan leaders realise what some of them have already instinctively felt – that allying with other nations in their situation will only strengthen their cause. This is particularly important as it is something that some of their opponents have already recognised. In the run up to Scotland's 2014 referendum, Spain's prime minister Rajoy argued that Scottish independence would break up Europe. Spain were clearly anxious that Scotland would provide an example for Catalonia to follow and there were even suggestions that Spain would veto an independent Scotland's entry into the EU.¹⁰³¹ This was a clear sign of solidarity between two states – Spain and Great Britain – and a recognition of the fact that they were fighting the same battle against secession. Eventually Spain stated that while not supporting Scottish independence they would not veto

¹⁰²⁶ <<https://www.commonspace.scot/articles/11790/scottish-parliamentarians-turn-out-support-catalan-referendum>> [Accessed 26 January 2020].

¹⁰²⁷ Vickie Oliphant, 'Could Wales be Next? Protestors Back Catalonia Independence Amid Calls for SPLIT from UK', <<https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/863564/Catalonia-referendum-independence-Catalan-Wales-Yes-Cymru-Llangefni-protest-Britain>> [Accessed 26 January 2020].

¹⁰²⁸ <<https://www.appgcatalonia.org.uk/>> [Accessed 29 January 2020].

¹⁰²⁹ <<https://www.commonspace.scot/articles/3164/catalan-mep-ramontremosa-scotland-we-must-coordinate-our-independence-referendums>> [Accessed 26 January 2020].

¹⁰³⁰ George Kerevan, 'The EU's Silence is Deafening as Spain Reacts to Catalan Protests', <<https://www.thenational.scot/news/17981713.eus-silence-deafening-spain-reacts-catalan-protests/>> [Accessed 26 January 2020].

¹⁰³¹ Jennifer Rankin, 'Spain Says It Will Not Impose Veto if Scotland Tries to Join EU', <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/apr/02/spain-drops-plan-to-impose-veto-if-scotland-tries-to-join-eu>> [Accessed 29 January 2020].

its entry into the EU,¹⁰³² but the threat and suspicions clearly show the alliance of the larger powers. If large nation-states unite in such a way to preserve the status quo, then the nations wishing to change it must also unite. Consequently, applying resistance theory to their current day political situation as well as to their literature in all languages could be of great benefit to both Catalonia and Wales.

¹⁰³² Ibid.

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