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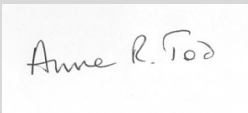
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# **THE ANGER AND THE LOVE**

**A comparison of the works of the two authors,  
Caradoc Evans and Moelona,  
who lived in Rhydlewys, West Wales**

**Anne R Tod, B.Sc.  
2008362**

**Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
University of Wales, Trinity Saint David.  
2024**



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Dedicated to the memory of Bella, my beautiful black Romanian rescue dog, who sat under my desk throughout the course of my studies and who is now running free in spirit across the green fields of West Wales.

## Abstract

Caradoc Evans and Elizabeth Mary Jones (Moelona) were contemporaries, living in the small West Wales village of Rhydlewys, going to the same school and sharing the experience of growing up in late nineteenth and early twentieth century rural Wales. However, their styles of writing as authors couldn't be more different and the reception of their works has also completely differed. This intrigued me as both authors would have been open to the same influences in their formative years. I wanted to explore the differences, to try to see what it was that led to such a dichotomy of approach and to see if any common themes could be extracted from their works. I thought that there would be a clear differentiation between them and that there would be a delineation between the universal condemnation of Caradoc's works and the appreciation of the gentle, didactic works of Moelona. What I didn't expect to find were similarities, albeit presented in different ways, but with strong feelings of a shared message about the lives of ordinary people living at this time. The issues brought to the fore by both the authors are to a certain extent unresolved, those of culture, language, education, employment and deprivation, and the feelings engendered by the two authors are still being discussed today. Studying their works gave me an insight into the forces at play at a certain time in Welsh society and, though I was concerned when I first had the idea for this dissertation that it could not be seen as relevant in terms of Celtic Studies, I am now confident that it does indeed shed a small shaft of light on what the term 'Celtic' can represent.

## Introduction

In this thesis I will explore social, educational, linguistic, and religious aspects of the writings of Caradoc Evans (1878-1945) and Elizabeth Mary Jones (1877-1953) under her pen name Moelona. When I came to live in Rhydlewís in 2017 I was amazed to find that such a small village was the birthplace of two influential authors. I was further amazed to find that their writings could not be more different in both subject matter, style and linguistic components. Surely their experiences should have been similar, and their influences contemporaneous? As I enquired further, both from the Rhydlewís History Group and from people whose family links stretched back further than the mid-twentieth century, I found that opinions about both writers differed enormously.

On the one hand, Caradoc Evans was described by T.L. Williams as the ‘best hated man in Wales’ and Glyn Jones defined him as a traitor to Wales, a heretic, a misogynist, and a renegade who had fled Wales for a better life in London.<sup>1</sup> Moelona, on the other hand, was generally described as a benign and gentle children’s author of educational books, who wrote lovingly about the Welsh families and countryside of rural Rhydlewís. Most of the people who had an opinion about Caradoc Evans had at least read *My People*, but I have only spoken to one elderly gentleman who had read Moelona’s *Teulu Bach Nantoer* in school, when he said the whole class had been reduced to tears over the pathos of the tale. Of further interest was that characters portrayed by both authors could be traced back to the relatives of family members still living in the area and this has also fuelled the polarization of opinions. At the start of my research I jokingly said that my exploration of these two authors may lead to me being ostracised from the village. This now seems rather a portentous observation!

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<sup>11</sup> T.L. Williams, *Caradoc Evans*, Writers of Wales (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1970), p.3; Glyn Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1968) p.70.

My dissertation examines how the backgrounds and influences of these two authors affected the style and content of their books. It also aims to identify any persistent themes, so as to evaluate whether there was a congruity within their works which has not yet been identified. In this dissertation I have concentrated on the works of Caradoc Evans that particularly relate to his memories of Rhydlewis and Moelona's more disparate works but which deal with kinship and the sense of belonging to place.

Caradoc Evans's career as a writer began when he'd moved to London as a draper's assistant and then obtained positions in magazine publications. He tried to write about London life but was advised to concentrate on the life that he knew so was drawn to look back on the formative experiences of his youth in Rhydlewis. I have concentrated on his works that are firmly rooted in the area in which he grew up. *My People: Stories of the Peasantry of West Wales* was published in 1915, closely followed by *Capel Sion* in 1916. These two books were seen as the most controversial by people in the local area. However, Evans continued to write about Welsh identity in London in *My Neighbours* published in 1920. *Nothing to Pay*, published in 1930, is a veiled autobiographical account of his journey from the drapery trade to becoming a writer, as is the more vicious *Wasps*, published in 1933. *Pilgrims in a Foreign Land*, published in 1942, is a reflective piece as Caradoc comes to the end of his journalistic career.

Moelona's works are initially rooted in Rhydlewis but are surprisingly diverse in their wide ranging geographical scenarios. This accords with Moelona's desire to educate her young readers as to the possibilities afforded by life away from the area in which they are raised. *Teulu Bach Nantoer*, published in 1927, is firmly set in the local area, but *Cwrs Y Lli*, also published in 1927, takes readers to Switzerland and also introduces them to the disruption of the First World War. *Breuddwydion Myfanwy*, published in 1928, journeys with her characters across the globe with the hope of a better life for families in Australia. *Beryl*,

published in 1931, suggests that prospects for families would be better in England, and *Ffynnonloyw*, published in 1939, examines changing social influences within Wales.

Both writers are drawing on their formative experiences, but whereas Caradoc Evans looks inward for dramatic effect, Moelona is keen to explore other scenarios for her readers.

## Chapter 1

### Social Conditions

Social unrest had been growing throughout the nineteenth century, culminating in the Reform Act of 1867. This gave voting rights to parts of the working classes, although stopped short of full enfranchisement. The 1868 General Election returned a Liberal Government but did little to enhance the life chances of the poorest in society. West Wales had its own particular grievances because the rural economy was not benefitting from the industrial progress of other areas of Wales. The small farms which formed most of the agricultural economy were worked by tenants of the local landed gentry, who themselves were not particularly wealthy compared to their English counterparts. Gareth Elwyn Jones writes:

from 1886 the Welsh land question was at the forefront of attention, accentuated by agricultural depression. The betes-noires of Welsh society were the landed gentry, English-speaking, Anglican, absentee, rich having acquired their riches by the exploitation of a Welsh-speaking, Nonconformist tenantry who had been victimized in a variety of ways.<sup>2</sup>

According to David Jenkins:

minor gentry (in Wales) lived in what were by the standards of the time small mansions, but which by the standards of the late nineteenth century were substantial farmhouses.<sup>3</sup>

One such mansion was Plas Gwernant in the parish of Troedyrour near the village of Rhydlewis in Ceredigion. Both Caradoc Evans and Moelona were born of similar tenant farming backgrounds and the livelihoods of their parents would have been controlled by the landowner of the Gwernant Estate. David Jenkins traces the ownership of the landed gentry in the parishes of Troedyrour, emphasising the distinction between this social class and the rest of the rural population. They were ‘an exclusive group, marrying within their own social

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<sup>2</sup> Gareth Elwyn Jones, *Wales 1880-1914* (Open University)

<sup>3</sup> David Jenkins, *The Agricultural Community in South West Wales at the turn of the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1971) p.18.

stratum whether locally or elsewhere within Britain and the Empire'.<sup>4</sup> Landowners did not necessarily spend all their time living in their mansions and Plas Gwernant, although it was owned by various members of the Lloyd Williams family between the period 1774-1943, was often tenanted during this time. There was an increase in lawlessness in the mid-nineteenth century brought about by the abject poverty in rural areas. David Williams charts this rise of civil unrest through sheep stealing and coastal wrecking, activities which law enforcement agencies were powerless to prevent. He also draws attention to the prevalence of *ceffyl pren* (wooden horse) by which transgressors were strapped to a wooden crossbeam and paraded through the local community for all to mock which was a form of popular justice. The lack of formal law enforcement encouraged the emergence of the Rebecca movement that challenged the establishment of toll booths on roads in Wales. These tolls drained the already meagre funds available to farmers trying to transport lime for fertilising their land or move goods for sale without constant payment to the landowners.<sup>5</sup> In 1843 Edward Lloyd Williams of Gwernant wrote a strong letter to the Rebecca rioters saying that he would penalise his tenants by removing any financial help to them and absent himself from the area if his mansion were to be attacked.<sup>6</sup> A later Lloyd Williams was also responsible for the closure of the public house in Rhydlew, demanding that all his tenants sign a petition asking for its closure in 1904. The petition is still in existence in the care of the Rhydlew Historical Society, and the village still does not have a pub. Both of these examples show the extent of the influence of the 'big house' on the local tenants of Rhydlew.

The uncertainty of the availability of agricultural labour which was dependent on the whims of the landowner, the weather conditions, the lack of money for health care and the

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<sup>4</sup> Jenkins, *The Agricultural Community in South West Wales at the turn of the Twentieth Century* p.31.

<sup>5</sup> David Williams, *The Rebecca Riots, A Study in Agrarian Discontent*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1986) pp.51-53.

<sup>6</sup> Henry Tobit Evans, *Rebecca Riots! True Tales of the Transvestite Terrorists who Vexed Victoria* (David M. Gross, 2010) pp.79-81.

necessary outgoings in terms of rent, food and educational provision for their children, were constant worries for tenants which are expressed in both the works of Caradoc Evans and Moelona. Caradoc Evans did not state his political affiliations in his writings but the financial fragility of the rural poor is illustrated in the disconnect between the landowners and the local population by a comment in Caradoc Evans's 'The Glory That Was Sion's'. The negotiations for an extended graveyard between Capel Sion and the landowner had run into problems:

This field belonged to the squire, who regarded anyone trading under the name of Nonconformist as a thief and a quibbler. In his dealings with the kind the squire acted through his lawyer.<sup>7</sup>

Evans's stories express frustration at the acquiescence of the rural population to more powerful figures in the community, particularly within the chapels. Moelona is more subtle in her handling of the political system of the time but, as I will argue in this thesis, often more powerful as a result.

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<sup>7</sup> Caradoc Evans, *My People* (Milton Keynes: Lightning Source UK Ltd. 1918) pp.95-96.

## Chapter 2

### Family Backgrounds

The family backgrounds of the two authors have similarities. Caradoc Evans's mother, Mary Powell, (1848-1934) was the daughter of William Powell who farmed a large amount of land at Blaenbarre near Rhydlewsi which, according to John Harris, would have qualified him to be seen as a 'gentleman'<sup>8</sup>. She married William Evans in 1870 and they settled at Pantycroi, two miles south of Llandysul, where he became an auctioneer. Harris writes that in this role, Evans officiated in a controversial sale of a property that had been forcibly vacated by the tenant for voting Liberal against the wishes of the local landowner. This resulted in William Evans becoming a social pariah in the area, the stigma of which followed the family and in part may have contributed to Caradoc Evans's sense of alienation. Caradoc was born in 1878 and when he was still a very young child, his parents' marriage broke down, due to his father's womanising and drink-related behaviour and his uncle, Joshua Powell, moved Caradoc's mother and siblings to Rhydlewsi. Harris suggests that it is possible the disabled son, Josi, who was born to her in 1881, was seen in the local community as judgement for his father William's immorality and interestingly, William Evans was one of the last people subjected to *ceffyl pren* in the area.<sup>9</sup> After Caradoc's father died in 1881, his mother moved to a 10 acre farm, Lanlas Uchaf in Rhydlewsi, where she lived frugally until her death in 1934. Because her family disapproved of her marriage, she was not included in any inheritance from her father, William Powell. This may have spurred Caradoc to write in the vein that he did, exposing the reality of the rural poor within the systems of land ownership and organised religion. As a young man, his need to earn a wage meant that he had to give up his education and become a draper's assistant in Carmarthen, a fate that befell

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<sup>8</sup> John Harris, *The Devil in Eden*, (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press Ltd., 2018) p.7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.9-10.

many from the rural areas who could not make a living out of casual farm labouring or who wanted more than a subsistence livelihood.

Elizabeth Mary Jones (nee Evans), the youngest of thirteen children, was born in 1877 and brought up at the farm called Moylon from which she took her pen name Moelona. David Jenkins traces the history of Moylon farm which ‘by 1834 [...] had been acquired by Lloyd Williams Esq., of Gwernant and a tenant installed’<sup>10</sup>.

In or about 1856 the tenancy passed to one John Owen, a carrier engaged in taking farm produce by horse and cart to the industrial areas of south-east Wales[...] John Owen married the maid at Gwernant home farm [...] After first living separately in their respective parents’ homes and then in a cottage of their own, John and Mary Owen moved to Moylon.<sup>11</sup>

Both the families of the two writers were involved in agricultural at a practical level. They did not own their own land and, however hard they worked, they were at the mercy of the landlord who did. Landlords were also influenced by their economic situation, but they had no necessary responsibility for the welfare of their tenants. With no public welfare system in place, life was precarious and uncertain for tenants and factors outside of their control, as effect of the weather and occurrence of sickness of both them and their animals alike was critical to their survival in the lives that they had built for themselves. Both Caradoc Evans and Moelona explored this predicament in their writings but in very different ways.

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<sup>10</sup> Jenkins, *The Agricultural Community in South West Wales at the turn of the Twentieth Century* p.280-281.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.280-281.

## Chapter 3

### Agricultural Practices

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 changed the way in which provision of care of the poor was offered to the destitute as, prior to this, poor relief was the responsibility of the parish. John Davies notes that at first the removal of the burden of poor relief from the parish was welcomed, but when taxes were increased to provide the funds to build workhouses, this quickly turned to dissent.<sup>12</sup> Conditions in the workhouses were designed to be as harsh as possible and distinctions were drawn between the ‘deserving poor’, such as the old and the sick, and the ‘undeserving poor’, deemed to be in poverty as a result of their own idleness and, in the case of many of the women, immorality.

Dissatisfaction in the rural community culminated in the Rebecca Riots that began in 1839 and were instigated by the charismatic Twm Carnabwth from Mynachlog-ddu in the Preseli Hills, and, in common with many rural protests across Europe, involved men dressed as women. The protestors attacked the toll booths, usually at night, and repeatedly destroyed them. The movement spread across mid and south-west Wales.<sup>13</sup> Glyn Jones makes the point that:

Caradoc was brought up near one of the centres of Rebecca, and as a boy might easily have spoken to men who had taken part in those courageous, imaginative and effective disturbances; only nine years before he was born the radical nonconformist farmers of his county were being evicted from their farms for having the guts to vote [...] openly against their own Tory landowners, although they knew the consequences would inevitably be eviction .<sup>14</sup>

While landowners had control over the actions and livelihoods of the rural farm workers, they had less effect on the day-to-day agricultural workings of the area as the tenants had their own ways of making sure that the land was farmed. It was in many ways run as a social co-

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<sup>12</sup> John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin Books, 2007) p.358.

<sup>13</sup> Hefin Wyn, *In Pursuit of Twm Carnabwth – the Original Leader of the Rebecca Riots* (Talybont: Y Lolfa Cyf, 2022)

<sup>14</sup> Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p.75.

operative, with labour flexibly distributed amongst the whole area. Harvest time necessitated a large work force that moved around the farms according to need and ensured that all the land was farmed as efficiently as possible. This did have an influence on the social standing of people in the community as they would be judged by their willingness to co-operate with each other.

Caradoc's writings are brutal in their depiction of agricultural conditions and refer to this practice of co-operation in working the land. Perhaps his most famous story is 'Be This Her Memorial', from *My People*.<sup>15</sup> This story is about Nanni, a poor old religious woman living on her own, surviving on a meagre pittance from Poor Relief, whose one solace in life was to listen to the sermons of the preacher, 'The Respected Josiah Bryn-Bevan', whom she had helped to deliver as a baby and whose career she had fervently followed. When she hears that he is going to move from the parish, she is persuaded by 'The Seller of Bibles' to buy a fine Bible to present to Bryn-Bevan. She is unable to present it herself as she has become increasingly unwell, and the Bible is ultimately given to Sadrach Danyrefail, a man who has been expecting Nanni to help him with his haymaking.

Her labour was wanted in the fields. It was the property of the community, the community which paid her three shillings and ninepence a week.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, Bryn-Bevan does visit her in her 'mud-walled, straw thatched cottage' and is appalled to find her dead on the floor, a roasted rat in her hand and the rats feeding on her corpse.

The minister, startled and horrified, fled from the house of sacrifice.<sup>17</sup>

The lack of awareness of both of the male figures in this story underlines the harsh conditions that the poor, and in particular women, were subjected to. In this society there was little help

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<sup>15</sup> Evans, *My People* p.161-172.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.168.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.172.

for the destitute and therefore they were prey to exploitation through economic realities in conjunction with the power of those involved in organised religion.

Another example of how subsistence living could so quickly turn into abject poverty and destitution can be found in 'The Widow's Mite' in *Capel Sion* where Esther and her already ailing husband Morgan, who has a cancer in his throat, try without success to sell Gwen, their sick and only cow. Reduced to begging by the roadside, Morgan dies, and Esther in her rage and desperation slowly kills the cow by hanging and skins it so that she can travel the countryside begging and attempting to sell the hide. Coming back to the village, she appeals to Abel Shones for Poor Relief in order to buy a coffin for Morgan by which time his corpse has decomposed. Caradoc does not hold back from describing the unpleasant details of this:

Abel came up to Tygwyn to view and measure Morgan, and as he drew aside the sacks which covered the body, lo, worms crept in and out of the mouth and out of the eyes of the dead man<sup>18</sup>.

The suggestion is that Esther, through necessity, has capitalised as much as she could from the two deaths, and Caradoc lays out the horrible reality of this in a way that is designed to shock the reader.

T.L Williams in *Caradoc Evans* suggests that a story in *My People*, 'The Blast of God' depicts the rigours of a rural life where there is no room for beauty:

Many critics have noted that Caradoc shows no awareness of the beautiful scenery of rural Cardiganshire[...]In the story Owen Tygwyn continues mechanically (ploughing) on his way until he has finished his task, and then he sees to his hanged son. In this kind of pastoral life, Owen has got his priorities right: a dead son has no economic value; a completed furrow has.<sup>19</sup>

Gwyn Jones wrote in *The Welsh Review* of March 1945 that Caradoc:

was blinkered. Greed, hypocrisy, and gross and brutal appetite-he wrote of these with power and fidelity and at times tiresome iteration: but generosity, self-sacrifice, love and the kindlier humours of the country-side of those he has nothing to say.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Caradoc Evans, *Capel Sion* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press Ltd., 2002) p.54.

<sup>19</sup> Williams, *Caradoc Evans*, p.59 & 61.

<sup>20</sup> Sandys, *Caradoc Evans*, p.153.

What Caradoc did was deliberately to suppress, beginning with the really marvellous beauty of Cardigan's natural scenery, everything he knew to be admirable in the life and circumstances of the people he was writing about.<sup>21</sup>

However, one might argue that Caradoc does show awareness of the beauty of the place, albeit indirectly as he refers to his home village of Rhydlewys as Manteg, in translation, 'Fair Place'. The countryside rises on both sides of the valley, which Caradoc often describes as being heather and gorse strewn and therefore not good agricultural land for the tenants, although the valley floor, owned by the landlord, was fertile. Whether referring to the valley as Manteg is ironic, or whether this was his grudging acceptance of the visual landscape, it is in direct contrast to the misery portrayed in his stories. Here, the hard grind of rural life does not lend itself to perceptions of natural beauty, rather the eye is drawn to the imperfections, the lack of fertility, the tasks that need to be undertaken, the incursion of the unwanted, whether that be illness in the stock, weeds, pests, degradation or water ingress. All dull the senses and impose an atmosphere of relentlessness and inevitable loss in the struggle against Nature's insistence that the land should return to its natural state, through disregard of mere humans' attempts to tame it. This is vividly shown in 'The Way of the Earth':

Simon and Beca are waiting for Death. The ten acres of land over Penrhops – their peat-thatched cottage under the edge of the moor- grows wilder and weedier. For Simon and Beca can do nothing now'.<sup>22</sup>

Caradoc does set the rural scene for many of his stories. In 'The Talent Thou Gavest' young Eben, son of Hannah, leaves school to look after Farmer Shames's sheep:

Eben, having walked over the mile and a half of heather, and having come to the point from which you can on a clear day see the waters of Cardigan Bay, opened the gate of the enclosure[...]. His life was lonely[...]. He had not been taught to read and the sense of the beautiful or the curious in Nature is slow to awake in the mind of the Welsh peasant.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p.75.

<sup>22</sup> Evans, *My People*, p.41.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.67-68.

This would suggest that Caradoc was not immune to the memories of the landscapes of his youth but also was aware of the need for an education to lift people out of stultifying poverty. It could also be seen by his critics as a sharpened barb directed at the idealised view of rural life.

A negative anonymous review of *My Neighbours* in 1920 in *The Nation* describes the book as ‘an extract of ferocity that he flings at his Welsh fellow-countrymen’<sup>24</sup>. There is a suggestion that Caradoc’s depiction of the Welsh peasantry of Rhydlewys is becoming overworked:

Mr. Evans's artistic gift is very genuine but hard and narrow. In its present trend one can see little chance for its development. The stories are like rocks-impressive but barren<sup>25</sup>.

This description seems in tune with Caradoc’s views of the grinding toil and sterility of the agricultural life in which he was brought up.

Moelona also refers to the way that agricultural practises were a community-based social convention as the children in *Teulu Bach Nantoer* were used as haymakers in the summertime.

Sathru'r gwellt oedd gwaith Alun a Mair, a chaent redeg a chwareu faint fynnent ynddo.<sup>26</sup>

Trampling the straw was Alun and Mair's job, and they could run and play as much as they wanted in it.

Failure of crops and variations in the market for produce could quickly result in an inability to pay rents. The possibility of poverty was an ever-present concern for those tenants trying to work a living on small farms. In Moelona’s *Ffynnonloyw* there are two graphic

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<sup>24</sup> Beauty and the Beast,” in *The Nation*, Vol. 110, April 17, 1920, p.522.

<https://www.enotes.com/topics/caradoc-evans/critical-essays/criticism>[accessed 16 July 2023]

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.522. <https://www.enotes.com/topics/caradoc-evans/critical-essays/criticism>

[accessed 16 July 2023]

<sup>26</sup> Moelona, *Teulu Bach Nantoer* (Wrecsam: Hughes & Fab, 1927) pp.29-30.

descriptions of deaths of stock on the farm, one of a productive mare named Flower and the other a young calf.

Yr oedd yr olygfa o'u blaen yn ddigon i beri i wŷr cryfion wylo. Yn yr afon a ffiniai'r ddôl ar un ochr safai Flower-ar dair coes. Yr oedd un o'i choesau blaen wedi ei throri yn ddeuddarn, ar y gwaelod yn ymyl y carn.<sup>27</sup>

The scene before them was enough to make strong men weep. In the river that bordered the meadow on one side stood Flower-on three legs. One of her front legs had been cut in two, at the bottom near the hoof.

Y llo bach gwyn a melyn, y tlysaf o'r lloi i gyd, oedd yno ar ei hyd ynghanol y drain a'r mieri, yn gwingo mewn poenau, ei dafod yn hongian, a'i gorff wedi chwyddo fel baril fawr.<sup>28</sup>

The little white and yellow calf, the fairest of all the calves, was there stretched out amidst the thorns and brambles, writhing in pain, its tongue hanging out, and its body swollen like a big barrel.

Both of these graphic scenes were witnessed by the children in the story, and one can only think that Moelona was drawing on personal experiences in these instances. Such losses would have increased the constant worry about money and, alongside resentment of the comparative wealth of the character Huw the Shop, and overwork in the fields, could have contributed to the ultimate death of the father. Given that her stories were first and foremost for children, these realistic descriptions show that children of the time would not have been unfamiliar with these harsh conditions. If rents could not be paid, eviction, destitution and the local Workhouse, which for Rhydlewys was in the nearby town of Newcastle Emlyn, would have been the fate for dispossessed tenants. These examples show why Moelona is not just a sentimental author, and her narratives can be seen to be closer to Caradoc's darker vision in places.

Rural poverty is a key part of Moelona's most famous book *Teulu Bach Nantoer* (1913) in which the story centres around a widowed mother bringing up four children on a

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<sup>27</sup> Moelona, *Ffynnonloyw* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1939) pp.34-35.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

small farm. The family is befriended by a wealthy couple, an English lady and her Welsh husband, who ingratiate themselves with the family. Later, the youngest child, Eiry, a pretty little three-year-old girl, goes missing from her bed whilst the mother is looking after the family's only cow. Because her toy is found near the river, it is presumed that the child has fallen in and been swept away. The family is devastated by their loss but manage to move on, the other children becoming successful in their chosen paths in life. One son, Alun, by now a sea captain, travels to Argentina and happens to rescue a beautiful young girl from drowning in the sea. Sometime later, a lawyer, accompanied by the young lady, arrive at the family home and it is disclosed that the young lady's 'mother' has died and amongst her papers it has been discovered an admission of abduction and of staging the drowning twenty years previously. Repentant, she explained that she had wanted a child of her own:

Meddylw'n yn brudd, pam na chawn i ferch fechan felly pan oedd gennyf ddigon o arian i'w dwyn i fyny yn briodol, tra'r oedd y fam hon yn dlawd, a'r fath blant tlws ganddi.<sup>29</sup>

We thought to ourselves, why can't we have a little girl like that when I had enough money to bring her up properly, while this mother was poor, and she had such beautiful children.

Although the Englishwoman's Welsh husband had some misgivings about her course of action, he had acquiesced to his wife's demands. If one were to take a political stance on this point in the story, it would appear that Moelona was implying that England thought it acceptable that the bounty of Wales could be taken without consent, with the agreement of certain elements of Welsh society. In *The Land of My Fathers, 2000 Years of Welsh History*, Gwynfor Evans makes an apposite remark:

There is nothing despicable about the imperial rape of the English. What is to be despised is that so many Welsh people themselves help to ravage their nation.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Moelona, *Teulu Bach Nantoer*, p.60.

<sup>30</sup> Gwynfor Evans, *Land of my Fathers: 2000 Years of Welsh History*, (Talybont: Y Lolfa Cyf, 2005) p.283.

This echoes Moelona's sense of the betrayal by the Welsh husband who did not remonstrate with his wife about her wish to remove the child from the poor Welsh family.

Again, because there has been so little research into Moelona's work, there are few constructive comments about her powers as an author. Anecdotally, she is still very well thought of in the local area, but generally people seem unaware of the real impact of her stories. Moelona's own political stance is highlighted by Prof. Katie Gramich who writes about the denouement in *Teulu Bach Nantoer* suggesting that:

The return of the lost child.....may be seen as an allegory for the 'awakened' Wales, whose sons and daughters are returning to her, having been 'kidnapped' by the foreign interloper.<sup>31</sup>

*Teulu Bach Nantoer* sends a powerful political message about the relationship between Wales and England at this time and yet, it is deemed to be a story for children with all the educational trappings that Moelona put in place, such as the Geirfa/Vocabulary and Talfyriadau/Abbreviations at the end.

It is difficult to find any criticism of Moelona's works as she is largely overlooked as a 'benign' children's author. Yet her writings are much more than that, and, as we have seen, operate on two different levels. Gramich notes that her writing, epitomised in *Teulu Bach Nantoer*:

is another example of a hybrid genre which appears to have been much used by Welsh-language women writers during this period: a novel which is ostensibly for children, and yet which was evidently much read by adults and which contains an ideology relevant to both adults and children.<sup>32</sup>

However, because of the public perception of the confines of children's didactic literature, Moelona is relatively unknown whereas Caradoc, through the controversies surrounding his work, has gained notoriety.

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<sup>31</sup> Gramich, *Twentieth-Century Women's Writing in Wales. Land, Gender, Belonging*, p.53.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.

## Chapter 4

### Education

As a result of the Rebecca Riots, a Royal Commission was set up in 1846 to determine the reasons behind the riots and concluded that poor education was one of main causes of the social unrest.<sup>33</sup> Although, in general, standards of education across England were also inadequate, the decision made by the Commissioners that one of the main reasons for poor standards in Wales was the use of the Welsh language, and they therefore concluded that education should be delivered solely in the English language. A large part of education in Wales in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century was being provided by Sunday Schools and John Davies notes that that this allowed children ‘to be literate in Welsh and trained them to use the language to discuss abstract ideas’<sup>34</sup> The report published in 1847, dubbed ‘The Blue Books’, also highlighted religious differences in Welsh society. It suggested that morality in Wales was at a low ebb and this was seized on by the Nonconformists as ‘it is possible to discern the seed of the notion that the chapel people were the only true Welsh and the Welshness was synonymous with Nonconformity.’<sup>35</sup>

The population of the Rhydlewish area was Welsh speaking and the landowners were generally absent. The village school which Caradoc and Moelona both attended was run by J.N. Crowther, ‘a Yorkshire teacher who had learned Welsh and was a good teacher but who Caradoc thought had ridiculed him’<sup>36</sup>. There were few prospects in the area apart from farm labouring and to have a better life the young had to move away. According to Caradoc’s wife and biographer, Marguerite Barcynska, writing under the pseudonym Oliver Sandys, Caradoc had really wanted to be a preacher, but lack of money forced him into becoming a draper’s

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<sup>33</sup> Wyn, *In Pursuit of Twm Carnabwth*, p.163.

<sup>34</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, p.379.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.380.

<sup>36</sup> Williams, *Caradoc Evans* p.13.

apprenticeship in Carmarthen, after which he went to London.<sup>37</sup> He hated the work because by then, he had aspirations to become a writer, something which he pursued after long hours in the shop whilst living in cramped conditions. The period is evoked in *Nothing to Pay*, which Harris describes as Caradoc Evans's most autobiographical novel, drawing on a background of shop work in South Wales and London.<sup>38</sup>

Moelona became a teacher, and many of her stories feature children intent on reading the classics thus encouraging her readers to find ways of moving beyond the confines of their agricultural existence. Often the emphasis was on the efforts of the parents to encourage their children to read more and take advantage of their opportunities. Some of her books include a series of questions and a list of vocabulary with the English translation of the words. In *Ffynnonloyw* one of the boys is avidly reading Charles Dickens:

Yng nghadair ei dad o dan y lamp eisteddai Lewis yn darllen Nicholas Nickleby heb air i'w ddweud wrth neb.<sup>39</sup>

In his father's chair under the lamp Lewis sat reading Nicholas Nickleby without a word to say to anyone.

In *Breuddwydion Mwynnwy*, Moelona describes how a large extended family decide to move to Australia where they have relatives, to provide better prospects for their children as they could not afford to pay for any further education for them.

Yr oedd yn Awstralia well cyfle i ddyfod ymlaen yn y byd nag oedd yng Nghymru.....Yr oeddyno alw am ffarmwyr, crefftwyr o bob math, masnachwyr, swyddwyr, athrawon a phregethwyr. Enillai hyd yn oed gweithwyr cyffredin o leiaf gymaint deirgwaith ag a wnaent yng Nghymru.<sup>40</sup>

In Australia there was a better opportunity to get ahead in the world than in Wales.....There was a demand for farmers, craftsmen of all kinds, traders, clerks, teachers and preachers. Even ordinary workers earned at least three times as much as they did in Wales.

<sup>37</sup> Oliver Sandys, *Caradoc Evans* (London: Hurst & Blackett Ltd., 1946) p.70. This was the *nom de plume* of Marguerite Barcynska, Evan's second wife.

<sup>38</sup> Caradoc Evans, C., *Nothing to Pay* (London: Sphere Books Ltd., 1990) p.222.

<sup>39</sup> Moelona, *Ffynnonloyw*, p.20.

<sup>40</sup> Moelona, *Breuddwydion Myfanwy* (London: Foyles Welsh Depot, 1928) p.19.

This story is written in the *Robinsonade* tradition in reference to Daniel Defoe's '*Robinson Crusoe*'. Ian Kinane suggest that, alongside the adventure story of shipwreck, survival, resourcefulness and eventual deliverance from danger, the form itself remains didactic in intent, and that it holds at its centre a certain kind of instructive merit that has hitherto been disregarded.<sup>41</sup> The two families are separated on the voyage by a shipwreck but fortuitously three of the children are washed up on a desert island with a French lady, Madame D'Erville from Bordeaux, and an English teacher, Mr. Albert Luxton, who continue their education. They also encounter, a young island girl, Mili, who, albeit from a somewhat colonial standpoint, introduces the party to different cultural scenarios. Within the story, Moelona manages to combine geography, botany, language and a broadening of perspectives for her young readers. The castaways are eventually rescued and find that their parents have already managed to arrive in Australia. A chance meeting in the park with the previous owner of Socrates, the ship-wrecked dog found on the island, re-unites the families with the fourth child who is in service to the dog's owner. After the reunion the four children are destined for a university education in Australia funded with the money from pearls that Mili had obtained for them whilst on the island. Mili goes into service with Socrates' owner, appropriate for the times in which the story was written but at odds with Moelona's subsequent stance on opportunities in education for women.

This story aptly describes Moelona's preferred form of instructive writing for young readers. She innovates within the tradition, for example through the predictive nature of the dreams that Myfanwy has which permeate the book, the emphasis on the benefits of multilingualism, and an outward looking stance on the wider world beyond Wales. Nonetheless, the female characters conform to the accepted roles of homemakers and the

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<sup>41</sup> Ian Kinane, *Introduction to Didactics and the Modern Robinsonade*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019) p.4.

contemporary colonial attitudes are illustrated by the denigration of the island's seemingly cannibalistic religion and introduction of the '*sauvage*' character of Mili. Moelona is not challenging the perceived place of women in society at this time or the societal attitudes towards colonisation of other countries. However, she does seem to be looking inwards into Wales's own mystical culture through Mwynnwy's dreams and also looking forward with the inspirational hopes of the young people in her stories, and therefore those of her young readers.

This concern to expand her readers' horizons is also evident in *Cwrs y Lli*, (1927) where Moelona first introduces her young readers to the existence of Welsh-speaking Patagonia through, Iolo, a young cousin of the children in the story, who comes to stay with his uncle in their village. The two families are taken by the uncle, Mr Herbert, to Switzerland, where they learn about the cultural history, in particular of William Tell, and the languages of Europe, namely French and German., the different religions and practices, and the geography of the country. However, they go on to understand that their world can change, for in the second part of the book they become embroiled in world events, namely the realities of the First World War. In spite of this, the families are eventually re-united and normal life returns with visions for the future.

Caradoc Evans, on the other hand, had no such reverence for formal education as he felt he had not been helped to succeed through schooling. Glyn Jones suggests that his disconnection from formal education came about because he had not been helped financially by his uncle, Dr. Powell, and that his mother was unaware of the benefits of education.<sup>42</sup> Caradoc had as much contempt for the hypocrisy of schoolmasters as he did for ministers of the chapels. In 'Calvary' Lloyd Schoolin makes fun of Pedr, who is trying to lead a religious life but is castigated and assaulted by both preacher and schoolmaster, whom Pedr has seen

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<sup>42</sup> Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p.69.

leaving the hut of Bertha Davies. Between them they accuse Pedr of stealing a sovereign from Lloyd Schoolin and then tie him up and leave him without water or food for three days in a shed.

...they tied together his feet and put him in the Schoolin's henloft.....and he wept that God had taken the part of the sinners of Sion. He asked for bread and water; none gave him any.<sup>43</sup>

The story comes to an abrupt end with the intended feelings of shock that Caradoc is trying to portray in contrast to Moelona who tries to resolve her stories with an optimistic reference to the future.

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<sup>43</sup> Evans, *Capel Sion*, p.58.

## Chapter 5

### Language

During the seventeenth century Nonconformity had become established in Wales after the religious conflicts surrounding the English throne. Most influential non-Welsh speaking people had returned to the old Anglican religion so ‘Nonconformity in most parts of Wales became thoroughly Welsh in language’<sup>44</sup> Circulating schools set up by Griffith Jones provided schooling in the Welsh language and his stated purpose was ‘not to make gentlemen, but Christians and heirs to eternal life.’<sup>45</sup> In the nineteenth century, publication of the notorious ‘Blue Books’ decreed that education in Welsh schools should be delivered in English and that children in school should be discouraged from speaking Welsh. The ‘Welsh Not’, a board placed around the neck of a child heard to be speaking Welsh, was introduced in some schools. There is no evidence to suggest that the ‘Welsh Not’, was used in the Rhydlewis school at the time of Caradoc and Moelona. As we have seen, John Crowther, the schoolmaster from Yorkshire that Caradoc so despised, ‘learnt to speak Welsh fluently and was both an able schoolmaster and a man with exceptional gifts to teach music to adults’<sup>46</sup>

Moelona wrote entirely in Welsh and the abuse of the Welsh language features very strongly in her books. In her first book, *Teulu Bach Nantoer*, an impassioned speech by Mr. Puw, who has come to present prizes to the school children, reminds them that:

Gymaint yn well yw arnoch nag ar blant bach o Saeson! Dyma chwi yn cael eich dwyn i fyny mewn dwy iaith. Mae hynny bron fel pe baech yn byw bywyd dwygenedl. Mae yn eangu eich syniadau, ac y mae y ffaith eich bnod yn gorfod ysgrifennu eich meddyliau mewn iaith ddieithr yn gwneud eich sylw yn graffach, eich meddwl yn fwy miniog, ac yn ei gwneud yn rhwyddach i chwi ddysgu pethau ereill ar ol hyn.<sup>47</sup>

You are in a much better position than little English children! Here you are brought up in two languages. That is almost as if you are living the life of two nations. It broadens your ideas, and the fact that you have to write your thoughts in a foreign

<sup>44</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, p.280.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.298.

<sup>46</sup> Jenkins, *The Agricultural Community in South West Wales*, p.201.

<sup>47</sup> Moelona, *Teulu Bach Nantoer*, p.25.

language makes your attention sharper, your mind sharper, and makes it easier for you to learn other things after this.

In *Ffynnonloyw*, Moelona is critical of the way that the English language was being substituted for Welsh in polite society and within the Chapels. Throughout the book she becomes increasingly incensed by the treatment of the Welsh language until one of her characters, Nan, is driven to a declaration:

Eglurodd i'r Saeson anwybodus a thrahaus o'i blaen nad dull rhai Cymry o siarad Saesneg oedd 'Welsh', ond iaith arall; mai pobl ddwy ieithog oedd y Cymry- eu bod yn hynny o flaen y Saeson; na fedrai hi na'i brawd chwaith air o Saesneg nes iddynt ei dysgu yn yr ysgol.<sup>48</sup>

She explained to the ignorant and arrogant English in front of her that 'Welsh' was not the way some Welsh people spoke English, but another language; that the Welsh were a bilingual people - that they were that way before the English; that neither she nor her brother knew a word of English until they learned it at school.

Through the character of Nan, Moelona's response to the Blue Book was equally uncompromising:

Difodi'r Iaith oedd amcan y Llywodraeth, ond beth a wnaeth ond ei hargyfodi!<sup>49</sup>

The Government's aim was to destroy the Language, but what did it do but resurrect it!

O hyn ymlaen, yng Nghymru, welwch chi, Addysg fydd yn gosod y ffasiwn, a rwy'n credo bod ein haddysg bellach ar y llwybr iawn.<sup>50</sup>

From now on, in Wales, you see, Education will set the fashion, and I believe our education is now on the right path.

Dim ond dechrau gwawrio mae'r dydd ar Gymru. Fe â ymlaen hyd aw rei anterth. Mae Iaith a Chenedl yn bethau cysegredig.<sup>51</sup>

The day is just beginning to dawn on Wales. It will continue until its peak. Language and Nation are sacred things.

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<sup>48</sup> Moelona, *Ffynnonloyw*, p.82.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.155.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.155.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.155.

Moelona, though a champion of education, was critical of the way that education was allowed to be delivered in Wales, both in terms of the lack of acceptance of the Welsh language and the history of Wales.

Yr oedd y Llywodraeth am wneud Saesneg un unig iaith Prydain, am ddifodi'r Gymraeg, ac yr oedd y rhan fwyaf o'r Cymry yn fodlon i hynny, yn meddwl mai trwy fod yn Saeson y gellid dod ymlaen yn y byd.<sup>52</sup>

The Government wanted to make English the sole language of Britain, to destroy the Welsh language, and most of the Welsh were satisfied with that, thinking that by being English they could get ahead in the world.

As to history, she must have been drawing on her own experiences when she wrote:

Ches i ddim dysgu dim am Gymru na'i hanes pan oeddwn i'n blentyn, na byth wedyn..... Y cwbl a wyddwn i am Owen Glyndwr oedd mai rebel oedd e yn amser Henry IV. Nawr rwy'n dod i weld mai arwr mwya Cymru oedd e. History of England a ddysgid i ni, edrych ar bopeth o safbwynt England. Barbariaid oedd y Cymru a rebels oedd ei dynion dewr.<sup>53</sup>

I didn't learn anything about Wales or its history when I was a child..... All I knew about Owen Glyndwr was that he was a rebel in the time of Henry IV. Now I come to see that he was Wales' greatest hero. We were taught History of England, to look at everything from England's point of view. The Welsh was barbarians and its brave men were rebels.

In *Cwrs y Lli* Moelona emphasises pride in the Welsh language whilst the families are in Switzerland, as they use Welsh whilst speaking to each other in the presence of other guests in the hotel they are staying in.

Edrychent ar y cwmni Cymreig mewn penbleth anghyffredin, fel ped ymholent. Pa bobl yw y rhai hyn, a pha iaith a siaradant?' Teimlai'r Cymnry'n falchach nag erioed ar eu trysor.<sup>54</sup>

They looked at the Welsh company in extraordinary perplexity, as if they were asking. What kind of people are these, and what language do they speak?' The Welsh felt prouder than ever of their treasure.

She also draws attention to the broader Celtic-speaking community through the introduction of a Breton character, Maurice Michel, who states:

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<sup>52</sup> Moelona, *Ffynnonloyw* p.97.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.96.

<sup>54</sup> Moelona, *Cwrs Y Lli*, p.40.

Yr un oedd ein teidiau ni a chwithau. Hwy oedd preswylwyr Prydain o leiaf bedair canrif cyn dyfodiad y Rhufeiniaid.<sup>55</sup>

Our grandfathers were the same as yours. They were the inhabitants of Britain at least four centuries before the arrival of the Romans.

A more conflicted attitude to his native language underlies Caradoc Evans's work.

Glyn Jones recounts meeting with him in 1934, in the company of a young Dylan Thomas, at a time when:

he (Caradoc) was regarded in Wales as the enemy of everything people of my upbringing and generation had been taught to revere, a blasphemer and mocker, a derider of our religion, one who by the distortions of his paraphrasing and his wilful mistranslations had made our language and ourselves appear ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of the world outside Wales.<sup>56</sup>

Caradoc's relationship with Welsh is complicated. His style has been criticised as

'pretending' to be an idiomatic Welsh translation. T.L Williams explains this as follows:

at first C. used to experience enormous difficulties over even the most routine stories because he was in the habit of thinking and composing in Welsh and then laboriously translating into English.....he experimented with what was to become virtually a new language in the short stories later published in *My People*.<sup>57</sup>

He used an inverted style which mimics Welsh construction but only served to suggest that the speakers involved were ignorant of grammatical constructions in English. 'Say you that people are voicing lying stories'.<sup>58</sup> This did not impress either Welsh or English readers and many readers in Wales thought he was parodying the Welsh language and bringing it into disrepute.

He also used Welsh phrases to give colour to his characters which gave the impression that the words used are direct translations from Welsh, and although some of these are real Welsh idioms, they do not translate literally in the way in which Caradoc used them. As Glyn Jones writes:-

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<sup>55</sup> Moelona, *Cwrs Y Lli*, p.65.

<sup>56</sup> Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p.64.

<sup>57</sup> Williams, *Caradoc Evans*, pp.19-20.

<sup>58</sup> Evans, *My People*, p.223.

Anyone ignorant of Welsh, the argument goes, would assume that the conversations of Caradoc's monoglot Welsh characters are as rendered by him, direct translations of their words into English.<sup>59</sup>

He suggests that Caradoc saw this as:

a splendid artistic opportunity. What he did was to invent a whole language for them and he invented it with one purpose, which was to create in his stories a certain atmosphere, an atmosphere of hypocrisy, stupidity, cunning and sham religion. This grotesque speech plays a large part in bringing about that powerful impression of universal falsity and uncouthness, which is the one he almost always wishes for, and for that purpose it is admirably chosen.<sup>60</sup>

The positive responses to Caradoc's work come from other Anglo-Welsh writers in the main. Contemporary literary critic, Edwin Pugh, writing a review of *My People* in

*Bookman* in 1915:

I have never before had brought to my notice so remarkable a first book as *My People*. It reads so maturely. It is so finished and distinguished, alike in its manner and matter. I do not say that it will succeed or fail, because it seems to me that as a consummate work of art it has not failed but is an assured success already.<sup>61</sup>

There is unexpected humour in Caradoc's writings. In 'As It Is Written', in *My People*, the story revolves round the proposed marriage of Shaci and Mali's son Dan to Alice Wite who is English. This causes consternation in the community and the couple manage to collect together all the local dignitaries, in order to persuade the girl to return to England. However, as she does not speak Welsh, she cannot answer any of their queries as to whether she can perform the necessary duties of a rural wife. To this, Dan answers 'what does that matter? Is not Alice the owner of a nice shop draper?'<sup>62</sup> This immediately changes the atmosphere and Mali starts to make a great fuss of the newcomer, 'English she may be, but has not the Big Man told us to love our enemies?'<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p.73.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.74

<sup>61</sup> Edwin Pugh, *A Book of Novels in Bookman*, Vol. 49, No. 291, December, 1915, p. 97.

<https://www.enotes.com/topics/caradoc-evans/critical-essays/criticism>  
[accessed 16 July 2023]

<sup>62</sup> Evans, *My People*, p.208.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.208.

All this is in contrast to the welcome given to Dr. Abram Lewis's unexpected marriage to Amelia Goodwin, an Englishwoman, in Moelona's *Ffynnonloyw*. This was greeted with consternation, not least because they were hoping to have financial help from their son to bring up the rest of the family.

Edrychodd y tad a'r fam ar ei gilydd a'u hwynebau'n welw.<sup>64</sup>

The father and mother looked at each other and their faces were pale. However, despite their disappointment much preparation was made, and the family went to great pains to make their son and brother and his wife feel welcome.

According to John Harris in *The Devil in Eden*, in spite of the sub-title of the book, *Stories of the Peasantry of West Wales*, Caradoc would counter:

'My People' also implies 'my kinsfolk', one is reminded of Caradoc's response to those who accused him of tarring the Welsh at large in his fictional portraits. He did not intend them to stand for the Welsh; they were some of his relatives.....He considered himself a realist in as much as he faced grim fact— and predictably inflamed the Welsh.<sup>65</sup>

A further anonymous contemporary review of *Capel Sion* in 1918, having first praised *My People* for its 'absolutely God-forsaken view of human nature and an utterly unscrupulous tongue'<sup>66</sup> suggests that:

Its sketches of these Welsh people have a dreadful effectiveness because of their unrestrained cruelty. You can always get a literary effect, like any other object, by going straight for it without eyes or heart for anything else<sup>67</sup>.

D. Evans-Emmott writes:

All Caradoc's critics since 1915, both hostile and friendly, have lamented the fact that he did not use his unquestioned genius for more positive ends. But [...] Caradoc continued to stick rigidly to his vision of a static, nineteenth century Welsh society<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Moelona, *Ffynnonloyw*, p.32.

<sup>65</sup> Harris, *The Devil in Eden*, p.84.

<sup>66</sup> Review of *Capel Sion*, in *The Nation*, Vol. 107, December 21, 1918, p.779.

<https://www.enotes.com/topics/caradoc-evans/critical-essays/criticism>  
[accessed 16 July 2023]

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.779.

<sup>68</sup> Evans-Emmott, <https://www.enotes.com/topics/caradoc-evans/critical-essays/criticism>  
[accessed 16 July 2023]

And Glyn Jones, in defence of Caradoc's work, makes the point that:

Caradoc's work is not documentary [...] Much of the adverse criticism of Caradoc has come about because Wales is a small nation fighting desperately for her life.<sup>69</sup>

The brutal sparse style in which Caradoc wrote is in tune with the starkness of his stories and the language used has no room for emotion which concords with the subject matter. This literary device has created the impression that the writer does not care about his subjects but it is actually being used to empathise the constrained and restricted lives that his characters are living.

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<sup>69</sup> Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p.78.

## Chapter 6

### Religion

The Calvinistic Methodist Revival of the eighteenth century, led by influential preachers such as Howel Harris and Daniel Rowland, continued to have an influence upon Welsh life well into the twentieth century. Numerous chapels had been built and communities adhered to either Methodist or Nonconformist ideals. Central to both aspects of religion was the power of the elders over their communities and the influence that could be exerted within the community by the fear of the penalties that could be incurred in the life hereafter for misdemeanours.<sup>70</sup>

Rhydlewys has two chapels, both built in the mid eighteenth century. Hawen Capel yr Annibynwyr, a Congregationalist Non-Conformist chapel, was originally built in 1747 and retains the original features of its 1838 renovation. It is identified in Caradoc Evan's writings as Capel Sion and is also the burial place of Moelona. The other smaller chapel is Twr-Gwyn, a Calvinistic Methodist chapel, built in 1750 and renovated in 1846. It is closer to the family home of Caradoc and was possibly an influence upon him.

Moelona displays both a positive and negative attitude to religion within her works. In *Breuddwydion Myfanwy*, the castaways were diligent in maintaining their religious connections. After their first Sunday service:

Teimlent bob un yn hapusach ar ôl y cyfarfod bach hwnnw. Rywfodd, teimlent nad oeddynt yn unig ar yr ynys. Yr oeddynt yng ngolwg Rhywun ac o dan ofal Rhywun oedd â phob gallu yn Ei law<sup>71</sup>.

They all felt happier after that small meeting. Somehow, they felt like they weren't alone on the island. They were in the eyes of Someone and in the care of Someone who had great ability in His hand.

This is in contrast with Mili's perceived heathen, idolatrous background.

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<sup>70</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, pp.299-304.

<sup>71</sup> Moelona, *Breuddwydion Myfanwy*, p.74.

Trawodd troed Gareth yn erbyn rhywbeth rhyfedd iawn a hanner ynguddiai yn y prysgwydd. Bôn pren ydoedd wedi ei dyllu o'r tu mewn, ac wyneb dyn wedi ei gerfio arno o'r tu allan. Yr oedd tua thair troedfedd o hyd, ac edrychai yn rhywbeth ofnadwy iawn.<sup>72</sup>

Gareth's foot struck against something very strange and was half hidden in the scrub. It was a wooden trunk pierced from the inside, with a man's face carved on the outside. It was about three feet long, and it looked very scary.

The colonial perceptions of the time of indigenous religions is illustrated by Mr. Luxton's response to this image.

Darllenasai lawer gwaith am anwariaid yn dyfod o ynysoedd eraill i ryw ynys neilltuol lle'r oedd teml. Deuent â'u carcharorion gyda hwy. Yna byddai lluo o seremoniau yn y deml, curo'r drymiau hyll, canu a dawnsio, ac yna, lladd y carcharorion, eu rhostio, a gwledda arnynt.<sup>73</sup>

He had read many times about savages coming from other islands to a certain island where there was a temple. They brought their prisoners with them. Then there would be a multitude of ceremonies in the temple, beating the ugly drums, singing and dancing, and then killing the prisoners, roasting them, and feasting on them.

However, Moelona was not afraid to be critical of some aspects of religious practices. She illustrates hypocrisy in *Ffynnonloyw*, as the heroine Nan Lewis becomes engaged to the very popular Rev. Harri Herbert, the young engaging pastor of the local chapel Siol. Theirs was an on-going but secret romance of about two years, which came to an end when the Rev. Herbert read in the paper that a Miss Nan Lewis had been at a Ferched y Fot, Votes for Women, rally and had actually given a speech.

.....a dyna hi wedi ymuno â'r haid o ferched gwyllt a ffôl a oedd yn destun chwerthin a chas pob dyn call, ac i wneud ffwl pellach ohoni ei hun dyna hi'n siarad o'u llwyfan<sup>74</sup>.

.....and there she had joined the flock of wild and foolish women who were the object of laughter and hatred of every sensible man, and to make a further fool of herself there she was speaking from their platform.

<sup>72</sup> Moelona, *Breuddwydion Myfanwy* pp.82-83.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>74</sup> Moelona, *Ffynnonloyw*, p.123.

This elicited a furious response and led to an end of their affair.

Dangosodd yn eglur i Nan os na ddywedodd hynny mewn geiriau ei bod hi i ddal pob meddwl a phob gair a weithred o'i heiddo yng ngoleuni llachar eu heffaith a rei gysur, ei ddylanwad, a'i urddas ef-Harri Herbert. Ei eiddo ef oedd ei henaid i fod.<sup>75</sup>

He clearly showed Nan if she didn't say it in words that she was to hold every thought and every word and deed of hers in the bright light of their effect and comfort, his influence, and his dignity-Harri Herbert. Her soul was supposed to be his.

On hearing this, Nan broke off the engagement and thanked him politely but when he asked why, she replied 'Am ddangos eich tymer mewn pryd'<sup>76</sup>. 'For showing your temper in time' and showed him the door.

Moelona was also critical of the lack of use of the Welsh language within religious communities and expressed regret as to the schisms that had arisen therein. Although all Chapel elders were Welsh speaking, the services were not conducted in Welsh.

Nan, oer a sych a ffurfiol oedd..... a thybiai eu bod wrth lafurus ganu'r emyn Saesneg yn cofio emynau Cymraeg y gallent eu canu gyda gorfoledd, heb edrych ar lyfr. Teimlodd ei chalon yn drist.<sup>77</sup>

For Nan, the service was cold and dry and formal.....and she thought that when they laboriously sang the English hymn they remembered Welsh hymns that they could sing with joy, without looking at a book. Her heart felt sad.

John Davies notes that by the mid eighteenth century a change was taking place and there was a loss of:

The old customs of the Welsh—their merriment, their tippling and their neglect of the Lord's Day—and the revivalists have frequently been blamed for annihilating the traditional culture of Wales.<sup>78</sup>

Caradoc's perceptions of the hypocrisy that he found prevalent in the Nonconformist religions of the period permeate all of his early work. Most of his stories have references to the 'Big Man' and 'the Little Big Man', with many of them including mention of the local

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<sup>75</sup> Moelona, *Ffynnonloyw*, p.123.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p.77.

<sup>78</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, p.301.

preacher and the elders of the chapel. The elders receive bribes, castigate the weak, turn a blind eye to their own and others immorality and persecute women mercilessly. It is reasonable to believe that not all chapel ministers were so corrupt, but in Caradoc's world, the perfidiousness is total and there is no redemption in relation to their behaviour. The blind acceptance of the power of religion is taken to extremes in 'A Just Man in Sodom' in *My People* when religious fervour causes Pedr to steal Sadrach Danyrefail's calf and sacrifice it on a home-made altar in the belief that he would be able to restore its life.

In the name of the little white Jesus, return you to life, little bull-calf' he said. 'Jesus bach, do you bring this about for the sake of your servant's good name.'<sup>79</sup>

In 'Lamentations' (*My People*) the profligate Evan Rhiw avoids censor for his misdemeanours by the preacher, the 'Respected Davydd Bern-Davydd', through the gift of a pig even though the local community berate Evan for bringing misfortune upon them.

Through Bern-Davydd, the Big Man decrees that:

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 generous'.<sup>80</sup>

Many of Caradoc's critics have accused him of misogyny and his stark depictions of brutality towards women can be read as such. Nonetheless, many of his stories describe the misogyny and hypocrisy with which those in power treated women. In 'A Mighty Man in Sion,' (*Capel Sion*) Lias Carpenter inveigles his way into the confidence of Ellen Pugh, a strong woman and 'proud of her chastity.'<sup>81</sup> He resorts to trickery by letting her cows into his field so that she has to engage with him and he wins her trust because of his perceived patience. After he mends the bar on her door, which he had previously broken, she declares: 'Neighbour very kind is Lias Carpenter. And there's harmless he is. Trust him I can with

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<sup>79</sup> Evans, *My People*, p.157.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.258.

<sup>81</sup> Evans, *Capel Sion*, p.63.

me.’<sup>82</sup> She does not heed her neighbours’ warnings: ‘Trust not your male before you win him’<sup>83</sup> and, after she becomes pregnant, although he had suggested to her that he would marry her:

He shammed innocence before the Respected Bern-Dafydd, to whom he sacrificed a hen, and whose counsel he craved, lamenting how Ellen proclaimed this and that to his discredit.<sup>84</sup>

Ellen is summoned to the counsel in the Chapel and is ridiculed by the members for suggesting that someone as religious as Lias Carpenter could be the father of the child. Lias himself says that the father of the child must be the Devil because he himself put a bar on her door, and:

Am I not full of the White Jesus bach? A carpenter was the Big Jesus....religious is the male that makes coffins.<sup>85</sup>

In her fury, Ellen tells her son to bury her in the field when she dies which he duly did. On hearing this, Lias buys the field and builds a pulpit. He wishes also to be buried in the field, so that on Judgement Day, he can quickly arise and go into the pulpit to denounce Ellen before he is judged by the Big Man.

In ‘The Redeemer’, (*My People*) the importance of the religious figures in the community and disregard for women collide. Bryn-Davydd, the ruler of Capel Sion finds out that his son Adam has been having a liaison with Lissi, a servant girl from the Workhouse in Castellybryn (Newcastle Emlyn). When she becomes pregnant, rather than admit that it is the minister’s son who is responsible, Adam’s older brother Lamech and his wife Puah try to persuade Lissi to say that Joshua Llanwen, who has been reporting on the incident to the Bryn-Davydd family, is the father of her unborn child. When Lissi refuses to implicate Joshua, and continues to tell the truth of the matter, Puah takes matters into her own hands,

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<sup>82</sup> Evans, *Capel Sion*, p.64.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

and, when pretending to be a ghost, frightens the girl into having a miscarriage and destroys the girl's mental state.<sup>86</sup>

John Davies notes that 'By the 1920's [...] finding fault with the religion of the Welsh of previous generations was one of the favourite diversions of the Welsh-speaking intellectuals of the decade'<sup>87</sup> and at this time Caradoc was part of the Anglo-Welsh intelligentsia based in London. Unfortunately for Caradoc's reputation, his exposure of hypocrisy within the Chapels in Wales resulted in retribution. The unfavourable depiction of the West Walian agricultural community brought down condemnation as critics thought that he was treating the land of his birth with disrespect, just as they thought his idiosyncratic use of the Welsh language was disrespectful. Brutal treatment of the women depicted in his stories has also led to accusations of misogyny and when read at face value, this seems a valid point. By constant repetition the overall effect is one of an acceptable degradation of women in his writings. However, this outrageous treatment is unrelenting and so to me it suggests that he is trying to make a point using shock tactics for the reader, just as he has tried to provoke his readers by his use of language and the portrayal of abuse within religious attitudes. So many of his stories leave the reader hanging at the end without a definitive conclusion and the same could be said for his attitudes to both religion and women. He does not express an opinion but leaves the discussion unresolved for the reader to decide. This construction within his stories still divides the readers of Caradoc Evans at all levels so the contention in which he is held continues to this day.

Caradoc was not oblivious to criticism of his works and style of writing. Mary Jones quotes a letter written by him to *The Western Mail*, 23rd January in 1917.

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<sup>86</sup> Evans, *My People*, pp.179-189.

<sup>87</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, p.551.

I write because I believe that the cesspools of Wales should be stirred up, because I want to see my people freed from religious tyranny, because I love my country so much that I would exhibit her sores that they may be healed.<sup>88</sup>

Mary Jones sees Caradoc's scurrilous writings as no different to the unrealistic idyllic pastoral charms depicted by other writers and that the satire involved in Caradoc's work had been completely overlooked:

the fact that they paint a distorted picture of Welsh life was enough for them to be condemned out of hand; hardly anyone in all those letters and articles mentions satire, the entire controversy raging over the literal truth of the stories.<sup>89</sup>

She suggests a similarity of purpose behind both pastoral and realistic writings:

Though the focus of pastoral, in exaggerating the virtue of unsophisticated life, is on remedy, while the focus of satire, in exaggerating the vice of sophisticated life, is on attack, both tend to the one moral aim of reforming a corrupt society<sup>90</sup>.

The brutality of Caradoc's stark literary style leads to the charge of misogyny because he leaves no space for comment on the treatment of women. The immediate effect of this implies a passive acceptance of this attitude, something that his legacy is still dealing with. T. L. Williams suggests that Caradoc's acerbic writings afforded him some psychological relief from the tribulations of his youth, and voices him thus:

I made a literary sensation that surprised me. I was the shocking Welshman, the traitor to his country, so I had to keep it up by saying shocking things at every given opportunity—at lectures and in public.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Mary Jones, *The Satire of Caradoc Evans*, in *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, Vol. 72, 1982, pp. 58–65. <https://www.enotes.com/topics/caradoc-evans/critical-essays/criticism> [accessed 16 July 2023]

<https://www.enotes.com/topics/caradoc-evans/critical-essays/criticism> [accessed 16 July 2023]

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., <https://www.enotes.com/topics/caradoc-evans/critical-essays/criticism> [accessed 16 July 2023]

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., <https://www.enotes.com/topics/caradoc-evans/critical-essays/criticism> [accessed 16 July 2023]

<sup>91</sup> T.L Williams, *Caradoc Evans in Taffy at Home: The Humour and Pathos of Welsh Village Life* ed. T. L. Williams, (University of Wales Press, 1970), pp. 29–99.

Writing in *The Anglo-Welsh Review* of 1985, John Davies and John Harris express their admiration for 'A Father in Sion' (*My People*) and the ways in which it throws light on the tightly bound social conventions of a closed society:

'A Father in Sion' ranks with the highest achievements of Anglo-Welsh literature. Among other things, it is an artistically powerful and subtle indictment of the suppression and manipulation of individual conscience and feeling<sup>92</sup>.

More recently, critics have noted that there is no mention of war in his stories: and suggested that the general ugliness, lack of humanity and horror of the times must surely have some reflection in how his characters behave to each other in his writings. However, he was expressing his condemnation of war and his socialist leanings during this time as he was editing the weekly journal *Ideas* from 1915-1917, during which time *My People* and *Capel Sion* were published. He reserved his commentary on the War to this journal, attacking the industrialists and farmers who were profiteering at the expense of the ordinary workers and labourers, who were being exploited through low wages and bad working conditions with women receiving even less than men.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> John Davies and John Harris, *Caradoc Evans and the Forcers of Conscience: A Reading of 'A Father in Sion,'* in *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, Vol. 81, 1985, pp. 79–89.

<https://www.enotes.com/topics/caradoc-evans/critical-essays/criticism>  
[accessed 16 July 2023]

<sup>93</sup> Harris, *The Devil in Eden*, p.56.

## Chapter 7

### Women

#### 7.1 Moelona's Position on Women

Changes in society were witnessed by Moelona in her writings and she was not afraid to be critical of social and religious misogynistic practices in the society of the time. We have already noted how she features the Suffragette movement in *Ffynnonloyw*, when Nan's rejection of her engagement to the Rev. Harri Herbert is directly linked to the minister's condemnation of her Votes for Women stance. For Gramich, 'Nan is a fictionalized version of the author herself'<sup>94</sup> as the occasion in which the incident took place was the 1909 National Eisteddfod held in the Royal Albert Hall in London, when Moelona was being inducted into the Gorsedd. The event was opened by the then Prime Minister Henry Asquith who, although ostensibly in favour of enfranchisement for women, had failed to see the Bill pass through the Westminster Parliament and was heckled by the audience. However, apart from her radical stance in *Ffynnonloyw*, in her earlier works Moelona is true to the confines of her time as regards the position of women in early twentieth century Wales. Therefore, in *Teulu Bach Nantoer* it is the boys of the family who go out into the world as Ieuan becomes an MP, and Alun, a sea captain, but the elder daughter, Mair stays home with her mother and became a schoolmistress.

Moelona came from a large family and this is reflected in *Ffynnonloyw*, as much is made of the sisterly relationships between the four sisters in the story, Marged (*Maggie*), Lisa Ann (*Nan*), Miriam (*Mimi*) and Ester Elen (*Hettie*). Their mother, Mali Lewis, was the epitome of traditional Welsh family life:

Mam ydoedd yng nghyntaf ac yn olaf, ac i blant Ffynnonloyw nid oedd neb fel hi yn y byd.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Katie Gramich, *Twentieth-Century Women's Writing in Wales. Land, Gender, Belonging*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008) p.60.

<sup>95</sup> Moelona, *Ffynnonloyw*, p.26.

She was a mother first and last, and for the children of Ffynnonloyw there was no one like her in the world.

The eldest daughter, Margred, becomes the cautionary tale of the book as she forms a relationship with the veterinary surgeon Ted Lloyd whilst being employed as a lady's maid in Caerafon. She becomes pregnant and returns home to the family and it was subsequently discovered that Ted Lloyd had married someone else. This has implications later in the story when her son falls in love with his undiscovered half-sister which underlines the effects that illegitimacy could have on a family.<sup>96</sup>

Moelona's stance on rights for women was influenced by the life of Cranogwen, the nineteenth century author, poet and by repute, a master mariner, from the nearby village of Llangranog. In *Storiau o Hanes Cymru* she writes:

Fel hyn dysgodd Cranogwen ferched i feddwl drostynt eu hunain, i bwyso arnynt eu hunain, ac i gydweithio â'i gilydd. Dysgodd hefyd y gall merched ddewis eu cwrs mewn bywyd yr un fath â bechgyn. Dangosodd hyn yn ei bywyd ei hun.<sup>97</sup>

Cranogwen taught women to think for themselves, to lean on themselves, and to work together with each other. She also taught that girls can choose their course in life the same as boys.

In her biography of Cranogwen, Prof. Jane Aaron states:

Tystiodd Moelona iddi draethu gyda'r fath awdurdod o bulpudau a llwyfannau ledled Cymru trwy ail hanner y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg nes, o'r diwedd, 'anghofiodd y bobl gyffredin synnu fod gwraig yn medru llefaru felly'<sup>98</sup>.

Moelona testified that she spoke with such authority from pulpits and platforms throughout Wales through the second half of the nineteenth century until, finally, 'the common people forgot to be surprised that a woman could speak like that.'

In *Beryl*, the sixteen-year-old heroine is thrust into responsibility by the death of both her parents. She refuses to allow the youngest children, three-year-old twins, to be separated or adopted, and gives up her prospects of a career to dedicate herself to making the

<sup>96</sup> Moelona, *Ffynnonloyw*, p.75.

<sup>97</sup> Moelona, *Storiau o Hanes* (Caerdydd a Wrecsam: The Educational Publishing Co., 1930) p.134.

<sup>98</sup> Jane Aaron, *Cranogwen*, (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru/University of Wales Press, 2023) p.10.

best of the situation for all four of her siblings. Her sister, Nest, is offered the chance to become a renowned singer and she is taken to London by the well-to-do family living in *Plas Gwynnant*, which could be a veiled reference to Plas Gwernant, the landowning estate just outside Rhydlewis. The older boy of the family, Eric, who had wanted to be a doctor, has to take employment in a draper's shop to earn money for the family and is falsely accused, so it transpires later, of stealing from the till. This occasions the family's move to Cambridge where he obtains another job, firstly in Cambridge and then later in Buenos Aires, but the only accommodation the family can afford is a small flat, in contrast to their comfortable house, Maesycloed, in Wales. However, Beryl has been most hurt by the fact that, although it is not proven that Eric is a thief, she has heard her neighbours talking as if they believed this to be the case.

Ond pan glywodd un ohonynt yn sibrawd wrth un arall, heb wybod ei bod hi'n clywed.  
'Pwy fuasai'n meddwl hyn'na am Eric?' teimlai mai hyfryd iawn a fyddai bod yn  
ddigon pell o'r ardal a pheidio â gweld neb o'r ardalwyr byth mwy.<sup>99</sup>

But when she heard one of them whispering to another, not knowing that she was hearing. 'Who would have thought this about Eric?' she felt it would be wonderful to be far enough away from the area and not see any of the locals ever again.

Although she had missed Wales dreadfully, when Eric's innocence has been established, she realises that she no longer wants to return to Wales for she has made a good life in Cambridge and secured a better education for her young siblings. The overriding sense is that the attitudes of her supposed friends in Wales have driven her away and it appears that Moelona was not blind to the faults to be found in a small insular rural population. However, she approached these issues in a much more subtle way than Caradoc. In her writings, she is critical, but does not engender the anger that are the hallmark of Caradoc's more extreme portrayals, but the intent is still there. The poem that Nan delivers in *Ffynnonloyw* was in fact composed by Moelona herself for the National Eisteddfod, and Gramich reads it as a direct

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<sup>99</sup> Moelona, *Beryl*, (Wrecsam: Hughes & Fab, 1931) pp.119-120.

political statement about the treatment of women. The poem, '*Y Delyn ar yr Helyg*', *The Harp on the Willow*, decries the position of the women of the time who have no standing in society, their only purpose being to serve their husbands. Gramich translates this appeal for recognition as:

When will woman gain her rights?  
When will we win the Vote?<sup>100</sup>

She suggests that references to the harp infer that: 'The time for lyricism and art for its own sake will come, but only when the political battle is won'.<sup>101</sup> According to Gramich, Moelona is suggesting that 'it is possible to be both proudly Welsh and proudly a woman'.<sup>102</sup>

Moelona's stories are deeply familial, emphasising the close knit structure of the family and the pain and devastation when misfortune befalls them. In her first book, *Teulu Bach Nantoer*, the little family, already deprived by the death of the father, struggle on in the face of the supposed loss of their youngest child. Order is finally restored but in the meantime the family has triumphed over the adversity. The setting of *Breuddwydion Myfanwy* would appear to be heading for a complete loss of family but the circumstances on the desert island produce a quasi-family feeling whereby substitute parents direct and care for the children until the happy ending of restoration to their real families. The two families who travel together in *Cwrs y Lli* have a delightful and educational time until the outside world in the shape of the First World War comes to challenge their stability, but overall they prevail. In *Beryl*, the heroine gives up her academic future at a young age when she refuses to split up the family after the death of her parents, and she dedicates herself to bringing up and supporting her siblings. The various trials and tribulations of normal family life of the time are displayed in *Ffynnonloyw*, as we are taken on a journey through death, betrayal,

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<sup>100</sup> Gramich, *Twentieth-Century Women's Writing in Wales. Land, Gender, Belonging*, p.62.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p.62.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p.62.

redemption, resolution and acceptance of the hopes and disappointments that are universal within family life. For Moelona, the love of the family is the key to stability and strength in the face of adversity.

## 7.2 Caradoc Evans's Position on Women

In contrast, Caradoc's writings lack any sense of family stability. The anger present in his stories, the lack of any tenderness within the family are in direct contrast to Moelona's approach, and it makes one wonder just how much resentment Caradoc carried with him owing to the treatment he received from the rest of his extended family in his younger life.

Although based in London, and working as a journalist, Caradoc made no mention in his stories of how Wales was changing. His stories, and the way they depict the lives of women, were seemingly rooted in a bygone age of repression and servitude to both men and religion. The tremendous upheavals caused by the First World War are not mentioned, the removal of men from the land through conscription and the rise of the importance of women's work to replace these male workers go unreported.

One of the most persistent accusations against Caradoc Evans as a writer is a revulsion against his depiction of cruelty against women. T.L. Williams writes of Caradoc:

'...the early short stories (in) which he obsessively examines [...]the animal status of his peasant women, women who are viciously ill-treated by lazy husbands or who work their bodies away in the service of a predatory Capel Sion]...(but) Caradoc scourges these oppressed women just as much as their oppressors because [...]they help to maintain the power of Sion by their ready acquiescence in the chapel ethos, by their refusal to rebel, as Caradoc has done in his stories, against the system that tyrannises them.<sup>103</sup>

Examples are legion and I will only focus on a few here. Caradoc Evans' *'My People'* opens with the damning story, 'A Father in Sion' about the male attitude to women as he saw it at the time. Achsah has borne her husband Sadrach eight children but he has turned against

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<sup>103</sup> Williams, *Caradoc Evans*, p.13.

her and imprisoned her in the stable loft. From there he leads her out on a cow's halter at night to take the air. When he goes to Aberystwyth and brings back Martha, who is supposed to be a servant, Rachel, his daughter, objects knowing that 'Martha was more than a servant'<sup>104</sup> as she is fulfilling many of the social roles in the community which would be carried out by a wife. When Rachel dies out in the fields, Sadrach treats her with no respect, first not coming to her aid, and then loading her into a manure cart showing no emotion apart from singing a hymn. Five of their other children die unbeknown to Achsah, who eventually discovers the truth whilst observing the marriage procession of her youngest child, Sadrach the Small, betrothed to Sara Ann. Rumour had it that this child was born prematurely because Achsah was chased by a bull although, as can be seen in other stories, any dubious circumstances around a birth had long lasting repercussions in the community:

Achsa remembered the birth of each (child) .....and she had been a good wife. Never once did she deny Sadrach his rights. So long as she lasted she was a woman to him

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Portrayed as acquiescent and uneducated she is driven to madness by mistreatment and neglect and confronts the couple on their return to the family home, but we never discover the final result of this. Caradoc has made his point and leaves us wondering.

There is resonance with Caradoc's upbringing in 'The Woman Who Sowed Iniquity' in *My People*. Betti wants to make the most of herself, much to her brother Joshua's annoyance, and she forms a marriage with Gwyllim in spite of his bad reputation. Her attempts to insure herself against disaster are met by Gwyllim as a sign that she has been unfaithful, and he spends all the money she has saved on drink. Subsequently, Gwyllim dies as a result of a drunken accident but rather than Betti receiving help from her brother Joshua, her brother manages to dispossess her of her meagre holding. Her old spirit returns and she

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<sup>104</sup> Evans, *My People*, p.18.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p.19.

barricades herself in her house. But in a chilling twist, after a night of prayer, Joshua instructs Hugh the Stonemason to go down to the house and start removing the slates from the roof.

However:

Do you see, Hugh bach, that not one slate falls on the head of our sister Betti. But if one does, well-well, then, has not the great Male promised to be on the side of His religious children.<sup>106</sup>

Often in Caradoc's stories religion seems to be against women and appeals by the men in the stories to the 'Big Man' almost always result in a judgement that puts women in the wrong.

In 'Lamentations' in *My People*, it is Hannah, the wife of Evan Rhiw, who receives harshness from him after he realises that in a drunken stupor he has 'sinned against his daughter Matilda'. To divert attention from his behaviour, he berates his wife 'Filthier you are than a cow'. and blames her for his poverty.<sup>107</sup> He turns to the chapel elders who exonerate him and continue to support him even when he puts his daughter in the local lunatic asylum. Once again, women have taken the blame for the conduct of their menfolk, the sense being that they are just tolerated to work for and give pleasure to men and are a useful scapegoat when misfortunes arise.

Within this framework, accusations of misogyny in Caradoc's stories seem well justified. Critics think that he should have condemned the harsh treatment of women more explicitly but the stories are unrelenting in their exposure of misogyny. Time and again women are left pregnant having been promised marriage, castigated for any failings of financial fortune, which are usually caused by circumstances at best or by the behaviour of men at worst, and generally regarded as not worthy of a presence in the religious activities of the community. The relationship between women and religion suggests that the misogyny is coming directly from the religious figures in the community and Caradoc frequently draws

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<sup>106</sup> Evans, *My People*, p.140.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p.251.

attention to this. Perhaps it was too uncomfortable for the great and the good to acknowledge these inferences and that this has led to the bitter criticism of Caradoc's work. His stories of rural life do not concord with the post-Victorian romantic ideal of country living and, whereas it was easy to feel moved by the horrors of industrial life as portrayed by Charles Dickens, Caradoc was demonstrating that there was also no escape from reality into a rural idyll. It is as though he has deliberately edited out all vestiges of humanity from his stories for the maximum shocking effect. Any protest by a woman as to her treatment is dealt with harshly. In 'Redemption' (*Capel Sion*), Hannah Harelip comes from the Workhouse in Castellybryn (Newcastle Emlyn) to be a servant to Evan Rhos but has ideas seemingly above her station.

She was aspiring and covetous, and because Evan would not let her be mistress over all that was his, she oppressed him with the burden of her sin.<sup>108</sup>

With the news that Evan was planning to marry Jane Pant, she managed to seduce Evan and so became pregnant but this only caused him to plan her removal from his life. He feigned a change of heart and said that he would marry her after all but devised a scheme whereby she would fall from the hayrick ladder and have a miscarriage. When this did not work, he induced her to be shot whilst cleaning his gun. This too failed so he had a deep well dug out and then disguised it with shrubbery, also erecting two fences creating a corridor that would only lead to the pit. He positioned himself the other side of the well: 'Come you here now, wench fach.'<sup>109</sup> The story ends here.

Caradoc often leaves his stories with an inconclusive ending, leaving it to the imagination of the reader as to what was to happen next. In 'An Offender in Sion' (*Capel Sion*), a family row about possessions leaves Rachel, the sister-in-law of Ianto, being covered in straw in the stockyard, imminently facing being maimed by him and his servants:

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<sup>108</sup> Evans, *Capel Sion*, p.23.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p.27.

Untidy is the yard. Clear the old straw we will into the stable. Get your pitchforks.  
Then they three drove their pitchforks into the straw.<sup>110</sup>

That too, is the end of the story. Many of Caradoc's stories are repetitive, with the same themes of the degradation of women, the resort to religion to enable men to do as they wish and to justify their actions, and the grinding resentment of any fortune accruing to others. Man's inhumanity to man, and in particular to women, is played out repeatedly which is either deliberate for emphasis or because Caradoc, writing now from outside the community, is fixated by his experiences.

An article by D. Evans-Emmott, *The Humour and Pathos of Welsh Village Life*, suggests that:

One reason, in Caradoc's view, why the women suffer is that they are not men, or, to put it in terms relevant to Capel Sion, they are not "photographs" of the Big Man. From birth, therefore, they are automatically degraded because of their unlikeness to the divine image.<sup>111</sup>

The treatment of women in Caradoc's stories is shocking in itself but there is also a general air of unpleasantness and cruelty that permeates many of his works. There is never any tenderness in the treatment of others and even within families, treachery and double dealings are to be endured. In fact, it is perhaps the cruelty within families that is the most shocking of the themes that Caradoc explores. Within 'Sons of Their Father' (*Capel Sion*) is the suggestion that land and possessions are more important than any familial love, but then, this may be a reflection of the hard lives lived at the time by the rural poor. The sons and daughter of Essec, who is dying, squabble over who will inherit the farm with not a hint of warmth for their dying and ultimately dead father.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Evans, *Capel Sion* p.111.

<sup>111</sup> D. Evans-Emmott, *The Humour and Pathos of Welsh Village Life*  
<https://www.enotes.com/topics/caradoc-evans/critical-essays/criticism> [accessed 16 July 2023]

<sup>112</sup> Evans, *Capel Sion*, pp.60-62.

Because of his stance, Caradoc has been portrayed as a realist but Glyn Jones takes issue with this:

The world he shows us is not lifelike, but it is very much alive [...] and this organic vitality of a work of art itself is surely what we should judge the work by, and not its resemblance to what we conceive to be the 'exact likeness to the reality'.<sup>113</sup>

He goes on to suggest that whereas the confidence of the English can cope with satirical writings, 'Wales, her language, her national identity threatened with extinction, feels herself unable to afford such tolerance'<sup>114</sup> and because of this, Caradoc 'was seen as a traitor, joining in the attack upon what was held dear'<sup>115</sup>. In other words, Caradoc was writing for artistic effect, bordering on satire, rather than as a sociological account of incidences in the community. He does not give a balanced account of happenings, as he strips out the humanity of any given situation to drive home his point of the shortcomings within the rural societies. Without this, his stories might not have had the same effect. Dylan Thomas wrote about his observations of a local community in *Under Milkwood* but, by introducing comical characters, he is feted as an author and the underlying sarcasm in his portrayal of the people in his work is tempered by humour. Caradoc does not afford his characters this luxury but keeps to their bleak portrayal in line with the harsh realities of the lives that they are leading.

Family ties and life is very important in the close knit societies of Wales both at the time of the writings by these two authors and beyond. In the Victorian era the fact that family life was closely bound up with chapel life, where kinships were on regular public display, only adds to the shock produced by many of Caradoc's writings. But if we look beneath the surface, we see that Caradoc is highlighting the pressures brought about by strict conformity to the religion of the time which is at the heart of the local community. Therefore, such criticism could be seen as an attack on the society as a whole. The fact that Caradoc was

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<sup>113</sup> Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p.78.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.78.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p.78.

writing from the outside of that society and looking back only served to infuriate the readers more. Of course, Caradoc was also writing for effect as he was making his way in London as a writer and it is so much easier to disassociate from the complexities of an environment when no longer living in it. One elderly gentleman, who had moved away from this village of his childhood, remarked to me that the only problem he had with Caradoc Evans's writing was that Caradoc had moved away. He made no mention of the scurrilous content of the stories.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

Within the village of Rhydlewys there are still living relatives of both Caradoc Evans and Moelona and, whilst Moelona's relatives may be happy to be associated with her, it appears that Caradoc's are still sensitive about their connections to the author. One of the first people I spoke to warned me not to be too quick to adversely judge Caradoc's writings and I have had a very positive viewpoint from another member of the community. However, I have been told not to talk to a certain gentleman in the village who becomes extremely angry at the very mention of the name of Caradoc Evans! There is, however, universal acceptance of Moelona as a children's story writer although no mention has been made to me of her passionate views on the Welsh language or of her enthusiasm for women's suffrage.

As a journalist in London Caradoc was looking at his childhood from afar. From this vantage point, he looked back at his early life in West Wales and saw the shortcomings, the interferences and the tightly bound social conventions of what he perceived as a closed society. He was writing for literary effect with apparently no concern for the sensibilities of the area in which he grew up. His stories are unrelentingly shocking and there is no attempt to give a balanced view, to include any positive traits or to soften the overall deadening effect of the grotesque. The frustration and sense of powerlessness which characterise his stories, and indeed his own early life, give a bleak picture of entombment in an unchanging world. One could surmise that his deep love of Wales and the Welsh is expressed in this unrelenting anger through his short stories in *My People, My Neighbours and Capel Sion*, and his self-hate is expressed in *Nothing to Pay* and *Wasps*. He had become the outsider through circumstance, and the dissonance that this had produced earned the hatred of the people in a land that he loved. Because he fed the village of his youth to the wolves of derision and hate to further the literary career that he felt had been denied him, he lost the trust of many readers

and this has never been repaired and therefore his name is still reviled in some quarters. For some, the fragility of Welsh identity meant that his stories were often taken as attempts to represent reality, not as satire, and deeply offended people's ideas of what it was to be Welsh within the confines of a nation besieged by influences from England. A sense of '*if only*' pervades his stories as Caradoc's characters seem to find only misery inside Wales. I would suggest that his anger was driven by his need to leave Wales to make any sort of living and he had a wish to challenge these forces. He did indeed return to Wales in his later life and is buried in Horeb Chapel Cemetery, New Cross, near Aberystwyth.

It is perhaps ironic that Moelona's characters seem to find the most fulfilment and happiness outside of Wales, with education providing the key to advancement, and in many cases, removal from Wales. This is not in accordance with the public's perception of her as a patriotic Welsh writer. However, Moelona herself remained in Wales and her books are tempered with an enduring love of home and fireside, as in *Teulu Bach Nantoer*. Moelona's husband, J. Tywi Jones, whom she married in 1917, was the editor of the Welsh language paper, *Y Darian*. He later became a pastor, was interested in the Pan Celtic Alliance and met with Eamon de Valera in Dublin in 1925, possibly accompanied by Moelona, at a contentious time in Irish politics.<sup>116</sup> The couple retired to live in New Quay but Moelona, in death, returned to Rhydlewys and is buried in Capel Hawen alongside many members of her extended family in the village where she was born and grew up.

In their writings, both these authors express the nuances of being Welsh. They reflect the community in which they lived, emphasising both the anger towards the disconnect in Welsh society between privilege, opportunity and corruption, and the love of the history, culture, language and identity of Wales within the framework of a nation that has a more economically powerful neighbour.

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<sup>116</sup> Kinane, *Didactics and the Modern Robinsonade*, p.105.

These days Rhydlewys Village School, where Moelona taught and Caradoc fretted, is a private house, and the power of the chapels has diminished considerably with only a handful of people attending the infrequent services held in Capel Sion/Capel Hawen, which are now led by a woman minister. But not much has changed as regards the landscape of the area. There are still isolated farms dotted amongst lush green fields bordered by thick well-tended hedgerows where contented cattle graze. Tracks and paths crisscross the area and there is the sense that countless feet have tramped these ways for aeons. Ruined one-roomed cottages can be seen, now overgrown, but in spring, their presence becomes obvious as the snowdrops which were always planted around habitations come out in profusion as a reminder of the people of the past. The lower slopes are rich in vegetation with magnificent oaks and beeches hosting ferns and lichens and the upper slopes are now grazed by large flocks of sheep. Red kites and ravens fly overhead and the small Afon Ceri meanders through Troed yr Aur, the Golden Valley of Rhydlewys, on its way to the Afon Teifi and the Celtic Sea.

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