

FROM GRAMMICH, K + HISCOCK, A
ed. DANGEROUS DIVERSITY
CUPP 1998

The Madwoman in the Harness-loft:

Women and Madness in the Literatures of Wales

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'On the banks of Avon Bern there lived a man who was a Father in Sion.²¹ So begins the first story in Caradoc Evans's *My People* (1915). 'A Father in Sion', as the title suggests, is a story of the triumph of the patriarchy: Sadrach Danyrefail, father of eight, succeeds with very little effort in silencing and incarcerating the mother by designating her mad: she becomes the madwoman in the harness-loft. Sadrach breaks the bad news to his children like this:

'Your mother Achsah is not what she should be. Indeed to goodness now, what disgrace this is! . . . Achsah is mad.'

Rachel sobbed.

'Weep you not, Rachel. It is not for us to question the all-wise ways of the Big Man. Do you dry your eyes on your apron now, my daughter. You, too, have your mother's eyes. Let me weep in my solitude. Oh, what sin have I committed, that God should visit this affliction on me?'

Rachel went to the foot of the stairs.

'Mami!' she called.

'She will not hear you,' Sadrach interrupted. 'Dear me, have I not put her in the harness loft? It is not respectable to let her out. Twm Tybach would have sent his wife to the madhouse of Carmarthen. But that is not Christian. Rachel, Rachel, dry your eyes. It is not your fault that Achsah is mad. Nor do I blame Sadrach the Small, nor Esau, nor Simon, nor Sarah, nor Daniel, nor Samuel, nor Miriam. Goodly names have I given you all. Live you up to them. Still, my sons and daughters, are you not all responsible for Achsah's condition? With the birth of each of you she has got worse and worse. Childbearing has made her foolish. Yet it is un-Christian to blame you.'²²

This astonishing narrative, functioning through irony, reveals the consummate hypocrisy of this Father in Sion. While pretending to refrain

from placing blame on his children, he in fact shifts the burden of guilt for Achsah's supposed condition from his own shoulders ('she had been a good wife. Never once did she deny Sadrach his rights²³) onto theirs, thus ensuring their co-operation and silence. Similarly, he declares that his refraining from sending her to the madhouse of Carmarthen is an action of Christian compassion, whereas of course it is a strong indication that Achsah is not actually mad, a fact which would soon be discovered by the doctors of the new, modern asylum at Carmarthen. As Elaine Showalter points out in her book *The Female Malady*, the Madhouse Act of 1828 'established that commitment of . . . pauper patients required an order signed by two magistrates . . . along with a signed medical certificate'.⁴ This Sadrach would have been unlikely to obtain, given that his influence is limited to the people of Sion, the local chapel. Moreover, the new asylums that were rapidly built in the wake of the Lunatics Act of 1845 were constructed in accordance with the new, relatively humane principles of Victorian psychiatry, so that, as Showalter says, many patients from poor families 'were materially better off in the asylum than they would have been at home'.⁵ The Joint Counties Lunatic Asylum in Carmarthen, which opened in 1865, was, like many of the High Victorian asylums, built along the lines of a grand country house: in an 1874 engraving it looks more like the Palace of Versailles than a hospital – a far cry from the harness-loft at Danyrefail.

Sadrach identifies motherhood as the *cause* of Achsah's supposed madness: this introduces the keynote of the whole collection, which satirically exposes a society in which the dominant male, often a chapel minister or a deacon, has bullied and brutalized the female into a position of bestial subservience. The matriarch is metamorphosed into a cow, and willingly wears the cow's halter. Caradoc Evans's depiction of this process is deliberately shocking; moreover, it reveals clearly a process within patriarchal society which has been largely ignored or covered up. Luce Irigaray, in her feminist theories, suggests that the murder of the mother and her silencing is one of the most fundamental acts of the patriarchal order; she writes:

When Freud describes and theorizes . . . the murder of the father as founding the primal horde, he forgets a more archaic murder, that of the mother, necessitated by the establishment of a certain order in the polis.⁶

Irigaray goes on to argue that it is Orestes' murder of his mother, Clytemnestra, which is the founding act for the patriarchal order. She

suggests that the way forward for feminism is to resurrect the mother and reassert her muted desire; hitherto, according to Irigaray, 'mothers, and the women within them, have been trapped in the role of she who satisfies need but has no access to desire'.⁷ This is, indeed, what is evidently lacking in Ahsah, who is infuriatingly meek and passive, accepting her incarceration and her designation as 'mad' without revealing any of Bertha Rochester's 'hunger, rebellion and rage'.⁸

Brontë's 'madwoman in the attic' has become, since Gilbert and Gubar's ground-breaking study⁹ in the late 1970s, a feminist symbol as well as a symptom of the effects of an oppressive patriarchy on the dissident female. Madness itself has of course frequently been used in literature as a trope signifying dissidence against the established order. Since that social order is usually patriarchal, the relation between women and madness in literary representations has often been very close: the madwoman becomes the embodiment of an excess or a desire which cannot be contained within the bounds of an ordered society. The madwoman may then become the emblem of the Other which must be denied or excised from society in order to maintain the status quo. Sadrach Danyrefail's actions in 'A Father in Sion' are wholly in accord with this: he emphasizes the shame and the unrespectability of having a madwoman in the family – the only decent and normal thing to do is to remove her from society. The problem is that he sets himself up as the only judge of Ahsah's mental state: what is really happening is that, under cover of behaving like an upright citizen, he is actually fulfilling his own desires by getting rid of an old and worn-out wife in order to acquire a newer model. His behaviour is, in many ways, identical with that of Rochester in *Jane Eyre*; Jane is the equivalent of Martha in Evans's story and, significantly, in both literary texts, the younger woman co-operates with the schemes of the patriarchy, repudiating her sisterhood with the oppressed madwoman. In both texts, the original insanity of the madwoman is questionable: certainly both are mad by the end of the story but their madness has been created by their ill-treatment and brutalization at the hands of the patriarchy and its female accomplices. What is disturbing in both texts is the suggestion that the oppressive system is infinitely self-perpetuating: Rachel 'has her mother's eyes', according to Sadrach, suggesting that her fate will be similar to that of her mother, with whom she clearly identifies and sympathizes. Rachel develops fits and drowns in the corner of a field

while her father drives past with his load of manure, chastising her for her laziness; once he is quite sure that she is dead, he throws her into the muck cart like a dead animal. More decorously, but no less chillingly, the daughter-substitute in *Jane Eyre*, Adele, is turned into a perfectly acceptable and accepting doll by the end of the novel; Jane, the erstwhile rebel, is smugly satisfied with her taming.

The link between women and madness is not a mere fictional device. As Showalter observes, 'the statistical overrepresentation of women among the mentally ill has been well documented by historians and psychologists'.¹⁰ Victorian physicians were inclined to attribute this fact to the inherent weakness of the female mind and constitution, while feminist critics suggest that 'madness has been the historical label applied to female protest and revolution'.¹¹

Certainly, some radical women were committed to asylums for behaviour which flouted societal norms; Showalter cites the case of Edith Lanchester, a feminist and political campaigner, who was committed to an asylum by her father and brothers because she chose to live with her lover instead of marrying him. Showalter adds that 'the doctor who signed the order gave the cause of her insanity as "overeducation"'.¹² Another real woman who has become a feminist heroine is Freud's patient 'Dora', the hysteric who has been taken as an emblem of dissidence and refusal of patriarchal rules. It is undeniable that some French feminists, notably Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, romanticize hysteria and elevate it to a kind of revolutionary tactic to depose the patriarchy. Irigaray writes that 'there is a revolutionary potential in hysteria'¹³ while Cixous sees Dora as 'the one who resists the system'.¹⁴ But several American feminists have been more cautious; as Shoshana Felman points out in her brilliant essay 'Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy':

Depressed and terrified women are not about to seize the means of production and reproduction: quite the opposite of rebellion, madness is the impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived of the very means of protest or self-affirmation.¹⁵

This can be seen clearly in another story in Caradoc Evans's *My People*, namely 'Lamentations'. Here, Matilda is sexually abused by her drunken, hypocritical father, Evan Rhiw; the protesting mother is quickly disposed of, but Matilda, unlike Ahsah in 'A Father in Sion', is not prepared to take her father's abuse in silence. 'Why brawls she

loudly about me?"¹⁶ complains the mock-innocent Evan; he quickly sets about manufacturing his escape by bribing the chapel minister and ingratiating himself with the people of Sion. Soon, Matilda is condemned in the chapel, and Evan exonerated from blame:

The third day the Judge of Sion commanded his flock to him, and he said to them: 'Boys, boys, glad was the Big Man that I spoke to him. Do you know what He said? "Large thanks, Bern bach. Religious are you to remind me of the sin of Evan Rhiw. The man has a clean heart, and an adder in his house." "Big Man, don't you vex me," I said. "Whisper you the name of the adder." The Big Man said "Matilda. Evan may sin again, grievously, but I will restore him to Capel Sion, and I will bless him abundantly, for his freewill offerings to my Temple are religious."'¹⁷

Thus, the victim is turned into the wicked temptress; alone and confused, Matilda takes to wandering the countryside naked, the very image of the Romantic madwoman, Crazy Jane. But her fate in Caradoc Evans's story is brutal in the extreme:

The people closed their doors on her, and for four days she wandered thereabouts nakedly. The men of the neighbourhood laid rabbit traps on the floor of the fields, and one trap caught the foot of Matilda, and she was delivered into Evan's hands. Having clothed her, he took a long rope . . . and one end of the rope he fastened round her right wrist and one end round the left wrist. In this wise he drove her before him, in the manner in which a colt is driven, to the madhouse of the three shires, which is in the town of Carmarthen.¹⁸

Whether silent or protesting, Caradoc Evans's females are systematically brutalized, reduced to animal status (cow, adder, rabbit, colt) and condemned to madness. Women are deprived of their potential power as mothers and are extracted from society: madness functions as an excuse for the patriarchs to effect this exclusion and silencing. Thus, madness is a socially induced disease in the fictional world of *My People* and it is a disease which afflicts only the most abject of society's victims, the women.

As I have already suggested, religion plays an important role in the designation of female madness in *My People*: Capel Sion gives its approval to the actions of Evan Rhiw and Sadrach Danyrefail. Moreover, the father figures are apparently able to persuade the Father

of all, the Big Man himself, with whom they have pally, masculine conversations, to speak on their side, giving them quasi-divine authority. Religion is of course only a disguise for the self-seeking activities of these patriarchs; religious fervour verging on madness never afflicts these eminently calculating beings. One could argue that it is a female character, Old Nanni, in the story 'Be This Her Memorial', who is suffering from a religious mania, but she is worshipping a false god, the chapel minister, who, like the other important males in the story, treats her with contempt. Suffering under a delusion and an obsession, Old Nanni is already absented from society, living in isolation in her mud-walled hovel: her evident madness is therefore not a threat to society and she is left to fester and die in the most horrific way.

Religious frenzy also afflicts one of the female protagonists of Allen Raine's 1906 novel *Queen of the Rushes*, which is subtitled *A Tale of the Welsh Revival*. Like Caradoc Evans's stories 'A Father in Sion' and 'Lamentations', Raine's novel juxtaposes the passive woman with the active, the voiceless with the vociferous. Also like Evans, Raine sets out to criticize the excesses of the religious revival and the overwhelming dominance of the chapel in the rural Cardiganshire society she depicts. However, Raine's vision of society, and particularly of gender roles within it, is, on the face of it, much more conservative than that of her male contemporary. Far from privileging the hysteric and extolling the madwoman as feminist dissident, Raine creates a flighty anti-heroine whose mind is fatally warped by the passions which the Revival encourages her to unleash:

[Nance's] whole mind and character [had been] thrown off its balance by her complete surrender to the excitements of the revival . . . she seemed less and less able to control her feelings . . .¹⁹

Contemporary French feminists emphasize the connection between madness and the excess of desire; Raine's anti-heroine allows her illicit desires to engulf her – her neglect of her wifely duties and her escape from the domestic enclosure to the passionate freedom of the prayer meetings indicate that her 'madness' is a sign of female rebellion as well as of religious zeal. An important element of the novel's symbolism is the fact that Nance gives *public* voice to her passions; her phallically upright husband, Gildas, is horrified when he hears her voice in the prayer meeting:

It was Nance's voice! and Gildas, astonished and angry, stood still to listen, scarcely believing his own ears. Nance: to raise her voice alone in an assembled multitude! Nance to lay her feelings bare before this crowd!²⁰

She compounds her crime by bringing Gildas's name into her prayers; we can imagine Gildas, like Evan Penthw, exclaiming 'Why brawls she loudly about me?' – it is as if she has indeed taken the name of the Lord in vain! Nance's voicing of her desires and protest are contrasted with the literal voicelessness of the heroine, Gwenifer, who has been struck dumb from childhood by the traumatic experience of seeing her parents drown. Gwenifer, the eponymous queen of the rushes, is the silent, obedient, stunningly beautiful, domestically adept heroine; unassailably sane and exuding integrity, she has the strength of mind to refuse the blandishments of the Revival and of the dashing Captain Jack, for whom Nance has an irresistible sexual passion. By the end of the novel, Gwenifer has miraculously regained her voice while Nance has lost hers, hopelessly enmeshed in her own madness: 'from her lips came only a little moan, a little gibbering.'²¹ Mercifully, Gildas does not have to decide whether to make preparations for her in the harness-loft or to lead her on a rope to the madhouse of Carmarthen, for she conveniently dies, allowing him to marry Gwenifer in a *Jane Eyre*-like happy ending. In this moral text, madness is the female dissident's punishment; she is physically exiled from a properly patriarchal society and has to undergo physical punishment by wandering on the mountains in her rags, being chased by shepherds' dogs. The message is that silence and compliance have their rewards.

Queen of the Rushes is a demonstration that women's writing is not necessarily oppositional, while a comparison between Raine and Caradoc Evans reveals that a male writer can sometimes project a much more radical feminist ideology than a female writer. This is not to say that *Queen of the Rushes* is not susceptible to an oppositional reading; like *Jane Eyre*, in which Charlotte Brontë does her utmost to make us sympathize with Rochester and not with Bertha, in *Queen of the Rushes* Raine tries, and fails, to convince us that the rule of Gildas the patriarch is a righteous and just one. Indeed, for many contemporary readers, female and male, Nance is likely to emerge as the defiant, hysterical heroine, her final refusal to acknowledge the name or the existence of her husband a sign of her continuing rejection of the system.

What has emerged, not surprisingly, in this exploration of the trope of female madness in some Anglo-Welsh texts is the importance of the

religious dimension, something which is not necessarily found in English texts using a similar trope. This focus on religious belief as a site of potential mania or depression is also found in two Welsh-language texts of the 1960s, namely Kate Roberts's novella *Tywyll Heno* (*Dark Tonight*, 1962) and Caradog Prichard's *Un Nos Ola' Leud* (*One Moonlit Night*, 1961). Kate Roberts's novella centres on a woman patient in a mental hospital who is suffering from severe depression brought on by her loss of religious faith. Roberts researched the background to this work in the mental hospital at Denbigh and she includes an acknowledgement of the help given her by one of the psychiatric doctors there for, as she says, 'enlightening [her] on matters which were to [her] very dark'.²²

Tywyll Heno is a first-person narrative: it is the madwoman herself who speaks of her own experiences. Bet is a writer who observes all the other female patients around her, and the tense atmosphere of the hospital ward as she describes it is palpable. Many of the patients have turned their faces to the wall, both literally and symbolically, inhabiting their private, hopeless prisons. Other patients torment each other to pass the time. Watching these women 'hidden in their corners' serves only to intensify Bet's depression. As she lies on her bed, she goes over in her mind how she has come to be here:

Edrychwn ar y peth fel rhyw ystafell Cynddylan ar ganol cae ar fin goedwig, a minnau'n mynd o amgylch yr adfeilion tylluanog, edrych i mewn i'r gwacter di-dân, di-wely . . . Yn araf y daeth ac ni wn sut, heblaw bod y gair 'syrrfed' yn fy mhen o hyd. Ysgrifennwn ef ar ddarn o bapur weithiau a cheisio gwneud cynghanedd ohono efo'r gair 'seirff' a methu.²³

(I looked at it as if it were some Cynddylan's Hall in the middle of a field near a forest, with me wandering around the owl-haunted ruins, looking into the fireless, bedless vacancy . . . It came slowly and I don't know how, except that the word 'surfeit' was in my mind all the time. I wrote it down on a piece of paper and tried to make a line of *cynghanedd* verse with it and the word 'serpents' but I failed.)

Bet sees herself as the figure of Heledd, the bereaved sister who laments in the ninth-century elegy 'Cynddylan's Hall'. Her image suggests loss, dispossession, exile, loneliness. Like Heledd, she wants to create something out of her loss, but her artistic impulse is blocked. 'Surfeit' or excess is the word that haunts her mind, indicating perhaps both her dissatisfaction with the restrictions and deadening

respectability of her life as a minister's wife and the excessive nature of her own ambitions and desires. In her description of her domestic life, she reiterates the phrase 'rhedais i baratoi bwyd iddynt'²⁴ ('I ran to prepare food for them') giving us a picture of the dutiful wife dancing attendance on her family and guests. But we are also given the impression of a woman with strong opinions and desires who feels dissatisfied with the narrowness of her world; her husband, an idealistic and dutiful clergyman, in his turn dances attendance on his flock. As in other stories, Roberts shows both women and men locked in gendered and societal roles which restrict and restrain their desires.

Although the novella is ostensibly about the loss of religious faith, obviously something very serious for the wife of a clergyman, I feel that this apparent theme is a partial disguise for a more far-reaching critique of patriarchal Welsh society. Bet feels straitjacketed by the role she is forced to play and particularly by the way in which her sexual desire is expected to be muted and restricted. The narrative makes it plain that Bet is sexually attracted not only to her husband's more iconoclastic friend, Wil, but also towards her adventurous and independent female friend, Melinda. Jane Gallop makes the point that 'Freud links hysteria to bisexuality; the hysteric identifies with members of both sexes, cannot choose one sexual identity . . . If feminism is the calling into question of constraining sexual identities, then the hysteric may be a proto-feminist.'²⁵ Before Bet in *Tywyll Heno* becomes an hysteric, she tries to find her way out of her impasse by writing and by reading: she turns to Morgan Llwyd's *Llyfr y Tri Aderyn* (*Book of the Three Birds*) but finds its confident answers unconvincing:

Hawdd oedd dweud bod y Goruchaf yn galw'r goleuni allan o'r tywyllwch. Ond sut? Yr oedd mwy o reswng o lawer yng nghwestiwn yr Eryr. 'Ond pa fodd mae i feddwl dyn cael llonydd?' Nid oedd ateb y golomen yn rhoi dim cysur i mi . . . Wedyn euthum i ddarlenn hanes Heledd . . . Nid rhyfedd iddi fynd allan o'i phwyll. Eto, er mor wahanol oedd yr amgylchiadau, teimlwn fy mod yn perthyn yn nes i Heledd nag i Morgan Llwyd.²⁶

(It was easy to say that the Almighty conjured light out of darkness. But how? The Eagle's question was more reasonable. 'But how is the mind of man to gain peace?' The dove's answer gave me no comfort . . . Then I turned to reading the story of Heledd . . . No wonder she went out of her mind. And yet, though the circumstances were so different, I felt that I was more intimately related to Heledd than to Morgan Llwyd.)

Bet brings about her own reasonably happy ending through self-analysis and through a talking cure with her doctor, from which she emerges feeling 'the same as I did in those dreams I used to have, when I went outside naked and failed to find my nightdress . . . I felt that I wanted nothing at that moment except to become nobody and nothing, like cuckoo-spit disappearing on the grass.'²⁷ The image of a new beginning, from nothingness, is reminiscent of Esther Summerson in Plath's *The Bell Jar* (published a year later) who speaks of the electric shock treatment which effects her cure as a 'darkness [which] wiped me out like chalk on a blackboard'.²⁸ *Tywyll Heno* is an important feminist text because it consists entirely of the voice of the madwoman analysing her own breakdown and effecting her own recovery. The fact that Roberts uses a religious crisis as an ostensible focus for her story of female madness shows her awareness of working within a Welsh literary tradition, as do her literary allusions, but she is also, covertly, bringing to her work a highly contemporary feminist consciousness.

*Un Nos Ola' Leuad*²⁹ is generally considered to be one of the most psychologically complex and stylistically experimental texts in modern Welsh-language literature. Unlike *Tywyll Heno*, Caradog Prichard's novel has a strong element of autobiography: it revolves around the close relationship between a mother and son, and the collapse of their world when she goes mad and is committed to the asylum. The story echoes the experience of the author who, as a boy, had to give his consent for the committal of his mother, who remained in the asylum for the rest of her life. The novel is both an exploration of neuroses evidently brought about by social deprivation and a fantastically poetic evocation of various kinds of lunacy. The protagonist's mother succumbs to a religious mania, while the protagonist never successfully disentangles himself from his attachment to his mother: instead of symbolically killing her, he murders a young girl and spends most of his adulthood in prison, as if in sympathy with his mother's incarceration.

The novel is hallucinatory: everything occurs in flashback 'one moonlit night', interspersed with the mysterious voices of the Queen of Snowdon and the Lady of the Black Lake. Yet the novel is also veritably Caradoc Evansish in its emphasis on oppression and brutalization, particularly of women by men: within the first few pages we read of sexual abuse, incest, domestic violence, eviction and suicide. Like Caradoc Evans's work also, its language is strange and unmistakable: it is as if Prichard is destabilizing language itself in his

rendering of the instability of the protagonist's mind. The voices of the spurned queens in the novel are the voices of the archetypal Mother who has been silenced and buried; Caradog Prichard can be said to have released these voices from the prison-house of patriarchal language.

Again, it is not surprising to find the male writer daring to be more stylistically experimental than his female contemporary (as we have already observed in the case of Caradoc Evans and Allen Raine). Far from being oppositional, much women's writing has in the past been fairly conservative precisely because of the precarious position of the woman writer who desires admission to the literary canon and therefore feels constrained to imitate its forms. This is not to claim that Kate Roberts is conservative; on the contrary, many of her ideas are radical, but her adherence to a realist mode is relatively inflexible.

Shoshana Felman has shown that Balzac's story of female madness, 'Adieu', can be read as both deploying and deconstructing the realist mode. As in *Queen of the Rushes*, the male character at the end of the story demands that the female protagonist prove her sanity by naming and recognizing him: "To restore Stephanie's reason" signifies, precisely, to reinstate her "femininity": to make her recognize man, the "lover" whose "glory" she ought to be.³⁰ She does so, but immediately dies. Felman goes on to argue that:

If, in our culture, the woman is by definition associated with madness, her problem is how to break out of this (cultural) imposition of madness without taking up the critical and therapeutic positions of reason . . . The challenge facing woman today is nothing less than to re-invent language . . . to establish a discourse the status of which would no longer be defined by the phallacy of masculine meaning.³¹

The contemporary short stories of Glenda Beagan, arguably, begin to do just this. One story entitled 'Don't Look!' foregrounds the madwoman, in this case an eccentric, pipe-smoking bag lady called Miss Schreider. The female narrator recalls her childhood fascination for this figure:

I didn't know whether to be afraid of her or sorry for her. Perhaps, secretly, like everyone else, I envied her. She could do what she liked . . . she could get away with things no-one else dared do. No other woman, certainly, could go on her own for long walks the way she did, turning up anywhere in her torn brown coat and her boots.³²

The story juxtaposes Miss Schreider with the narrator's Aunt Annie, fiercely buttoned up in her frustrated respectability. The story's epiphany occurs when the narrator as a girl is taken to spy on Miss Schreider by an ebullient boy, Arnie; the two voyeurs get more than they bargain for: "Oh God", [Arnie] managed to burst out at last. "Oh Jesus. Look. No, don't look. She's not wearing KNICKERS!" I looked. He was quite right. She wasn't.³³

The madwoman is certainly the dissident heroine in this story: her madness seems an 'antic disposition' assumed to flout every rule of female decency. The story ends as a lament for the unliberated, sane female, Aunt Annie, forever stationed in her stifling window, coiled in her knot of frustration and rage, trying so hard to fit herself and everyone else into an invisible box. Respectability. Decency. The Way to Behave.³⁴

In three very different texts upon which I have touched thus far, public nakedness – the revelation of the female body – has been used as an emblem of insanity. The madwoman displays her body and her desire, rather than concealing them in the patriarchally approved manner. In the earlier texts, this revelation is also a revolution against Nonconformity, the Puritanical distaste for the flesh of the female 'adder'. But this religious dimension has virtually disappeared in Beagan's work, suggesting that its importance has diminished in a new, secularized Welsh culture. However, Beagan does expand one distinctive motif found in the earlier texts, namely that of eviction or dispossession. In all the works mentioned, the mad female is expelled from her house; these evictions mirror a harsh historical reality while at the same time suggesting a symbolic homelessness. As Hélène Cixous has said, the dissident woman in the patriarchy is by definition the witch³⁵ inhabiting the heath, the wasteland, turned out from the home comforts reserved only for domestic angels.

This is seen clearly in another of Beagan's stories, 'Scream, Scream', where eviction is metamorphosed into cultural dispossession: Mrs Jenkins, the hysterical screamer, is described as 'the last of the Jenkinsons of Sgubor Fawr',³⁶ not turned out of her house but doomed to make it her own coffin. The unique pressures of Welsh religion have given way to a distinctive kind of Welsh deracination, or 'internal exile',³⁷ to quote Wynn Thomas's phrase. The setting of 'Scream, Scream' is very similar to the opening of *Tywyll Heno*, depicting a ward of female patients suffering from the typical diseases of the madwoman, such as anorexia and depression. Into the ward comes

screaming Mrs Jenkins and gradually her scream becomes the voice of each of them, the madwoman's voice:

It's as if the scream slowly inhabits them all, slowly expresses them all. It's as if the terror slowly seeps out of it, while another nameless quality enters. What does it consist of, this blend of dark voices beyond Mrs Jenkins' own, far beyond, ungovernable, timeless voices without meaning or order, but shot through with a rhythm they recognize, a substance they have felt themselves, all of them . . . It is a medley of voices, the cry of aftermath, of battle and birth, of sap and sinew.³⁸

What makes this story so hopeful is the fact that Mrs Jenkins is allowed to scream: the female Dr Patel overrules her male colleague who wishes to drug Mrs Jenkins into silence. For it is Dr Patel's scream, too. Beagan shows how the scream of the hysteric is the expression of a multiple wound, the wound of female disempowerment and cultural dispossession. The scream changes nothing; what might bring change is its fluid, eloquent expression in Beagan's story.

Notes

- ¹ Caradoc Evans, *My People* (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1953; first ed. 1915).
- ² *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- ⁴ Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture 1830–1980* (London: Virago, 1987), p. 26.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- ⁶ Luce Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. by Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 36.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- ⁸ Matthew Arnold, writing of Charlotte Brontë in 1853, quoted in Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979).
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ Showalter, *The Female Malady*, p. 3.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- ¹³ Luce Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, p. 47.
- ¹⁴ Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *La Jeune Née* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions), p. 273.
- ¹⁵ Shoshana Felman, 'Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy', in Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (eds.), *The Feminist Reader* (London: Macmillan, 1989) p. 134.

- ¹⁶ Caradoc Evans, *My People*, p. 145.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 147–8.
- ¹⁹ 'Allen Raine', *Queen of the Rushes: A Tale of the Welsh Revival* (London: Hutchinson, 1906), p. 147.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 306.
- ²² Kate Roberts, *Tywyll Heno* (Denbigh: Gwasg Gee, 1962), p. 6 [my translation].
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26 ff.
- ²⁵ Jane Gallop, quoted in Showalter, *The Female Malady*, p. 160.
- ²⁶ Kate Roberts, *Tywyll Heno*, p. 68.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 95–6 [my translation].
- ²⁸ Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (London: Faber, 1988), p. 226.
- ²⁹ Caradog Pritchard, *Un Nos Ola' Leuad* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 1990); translated by Philip Mitchell as *One Moorlit Night* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1995).
- ³⁰ Shoshana Felman, 'Women and Madness', p. 147.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 152–3.
- ³² Glenda Beagan, *The Medlar Tree* (Bridgend: Sren, 1992), p. 110.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- ³⁵ Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (eds.), *New French Feminisms* (Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1981), p. 247.
- ³⁶ Glenda Beagan, *The Medlar Tree*, p. 32.
- ³⁷ M. Wynn Thomas, *Internal Difference: Literature in Twentieth-Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992).
- ³⁸ Glenda Beagan, *The Medlar Tree*, p. 31.

