

**The Bard of the Black Chair: Ellis Evans as a Case Study into the
Development and Character of Welsh National Identity**

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Abstract

Ellis Evans, through his transformation into a cultural hero as the poet Hedd Wyn, provides a case study into the development of the Welsh national identity that began in the 19th century and matured throughout the 20th century. This dissertation relies on the theoretical work of Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, and Benedict Anderson in examining how a national identity is constructed and maintained, demonstrating how Ellis Evans' life, work, and memory provide an example into such creation. Chapter One examines the theoretical foundation of national identity and nationalism across cultures, particularly in communities that have faced cultural oppression or have been conquered. Chapter Two then examines how a particular and unique national identity arose in Wales throughout the 19th century through the creation of a shared history, the selection and praise of national heroic figures, and the promotion of the Welsh language. Chapter Three examines the life and legacy of Ellis Evans, as well as the national imagery found in "Yr Arwr," the ode for which he posthumously won the 1917 National Eisteddfod of Wales, demonstrating how in Evans scholars can see the culmination of the strivings of Welsh nationalists and the way his memory has been maintained in the century following his death to promote national ideals. Ellis Evans was born a shepherd in Trawsfynydd, but he was seemingly destined to immortality as Hedd Wyn, the shepherd-poet whose death in the First World War transformed him into a heroic figure for his entire nation.

Chapter One - The Theoretical Foundation for National Identity

In the estate of Yr Ysgwrn, just up the road into the hills above the village of Trawsfynydd, rests a wooden throne in a parlour. Carved by Belgian refugee Eugene Vanfleteren in 1917, the throne marked the winner of the awdl contest at the National Eisteddfod of Wales. That year, however, the winner did not appear to be chaired and praised for his poetry, for Ellis Evans, known more widely as his bardic name Hedd Wyn, had been slain in battle in Passchendaele six weeks before the eisteddfod was held. Draped in mourning cloth, the throne became known as the Gadair Ddu, the Black Chair, and became a symbol of the destruction of the First World War for people throughout Wales. In the same way, the legend of Hedd Wyn, cultivated by friends and fellow poets, came to define the Welsh experience of the First World War, transforming a shepherd poet from Trawsfynydd into a national symbol. In doing so, these cultivators continued a tradition in Wales of crafting a national identity around constructed histories and traditions, participating in what Anderson defined as “Imagined Communities.” That narrative and imagination should play a role in the establishment of national identity, however, is no flaw or weakness of that identity, no fact that somehow makes the community it creates any less real or tangible for those who experience it. Rather, as Anderson demonstrates, it is a simple understanding of the reality that nationalism in any society arises from conscious decisions and stories cultivated by that society. For Wales, particularly throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, that meant a reliance on perceived Celtic pasts and cultural practices to differentiate the Welsh from their Teutonic English neighbours. With this in mind, the works of Ellis Evans and his posthumous transformation into a national figure known as Hedd Wyn, serves as a case study into the way that narrative constructs national identity and forges community.

Of course, if Ellis Evans is to be viewed as a figure in the national story and heritage of Wales, it is necessary that the very concept of nationality and nationalism be expanded and explored. After all, the term itself is controversial and laden with various images, some less comfortable than others. As Miller demonstrates, to a modern audience, “nationalism” can summon “the idea that there are no ethical limits to what nations may do in pursuit of their aims, that in particular they are justified in using force to promote national interests at the expense of other peoples.”¹ Nationalism conjures images of Brexit and far-right movements throughout Europe and America that seemingly threaten to undo centuries of liberal progress and democratisation. This, however, is not the primary role of national consciousness that seeks simply to mark and recognise differences among societies that make them unique. If to recognise nationality is to simply recognise the existence of “a community constituted by mutual belief, extended in history, active in character, connected to a particular territory, and thought to be marked off from other communities by its members’ distinct traits,” then such recognition is at worst an ambivalent act, in no way an endorsement of the negative attributes often associated with nationality and nationalism.² Thus, an examination of national identity, particularly in Wales and demonstrated by the cultivation of Ellis Evans’ story, simply recognises that human beings do, in fact, define themselves by their nationality. It must be left to the philosophers to determine if such self-identification is advisable or ethical. Historians are left with the examination of how such self-identification does occur and what it entails in disparate cultures.

Such a cultivation of national identity is especially relevant in the context of conquered nations and peoples, of which Wales provides a useful example. In these nations, there exists an inherent struggle in achieving a communal identity. Both

¹ David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 8.

² David Miller. “In Defence of Nationality,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 10 (1993), 8.

conquerors and the conquered attempt to establish ethnic and communal identities to demarcate between the two groups. Often on the part of the conquerors, this demarcation takes the form of ethnic prejudice and discrimination. The conquered are “primitive” or “savage.” They are unenlightened tribes and peoples who need the heavy hand of civilisation to bring them out of the darkness, and it is of course the conquerors who provide that civilisation. From the perspective of the conquered, there then arises a necessary protest against such denigration. Whether operating within the framework imposed by the conquerors or rejecting that framework altogether for a new system of cultural appreciation, conquered peoples strive to create for themselves a communal identity, and in the case of nations, a national consciousness to promote respect and achieve some measure of cultural equality. As Pitchford demonstrates, the cultural traits and aspects the conquered people choose as the basis of their national identity “become the ‘raw materials’ activists use to construct a more positive image...in response to existing negative images, and a response is best understood in relation to the stimulus that provoked it.”³ In the face of cultural resistance and denigration, those concerned with national identity work to create for themselves a new consciousness in which their people can find pride and meaning.

That national identity arises from careful cultivation and intentional narrative raises controversies about its importance in modern society. If nations are “imagined communities,” as argued by Anderson, then perhaps they are ethereal identities better abandoned because they possess no true, real substance. But imagined does not necessarily constitute unreal. Scholars who too quickly dismiss the all-too-tangible reality of national identity are “so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that [they assimilate] ‘invention’ to ‘fabrication’

³ Susan Pitchford, “Image-Making Movements: Welsh Nationalism and Stereotype Transformation,” *Sociological Perspectives*, 44 (2001), 45-64 (p. 48).

and ‘falsity,’ rather than to ‘imagining’ and ‘creation’.”⁴ Members of all cultures and societies view themselves and their fellow members of those cultures in a particular way because of that national identity, those narratives that make up the fabric of their heritage. As Althusser posits, “modern ideological apparatuses transform individuals into subjects of particular political, social and economic systems in which these subjects then function freely, self-efficiently and autonomously.”⁵ In this way, the perceived reality becomes the tangible reality to those living in a nation. To ask whether Welsh citizens should see themselves as culturally distinct from English citizens is entirely different than asking *if* Welsh citizens see themselves differently. The vast majority would say they do because of their heritage and language, their practices and histories. To them, the Welsh nation is no less real because it is imagined and cultivated.

Of course, if national identity is created, there must be creators who bring it into existence, who craft its narratives into a holistic image of the nation to which they desire their citizens to aspire. In any nation, there exist the dominant voices that help steer the national identity in a particular direction. While these voices can change, the strength of power dynamics means such change is often a long, arduous, and often conflict-filled process.⁶ But the existence of this power dynamic is not inherently one of oppression or cruel manipulation. To create a national identity assists members of that community to share in a heritage, to band together in common cause toward unified goals. These narratives provide collective lenses by which members of communities perceive themselves and those around them.⁷ It is

⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 6.

⁵ Ieva Zake. “The Construction of National(ist) Subject: Applying the Ideas of Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault to Nationalism,” *Social Thought and Research*, 25 (2002), 217-246 (p. 222).

⁶ An obvious and prescient example is the changing narrative of Confederate statues and memorials in the American South. What was once viewed by the dominant forces of southern states as historically-essential and important testaments to the supposed bravery of Confederate forces is now increasingly viewed as monuments to racial oppression and the abuse of Black Americans.

⁷ Zake. p. 224.

also important to understand that the creation of a national identity is often essential for groups in positions of diminished power. After all, dominant cultures that encounter these groups will define them. Historically to the English, Welsh culture was defined by what it was not. It was not rational, Teutonic, modern.⁸ Thus, the Welsh people were defined in a particular way whether they wanted to be or not. Foucault's concept of bio-power as a foundation of the modern state further explains this phenomenon, demonstrated by the "connections between the development of anthropology, biology, physiognomy and political interest in defining the racial and ethnic differences among human bodies."⁹ That the Celt was physically, emotionally, and mentally different than the Germanic English was a fact embraced on both sides of the ethnic divide in the late 19th century, even by many Welsh nationalists who saw these supposedly inherent differences as evidence for the value of their unique culture that might aid them in escaping the looming shadow of England. To create a national identity for oneself is therefore an often essential step in a conquered or disadvantaged group's efforts to assert themselves. It is among the simplest yet most important forms of self-determination.

To bring about this manner of self-determination, national actors rely on narrative and imagination to create a shared sense of history and culture. As Zake argues, this first arises from the creation of a shared history, a national narrative in which all members of the community can find a common heritage.¹⁰ Members often find this narrative in military history, especially among men who envision themselves standing beside Owain Glyndwr or rallying with George Washington. But whether military or civil, these narratives create a sense of shared obligation. Members recognise that "because our forebears have toiled and spilt their blood to

⁸ Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1867), p. 100.

⁹ Zake, p. 241.

¹⁰ Zake, p. 226.

build and defend the nation, we who are born into it inherit an obligation to continue their work, which we discharge partly towards our contemporaries and partly towards our descendants.”¹¹ Beyond these histories, national identity is found in cultural practices and traditions that echo that history (or at least claim to do so). Hobsawm and Ranger explained these traditions and their importance to a national identity as a “set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”¹² While for many nations, these practices only tacitly connect to the reality of their history, their repetition reinforces the importance of that history, the essential nature of those narratives to fashioning the very identity of a society. These traditions empower members of communities to form stronger bonds and eventually forge a national identity differentiating themselves from members of other communities.

Beyond a shared history, however, there also exists the need for shared heroes, for figures and leaders around which a people can rally and communally draw inspiration. In many Western, Christianised nations, these heroic figures can often be national saints, such as George in England and David in Wales. However, they are often also military leaders or monarchs, whether historical like Caesar and Charlemagne or legendary like King Arthur. These heroes in many ways become blank canvasses upon which national ideals can be placed.¹³ It does not matter that George Washington owned slaves for many citizens of America to this day. That he should own up to his sin of chopping down the cherry tree demonstrates his integrity and commitment to honesty, shared ideals to which all Americans at least claim to aspire. That these rallying figures are so often men demonstrates the prominence of

¹¹ Miller. “In Defence of Nationality,” p. 7.

¹² Eric Hobsawm and Terence Rangers, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). p. 1.

¹³ Miller, “In Defence of Nationality,” p. 7.

men in the formation of national identities, but such identities are often embraced just as passionately among the women of a community.

For the majority of nations seeking to establish their identity, the protection and promotion of a national language becomes essential. The language unites the members of that community. All who speak and read it become united in a tradition separate from any other culture. It provides a clear means by which members and non-members can be divided. This, as Anderson so thoroughly demonstrates, explains the increased rate of national movements during the Enlightenment, as the printed text made national languages more ubiquitous and codified. Individual dialects became less important than a national tongue, as “these fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the national imagined community.”¹⁴ Foucault’s concept of bio-power in the modern state further demonstrates the importance of institutions of power to the development of nationalism, as language programmes and policies so often founded in an anthropological need to “preserve” what is viewed as an inherent facet of a culture can only be enacted from organised groups.¹⁵ The need for print literature and a codified language thus transforms the nascent desire for a national identity into a drive for political and social action, intentional programmes to establish a national heritage in a national tongue that can help unite a culture under a single banner, or so, at least, is the hope.

¹⁴ Anderson, p. 44.

¹⁵ Zake, p. 230.

Chapter Two – The Development of Welsh National Identity

To understand how Ellis Evans became an example of the constructed Welsh national identity, an exploration of how that identity was constructed is required. Anderson and Miller's analyses of the construction of nationality become particularly useful in this exploration, as they provide the three central divisions of national identity: a shared history, shared heroic figures, and a shared language. Ellis Evans, in his bardic persona of Hedd Wyn, embodies all three of these aspects, but the cultivation of a national identity began over a century before him. Throughout the late 18th and the 19th centuries, Welsh cultural leaders sought to establish and clarify for their people an identity distinct from their English neighbours. This is not to say that no such identity existed previously, even if not explicitly formulated, but that these centuries saw the development and strengthening of a unifying identity to an extent not yet encountered. The fascination for linguistics and ethnography led Welsh antiquarians to "resurrect" what they claimed were ancient practices of their Celtic ancestors such as the Eisteddfod and gorsedd of the bards. With the increasing interest in King Arthur on the part of the English in the Victorian Era, the Welsh turned instead to revolutionaries such as Owain Glyndwr for their heroic figures, complete with messianic images of these heroes returning one day to free the Welsh from the English yoke. As the use of Welsh came under attack from English Parliamentarians, particularly with an 1847 report into the state of education in Wales that derided the use of Welsh and claimed it maintained a state of poverty and immorality among the Welsh people, Welsh leaders reclaimed the use of their language and tied it intrinsically into the national identity of their people. To defend the Welsh language meant to defend Wales itself. Around these three facets, a national identity for Wales materialised, an identity embodied by the life of Ellis Evans and his posthumous, legendary status as Hedd Wyn.

Efforts to construct a shared Welsh history for all the people of the nation arose to prominence in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, finding fertile ground in the enthusiasm surrounding the Romantic movement. Poetry began to expound on the supposed ancient traditions and histories of the Welsh people, inventing these practices where no true historical basis could be found. John Ceirog Hughes wrote of this longing for the past, declaring that “Passing with the passing years/Ancient customs change and flow;/Fraught with doom of joy or tears,/Generations come and go./Out of tears’ and tempests’ reach/Alun Mabon sleeps secure;--/Still lives on the ancient speech,/Still the ancient song’s endure.”¹⁶ To create a national identity, a connection needed to be forged to these ancient ways and practices. After all, “to ponder a nation’s poetic past is to sharpen one’s awareness of its political past,” and both were needed to foster a sense of national unity.¹⁷ Other poets such as Felicia Heman, whose works were collected into *A Selection of Welsh Melodies*, and Ieuan Fardd lamented what they saw as the loss of this history and culture in an attempt to fashion it anew, their works aided by the spread of print literature throughout Wales.

However, no single individual can be granted as much credit in the creation and spread of interest in Welsh practices as the antiquarian Edward Williams, more widely known by his adopted bardic name of Iolo Morganwg, whose interest and work in what he called the Celtic past of the Welsh people occurred at a time when interest in that supposed past reached a fever pitch in Wales, England, and throughout Europe.¹⁸ Based in London, he promoted bardic orders and gatherings among his fellow antiquarians, seeming to genuinely believe that he was the last of a long line of bards and druids who passed wisdom from one generation to the next.

¹⁶ Translated in Gwyn Jones, *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse in English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 142. Original text can be found in *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse*, p. 381.

¹⁷ Gwyn Jones, *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse in English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), xxiv.

¹⁸ Mary-Ann Constantine, “Songs and Stones: Iolo Morganwg (1747-1826), Mason and Bard,” *The Eighteenth Century*, 47,(2006): 233-251 (p. 233).

It was incumbent upon him and his compatriots to share this wisdom, and to this end he, Owen Jones, and William Owen Pughe published the *Myvyrian Archaiology*, a collection of what he claimed were legitimate Celtic texts from the distant past. Such was the enthusiasm among the Welsh gentry about this burgeoning national identity that the reality that Iolo and the other editors had forged a great many of the poems, passing their own work off as ancient texts, did little to diminish the enthusiasm surrounding the work.¹⁹ Edward Jones even compiled the *Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards* for the Prince of Wales in 1808 due to this zeal that helped fashion a nascent national identity among the Welsh people. In it, he claimed that from “the poetical and musical compositions which time has spared, we are enabled to produce unquestionable evidence...since there is no living nation that can produce works of so remote antiquity, and at the same time of such unimpeached authority as the Welsh.”²⁰ The work of poets and antiquarians such as Iolo and Jones helped fashion a shared history from which a national identity could be drawn, the foundation upon which Welsh nationalism might grow if given encouragement.

Beyond their publications, these antiquarians also helped found the Gorsedd of Bards and popularised the eisteddfodau of Wales, essential cultural institutions that to this day help shape the Welsh national identity. Iolo’s objective in forming these practices was undeniably nationalistic. Though “druidic theology bore a strong resemblance to his own Unitarianism, and with it was mixed with a good deal of pacifism...his purposes were to make the common people support their language...to make them know their own history through song, and to achieve a moral religion without denominational squabbles.”²¹ In the Gorsedd, Iolo sought to unite his fellow citizens as Welsh people, regardless of individual political

¹⁹ Prys Morgan, “From a Death to a View,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 61.

²⁰ Edward Jones, *Musical and Poetical Relicks* (London: Goulding and Co., 1808), p. 1.

²¹ Prys Morgan, p. 65.

differences or religious practices. Here, they could celebrate their national heritage as one nation, a single community bound together by the shared history that the antiquarians so carefully cultivated and promulgated. Alongside the Gorsedd, the antiquarians helped spread the popularity of the eisteddfodau. Though they had existed for decades before Iolo and his compatriots, and even claimed to trace their existence at least to 1176 in Cardigan Castle, their growing association with the Gorsedd and other bardic orders only increased interest and attendance. The partnerships between the bardic orders and the eisteddfod “created a tremendous interest in history (genuine and mythical) amongst the Welsh,” and Iolo even “first envisaged the Gorsedd as something which would incorporate the eisteddfod competitions, and turn them into something far more permanent than mere ad hoc competitions, part of a larger whole, a national institution.”²² The eisteddfodau were to be places where the Welsh language and culture were celebrated, where history came alive and the people envisioned themselves as heirs of an ancient and sacred tradition.

Studies of the eisteddfodau later in the 19th century seemed to prove Iolo’s hopes as accomplished. Rhys, in his thorough exploration of the Welsh people, demonstrated that toward the turn of the 19th century, the National Eisteddfod of Wales “continues to encourage Welsh literature, prose and verse...It is not a union of learned or famous men like the French Academy, or even like the British Association, but a thoroughly popular assembly representing the rank and file of the Welsh people.”²³ People from various classes and backgrounds could find common ground in the literal earth of the National Eisteddfod, celebrating Welsh history, culture, and creativity together. It was through this institution, after all, that Ellis Evans toiled for poetic acclaim during his life and reached legendary status after his

²² Prys Morgan, p. 61.

²³ John Rhys and David Brynmor-Jones, *The Welsh People* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1900), p. 522.

death. Particularly the National Eisteddfod lived out the nationalist dreams of the antiquarians – it was an almost sacred space where the Welsh people could gather in their own language and celebrate their own nation, preserving the shared history of their nation.²⁴ Whatever the other dangers posed to Welsh national identity, the eisteddfodau and the bardic orders created spaces where Wales could thrive and honour the best of itself. To this day, the National Eisteddfod of Wales stands as a testament to Welsh culture, gathering attendees from all around the world for a week of accomplishments in literature, science, song, and engineering, among others, all highlighting the prowess and impressiveness of the Welsh nation. And all throughout the proceedings of the Eisteddfod, the attendees brim with pride in their shared history, the narrative of their nation that defines who they are collectively as a people.

If there is to be a shared history for a nation, there must be heroic figures who have carried that history forward through great deeds. For the Welsh national identity, this need was no different. Like other nationalist movements, those who sought to unify the Welsh relied on these figures for that unification, figures around whom all the people could rally and find common ground. This was no new phenomenon in Wales. For centuries, they had relied on heroic tales of historical and legendary figures, particularly drawn to *y mab darogan*, the son of prophecy. These redeemer-heroes, Henken notes, often met specific conditions. When a deliverer is required, “he comes, whether from sleep, hiding or across the sea, he will through blood and terrible battles, rid the land of the hated alien presence, and then restore peace, prosperity and justice to a united Welsh people.”²⁵ The messianic imagery surrounding such redeemers persisted long into the 19th and 20th centuries, with the

²⁴ Roslyn Blyn-Ladrew, “Ancient Bards, Welsh Gipsies, and Celtic Folklore in the Cauldron of Regeneration,” *Western Folklore* 57, (1998), 225-243 (p. 226).

²⁵ Elissa Henken. *National Redeemer* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), p. 40.

theme even arising in the work of Ellis Evans. The popularity of these figures in Welsh culture made them easy unifiers around whom the nationalist forces could rally. To continue on the tradition of Saint David (predicted in the *Armes Prydein* to one day return and rally the Welsh) or King Arthur (whose prophesied return needs no explanation), was to fight for the Welsh themselves, for their history and their culture, against all opponents and foes.

In one redeemer-hero, however, the proponents of Welsh national identity found their central figure. Owain Glyndwr, immortalised even for English audiences in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I*, had led the last serious rebellion against English rule before disappearing into the Welsh hills and never being found again. Portrayed as a manic military commander with magical abilities in Shakespeare, interest in Glyndwr began to arise in the late 18th century with Thomas Pennant's publication of his travels in Wales, though initially interest was largely historical rather than political. Glyndwr fascinated Iolo Morganwg, who included tales of him in collected works, though most of these were constructions of his own rather than medieval pieces. As the 19th century progressed, however, interest in Glyndwr grew as well.

Mervinius wrote in 1821 how Glyndwr represented the long-suffering nature of the Welsh people, not easily moved to revolt against the English. After all, Glyndwr had served King Richard II faithfully, "to whom he was sincerely and affectionately attached."²⁶ Glyndwr, thus, was not some obstinate warrior who took the first opportunity to bring about conflict and revolt. He was, by all accounts, respected and concerned with the well-being of his people. When he suffered injustices from his neighbour, Reginald Grey, Glyndwr initially sought restitution through the English judicial system, trusting Henry IV and Parliament to uphold fair practices.²⁷ They ignored his calls for justice, however, and because of suffering

²⁶ Mervinius, "Biography: Owain Glyndwr," *The Cambro-Briton* 3, (1821), 17-27 (p. 18).

²⁷ Henken, p. 5.

“oppression unendurable by a Briton,” he gathered a band of warriors and began campaigns against the English that would persist for fifteen years.²⁸ Though he enjoyed some victories during these campaigns, Glyndwr was eventually forced to retreat into the hills and mountains of Wales, from which nothing other than legend was ever heard again. History became legend, and like the redeemer-heroes before him, Glyndwr’s disappearance was interpreted as a mere absence before his inevitable return to free the Welsh from the yoke of the English and restore justice to his people.

Like King Arthur before him, he stood for the unity of true Britons and had passed from Wales rather than die outright, but unlike Arthur, he had not been co-opted by other European nations. English monarchs had long since embraced Arthur and the tales of his knights, and in the 19th century as Welsh nationalism took root, Tennyson was publishing his *Idylls of the King* and bringing English interest in Arthur to new highs. Owain Glyndwr, however, remained a uniquely Welsh figure, one that the English could not take as their own, the very “most compelling of the emblematic heroes of the Welsh resistance.”²⁹ He was, to the Welsh nationalists, the perfect figure around which the Welsh people could rally in search of their national identity. His image required rehabilitation, however, given that even the majority of the Welsh nationalists did not advocate for violence against the English.³⁰ Theirs was a movement of ideas and legislation, not warfare.

However, even those who were quick to condemn Glyndwr’s warfare as illegitimate and not to be imitated were willing to praise him. Mervinius praised his “boldness and activity, ambition, bravery, and no small portion of military skill. Hospitable to profuseness the patron and liberal encourager of bards...in him were

²⁸ Mervinius, p. 18.

²⁹ Jan Morris, *The Matter of Wales*, 4.

³⁰ Henken, p. 166.

combined all the characteristics of the warm-hearted Cambro-Briton.”³¹ Writers published poems detailing the exploits of Glyndwr, praising him as a hero for the Welsh people. Rhoscomyl published a monograph about heroes of Welsh history, declaring that “no other of all our heroes ever seated himself so firmly in the hearts of our race as this Owen...he was the champion of poor folk, of folk that live ever too near to misery.”³² Because of the work of Welsh nationalists and writers, Glyndwr’s image was restored from a violent rebel to a hero of the Welsh people who spent his life fighting for their freedom and culture. Prime Minister David Lloyd George would even go on to unveil a statue of Glyndwr at Cardiff City Hall in 1916, a testament to his legacy as a national hero for Wales. Glyndwr sat atop a mountain of heroes around which the Welsh people could rally, figures upon whose shoulders the weight of this new national history could rest and find support.

Beyond Glyndwr himself, a defining characteristic of Welsh nationalism was the appreciation of poets as cultural heroes. They were viewed as prophets awakening the nationalist spirits of the Welsh people throughout history to defend their homeland against invaders. It is certainly true that, the unlikely nature of a Welsh national identity existing prior to the 18th and 19th centuries due to the efforts of intentional nationalists notwithstanding, the bards of medieval Wales served an essential public role that established them as heroes of the Welsh national identity. It was the bard’s role to “maintain a leader’s fame, retail tribal triumphs and disasters, persuade and foretell, convey to his hearers that accepted corpus of lore...and to set forth repeatedly and unequivocally...the cherished beliefs of a hierarchical and war-waging society: valour, loyalty, service, reward.”³³ John Rhys would explain how an essential function of the original *eisteddfodau* was to admit

³¹ Mervinius, pp. 25-26.

³² Rhoscomyl, *Flame-Bearers of Welsh History*, 219.

³³ Gwyn Jones, p. xviii.

new poets into the bardic order for public function in the courts of princes and other lords throughout medieval Wales.³⁴ The bard, studied extensively by Thomas Stevens in the late 19th century, “had the care of the historical documents pertaining to the tribe and its chief, and was the historiographer of his patron, as well as his laureate.”³⁵ These poets, their roles so essential to medieval life in Wales and the civil function of tribes, were repositories of their peoples’ histories and tales. Their poems praised ancient heroes and summoned bravery in battle. They honoured feats of renown and immortalised the great figures of their countrymen. And their poetic works became the artifacts of their people, existing long after whole tribes had passed from existence.

Though by the 18th century the presence of bards and other poets as integral civil servants had diminished, the enthusiasm of antiquarians such as Iolo Morganwg resurrected interest in the poets as national figures. The proliferation of bardic orders throughout the eisteddfodau, as well as the establishment of the Gorsedd, led to the increased appreciation for Welsh poets and their role in the preservation of Welsh national identity, as well as the language itself. One manner in which this establishment of poets as national figures occurred was the emphasis on traditional Welsh poetic metres and structures. Drawing on the works of the medieval court poets, “the *awdl* (ode) dominated, with its end-rhymes, sections, connections, repetitions, vocabulary, figures and tropes, alliteration and internal rhymes, woven into a rhetorical pattern of song, sonorous, powerful, and directed very much at the ear.”³⁶ Poetry thus became a communal practice, and the bardic participants, like their forebears, trained and perfected their craft to earn acclaim. In the eisteddfodau particularly, these scholars and writers gathered to uphold and preserve their national

³⁴ John Rhys and David Brynmor-Jones, p. 516.

³⁵ Thomas Stevens, *The Literature of the Kymry* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1876), p. 86.

³⁶ Gwyn Jones, p. xix.

culture.³⁷ They carried the spirit of their national identity in their poetry, spreading it among the people.

In addition to the reliance on heroic figures like Glyndwr and poetic champions, the Welsh people themselves, *y werin*, have always been viewed as champions of the Welsh national identity. It was the gentry, Rhys points out, that increasingly sought to abandon their heritage and language during the 17th and early 18th century, while the common people of Wales maintained their traditions and language.³⁸ Such was the influence of the common Welsh people on the preservation of their language and history that Manning refers to the *werin* as the heart of Welsh nationalism.³⁹ Owen M. Edwards mythologised this notion of the *werin*, and the Romantic image of true Welshmen became that of a “sturdy tough hillman, free as mountain air.”⁴⁰ In Edward’s works, the common Welsh people were “sober, literate and honest...emancipated from darkness by the religious revivals of the eighteenth century and forever upright.”⁴¹ Welsh nationalism became thus a prominently egalitarian force, an identity that could be fostered and upheld in the heart of every person in Wales, not just the gentry and aristocracy. With industrialisation and the prominence of coal and slate mines, however, the *werin* came to embody more than the romanticised, rural Welshman. Kenneth Morgan and Simon Brooks both address the importance of industrialisation to Welsh nationalism. Morgan notes that “the blast furnaces and winding-shafts of the working-class metropolis of Merthyr Tydfil” were integral to the preservation of Welsh culture by producing jobs and

³⁷ John Rhys and David Brynmor-Jones, p. 522.

³⁸ John Rhys and David Brynmor-Jones, p. 513.

³⁹ H. Paul Manning, “English Money and Welsh Rocks: Divisions of Language and Divisions of Labour in Nineteenth-Century Welsh Slate Quarries,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 3 (2002): 481-482.

⁴⁰ Prys Morgan, p. 89.

⁴¹ Peredur Lynch, “Twentieth Century Welsh Literature,” in *Celtic Literatures in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Seamus mac Mathuna and Ailbhe Ó Corráin (Ulster: Research Institute for Irish and Celtic Studies, 2007), pp. 97-128 (p. 103).

wealth for the Welsh people.⁴² Brooks, in his criticism of the failures of Welsh nationalism, insists that because “industry was a cauldron of rebirth for the Welsh language...the south Wales coalfield brimmed with immigrants from rural Wales,” the reluctance of Welsh nationalists to more quickly incorporate industrialisation into the national identity played an essential role in nationalist disappointments of the early 20th century.⁴³ Regardless, the miner and slate quarrier did eventually come to be members of the *werin* and embody the egalitarian nature of the Welsh national identity.

One institution particular to the Welsh people and instrumental in the exercise of their national identity was the local church of each community. Throughout the 19th century, Nonconformist congregations had risen to such prominence that by 1851 “almost four-fifths of those attending places of worship were to be found in the chapels, rather than in the Anglican church.”⁴⁴ J. Vyrnwy Morgan, so often critical of Welsh nationalism and nationalism in general, nevertheless noted that these chapels provided “a form of religion that was in accord with the spirit of the race, that afforded a scope for the genius so peculiar to the race – its mysticism, its idealism, and its imaginativeness.”⁴⁵ A unique feature of the Welsh chapels was the existence of the Seiet, a society where religious and literary discussions could be held exclusively in Welsh. Rhys noted that the Seiet, “composing every church member, is, in a word, a miniature democracy, with the power residing in the elders and the other communicants, and not in the minister, whose presence, though usual, is not essential to the workings of the system.”⁴⁶ Much like the eisteddfod, the Seiet afforded the common people of Wales a place to gather together and strengthen their

⁴² Kenneth Morgan, “Welsh Nationalism: The Historical Background,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 6 (1971), 153-172 (p. 156).

⁴³ Simon Brooks, *Why Wales Never Was* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017), p. 19.

⁴⁴ Kenneth Morgan, p. 156.

⁴⁵ J. Vyrnwy Morgan, *The Philosophy of Welsh History* (London: John, Lane, the Bodley Head, 1914), p. 149.

⁴⁶ John Rhys and David Brynmor-Jones, p. 589.

own communities in an egalitarian fashion. Alongside national heroes such as Owain Glyndwr, the *werin* came to embody the ideals of Welsh nationalism through egalitarian communities and an embrace of the cultivated Welsh culture and the Welsh language.

Alongside a constructed, national history and heroes to carry that history, the most defining aspect of Welsh nationalism has been its promotion of the Welsh language, centring its usage at the heart of Welshness. It is important to note that this centring of the language came to prominence through the Welsh national movement, and not merely as a natural attachment to the language on the part of the Welsh population in centuries before. In fact, Prys Morgan notes that by the 18th century, “the native legal system was abolished, the bardic system atrophied, the old language was outlawed from administration, and, although the official classes such as the gentry and professional tradesmen still spoke Welsh, their attitudes became anglicised.”⁴⁷ In an effort to strengthen their relationships with the English, the upper classes of Wales had begun to abandon much of their Welsh identity. Many even avoided teaching their children Welsh “lest it should spoil their English accent for the rest of their lives” and thus prevent them from obtaining respect and success among their English neighbours.⁴⁸ However, as it became easier to print and distribute literature in Welsh through journals, magazines, and other texts, enthusiasm for the language grew once more in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Such was the expansion of texts published in the Welsh language that by the turn of the 19th century, “there was not only a huge printed literature of moral and religious tracts in Welsh, but a small number of literary texts, a few historical works (which were enormously popular), and a few grammar books and dictionaries.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Prys Morgan, p. 44.

⁴⁸ John Rhys and David Brynmor-Jones, p. 513.

⁴⁹ Prys Morgan, p. 70.

Anderson's evaluation of nationalism and the forces that cause it to grow explains this, as communities found kinship in "these fellow readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the national imagined community."⁵⁰ The Welsh national identity found fertile soil in the Welsh language, though oftentimes this soil was found in the coal mines of southern Wales rather than the farmlands of the north.

It is a curious phenomenon that industrial workers, rather than the shepherds and other agrarian workers so often viewed as the symbols of Welsh nationalism, should have been the primary preservers of the Welsh language. Kenneth Morgan points specifically to the population growth in southern communities as hotbeds of linguistic fervour, with the idea being that as more and more people gathered in these industrial communities with new print literature, they were bound ever closer by their shared language.⁵¹ The industrial workers even embraced their role as defenders of their national identity and "Volkisch exponents of the Welsh nation," boasting even that their knowledge of Welsh helped them be more successful in the quarries because "Welsh is the language of the land and the quarries, and Welsh is what the rocks, and the sheep who browse our slopes, have learned."⁵² As the 19th century progressed, this enthusiasm for the Welsh language and its preservation seeped into the various classes of Wales, though not without opposition from the English.

It is this reliance upon the support of industrial and agrarian workers, as well as other members of the working class, that Simon Brooks argues stalled the progress of Welsh nationalism from ever reaching true fervour for independence. Because the

⁵⁰ Anderson, p. 44.

⁵¹ Kenneth Morgan, p. 156.

⁵² H. Paul Manning, "English Money and Welsh Rocks: Divisions of Language and Divisions of Labour in Nineteenth-Century Welsh Slate Quarries," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44 (2002), 481-510 (p. 492).

vibrancy of Welsh nationalism resided in the quarries and mines, so many of which were still owned and managed by English capitalists, the economic benefit of industrialisation did not extend to empowering the common people financially. He criticizes the dependence on the coalfields, arguing that “opportunities for an indigenous bourgeoisie to develop were more limited than they would have been in a more balanced economy.”⁵³ Nevertheless, a national identity did arise in Wales during the 19th century, even if it did not reach the separatist zeal demonstrated in Ireland in the early 20th century and throughout much of the Commonwealth throughout subsequent decades. Enthusiasm for Welsh culture and the Welsh language grew, even if predominantly among the working class and with an enthusiasm not quickly matched by the gentry and upper classes who might have been able to spur change more dramatically.

In 1847, concerned with what he saw as a worrisome state of education in Wales, William Williams suggested that a study be taken to determine educational improvements in Wales. A Welsh MP himself, Williams’ idea arose from “the concern of the growing hold of Dissent and Nonconformity over the common people, the lack of provision for education in Wales and the growth of political unrest over the previous decades.”⁵⁴ Where Williams’ efforts arose from genuine concern for his countrymen, *The Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales* presented a scathing rebuke of Welsh society. The commissioners determined that “equally in his new home as in his old home, his language keeps him under the hatches, being one in which he can neither acquire nor communicate the necessary information. It is a language of old-fashioned agriculture, of theology, and of simple rustic life, while all the world about him is

⁵³ Brooks, p. 22.

⁵⁴ Daniel Williams, *Black Skin, Blue Books* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), p. 26.

English.”⁵⁵ Beyond the supposed limits of the language, however, the commission also concluded that the Welsh language itself promoted drunkenness, violence, and sexual promiscuity. All of the problems of Wales, it declared, could be traced to the language itself, and for the Welsh people to advance they needed to abandon their language to the refuse of history.

The response was immediate and furious. The “Treachery of the Blue Books,” as the report came to be known, enflamed and united the Welsh people against such prejudice.⁵⁶ To attack the language was to attack the people themselves, and thus “Welsh nationalism and Welsh nonconformity were now united in a crusade for national self-respect.”⁵⁷ With Anderson’s theory of nationalism in mind, it is clear now as it was then that to deride the language and argue it needed to be abandon was to argue that the Welsh people themselves did not deserve a national identity. Khleif explains further how the Welsh language thus became the central entity of Welsh nationalism, acknowledging that “A language, in a very real sense, is the pedigree of a people; for a Welshman, it unlocks centuries of the Welsh experience...Language creates consciousness.”⁵⁸ As Althusser’s work in the construction of national identity demonstrates, Welsh nationalists portrayed the language as endangered and attacked by powerful forces.⁵⁹ The Welsh language thus became not only an aspect of national identity; it became the very heart of the movement. To speak Welsh was to be Welsh, and to attack the Welsh language was to attack the Welsh people.

Even with opposition from the English, Welsh leaders and nationalists fought for the preservation of their language. The opposition they faced, however, was no

⁵⁵ Committee of Council on Education (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1848), p. 4.

⁵⁶ Daniel Williams, p. 27.

⁵⁷ Kenneth Morgan, p. 157.

⁵⁸ Bud Khleif, “Language as a Barrier in English-Welsh Relations,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (1979), 59-74 (p. 60).

⁵⁹ Zake, p. 231.

small obstacle. The Education Act of 1870 provided extra resources for schools throughout Wales, but it required that education be done in English. Schoolteachers often punished students viciously for using their native language. Khleif details how “one of the devices that zealous school masters employed to terrorize their monoglot Welsh charges into acquisition of English as the sole working language of the school was the ‘Welsh Not,’” a piece of wood on a rope that any student caught speaking Welsh would have to wear until the end of the day, when such students were often beaten.⁶⁰ Even David Lloyd George’s foster father, his “Uncle Lloyd,” was “partially deaf in one ear, the result of being struck by a schoolmaster for speaking the forbidden Welsh language in the classroom.”⁶¹ Such tactics led to fewer Welsh people speaking the language for a time, such that “the percentage of the inhabitants of Wales who could speak Welsh dropped from 90 per cent before the Act to just over 50 per cent by 1891,” but these tactics also strengthened Welsh nationalist movements by convincing more and more people that their language and culture were under attack.⁶² The 19th century saw the Welsh found Cardiff University, University College of North Wales (now Bangor University), St. David’s College, Lampeter (now a part of University of Wales, Trinity Saint David), University College Wales (now Aberystwyth University), as well as others.⁶³ And outside of Wales itself, in 1877 Sir John Rhys was appointed as the first professor of Celtic at the University of Oxford, demonstrating the growing academic respect and concern for Celtic cultures and the Welsh people.

Outside of academia, other cultural institutions of Wales helped promote the usage of the language and establish it as the central aspect of the Welsh national

⁶⁰ Khleif, p. 64.

⁶¹ Don Cregier, *Bounder from Wales: Lloyd George’s Career before the First World War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976), p. 4.

⁶² Henken, p. 163.

⁶³ J. Vyrnwy Morgan, p. 12.

identity. Welsh nationalists relied on periodicals and other journals for the dissemination of their language and ideals. *Y Geninen*, founded in 1881 by John Thomas, relied on the motto “My language, my land, my nation” to declare its stance on the national identity of Wales, and other periodicals published by men such as Goronwy Mathias and Owen M. Edwards helped spread nationalist ideas through the Welsh language.⁶⁴ Poets wrote and published in Welsh, often telling stories of great heroes such as Owain Glyndwr. And just as Iolo Morganwg had hoped, the Gorsedd of Bards and the eisteddfodau became cultural cauldrons of ingenuity, with Rhys praising the fact that the National Eisteddfod “continues to encourage Welsh literature, prose and verse.”⁶⁵ In 1885, the Welsh Language Society was founded, eventually getting Welsh introduced as a formal subject in schools, even if the primary language of education was still English.⁶⁶ National songs and poems grew in popularity, with “Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau” (“Land of My Fathers”) gaining prominence from its creation in 1856 until 1905 when its performance before sporting events made it the de-facto anthem of the Welsh people, still sung to this day.

In opposition to the degradation of their language, Welsh nationalists defended and promoted the use of their language, gathering support from other Welsh men and women who might not have otherwise supported the aims of nationalism. The establishment of a Welsh national identity, thus, expanded from a political intention and drive on the part of a subset of the Welsh community to a widespread effort and goal of the Welsh people. The defence of the language, in particular, united various strata of society to the goal of declaring on a grand scale the characteristics and nature of the Welsh nation, to validate its existence in the face

⁶⁴ Henken, p. 171.

⁶⁵ John Rhys and David Brynmor-Jones, p. 522.

⁶⁶ Khleif, p. 64.

of insults from their English neighbours. The Welsh language sat at the heart of this movement, this identity, and practices and institutions acted as guardians of the language, preserving it all throughout society.

Althusser and Anderson's analyses of national identity and the formation of nationalism in any given society thus explains how such an identity arose in Wales during the 19th century. The Welsh people constructed for themselves a history, cultivating legends and a national heritage through the works of antiquarians such as Iolo Morganwg and historians like John Rhys. They established practices and cultural events such as the Gorsedd of Bards and various eisteddfodau as havens where Welsh culture would be celebrated and its history told. This history was placed on the shoulders of heroic figures, both historical and legendary, to whom the Welsh people could look with pride. Chief among these was Owain Glyndwr, uniquely Welsh and uniquely positioned to act as a symbol of Welsh nationalism and the defence of the Welsh people. Beyond individual heroic figures, they also looked to the prophetic poetry of ancient bards and contemporary poets who constructed new beauty in the Welsh language. This enthusiasm spread to the common people themselves, *y werin*, who carried on the torch of national identity. And at the heart of this movement was the Welsh language itself, that very tongue that marked the people as separate from all others. United against powerful efforts to end the language's use, the Welsh people established institutions to protect it and promote its future. These three facets of cultural creation, history, heroes, and language, thus acted as the pillars upon which a Welsh national identity was created and promoted, and in the 20th century, these three facets all found their embodiment in the legend of a shepherd from Trawsfynydd who fought and died in the fields of Belgium during the First World War – Ellis Evans.

Chapter Three – Ellis Evans as a National Figure of Wales

It is strange that a man whose early life was marked with an unassuming path should have become a national icon. A shepherd from Trawsfynydd, a village so small that to this day it has but one hostel and one restaurant (and not open on Monday, for those planning a visit), Ellis Evans was not intended for greatness. According to biographer Alan Llwyd, he was even an inept shepherd, preferring to be out in the fields with the sheep “only because the solitude gave him ample opportunity to meditate and write poetry.”⁶⁷ Apart from a brief stint seeking a non-existent fortune in the coalfield of southern Wales, and his final travels into France and Belgium where he would perish in battle, Evans rarely travelled beyond Trawsfynydd and the surrounding villages. He spent his time on his family farm, helping his father, writing poetry as he became more and more fascinated with the traditional structures of the Welsh bardic tradition, or in town with friends. The Reverend John Dyer Richards, a mentor and friend of Evans, remarked that he was “a pure socialist in his creed. But he was not a strict temperance man, he mixed with his contemporaries over a pint of beer. A friendly, kind hearted, humble lad, extremely popular with everyone in the village of Trawsfynydd.”⁶⁸ Unassuming and otherwise unexceptional, Evans nevertheless came to represent the Welsh experience of the First World War through his life and poetry.

Evans’ first exposure to traditional Welsh poetry came at the age of eleven when his father “bought his son a book on the rules of strict-metre Welsh verse, *Yr Ysgol Farddol* by Dafydd Morganwg.”⁶⁹ Evans devoured the book with an enthusiasm that never reached his work on his parents’ farm. He dedicated himself to the traditional forms and structures of Welsh poetry, striving to master that art that

⁶⁷ Alan Llwyd, *The Story of Hedd Wyn* (Llandybie: Cyhoeddiadau Barddas, 2015), p. 23.

⁶⁸ Ben Rees, “Hedd Wyn (1887-1917) and the First World War,” in *The Black Chair Centenary 1917-2017*, ed. Ben Rees (Liverpool: Modern Welsh Publishers, 2017), pp. 1-2.

⁶⁹ Llwyd, *The Story of Hedd Wyn*, p. 27.

marked true bards from mere writers. He demonstrated a particular talent for poetry and “won his first poetry competition for composing an *englyn*...to the peat stack (*Y Das Fawn*) at the age of 12, at the Ebenezer Chapel literary meeting.”⁷⁰ The young Evans perfected his craft for years following this first measure of success, eventually adding four chairs from local and regional eisteddfodau to his collection, all of which can also be found in Yr Ysgwrn to this day.

It was not until his early 20s, however, that Evans came to adopt his bardic name of Hedd Wyn. There is some uncertainty as to exactly when the moniker first became associated with the young poet from Trawsfynydd, but in 1910 Evans, along with other poets from his region, were presented to Humphrey Jones (Bryfdir) during a gorsedd ceremony for official welcome into the bardic orders. Bryfdir recalled that when Evans approached to receive his bardic name, “He had the appearance of a dreamer, and he moved slowly and calmly. After we suggested ‘Hedd Wyn’ as his bardic name, and asked him if he accepted the name, an honest smile spread across his face, although he didn’t utter a word. He was honoured in the college where he won his degree, the College of Nature.”⁷¹ Named after the peace he experienced in the fields and hills surrounding Trawsfynydd throughout his youth, Evan’s poetry reflected his deep love and appreciation for the natural beauty of his home. From that moment forward, Evans competed as Hedd Wyn, and it was as Hedd Wyn that his successes as a poet passed into national legend. But before he could become legend, Evans, alongside so many young men of Wales, had to endure the horrors of the First World War.

The First World War posed a paradox to the Welsh people. On the one hand, Wales in the 18th and 19th centuries was predominantly pacifistic, with Nonconformist ministers and nationalist leaders using this pacifism as a

⁷⁰ Gruffudd Antur, *The Shepherd War Poet: Hedd Wyn* (Llanwrst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2017), p. 13.

⁷¹ Alan Llwyd, *The Story of Hedd Wyn*, p. 29.

demonstration of their people's dignity and respectability. Though pacifism was by no means the position of every Welsh citizen, "the actual ambiguous embrace of the pacifist movement by the Welsh people is less important than the powerful and enduring image of pacifist commitment that such leaders constructed."⁷² Once again, the power of the nationalist movement to create a national identity appears, and in the early 20th century, the supposition was that the Welsh people opposed war in great numbers.

This supposition arose from the careful cultivation of the Welsh national identity on the part of Welsh nationalists. Throughout the 19th century, to differentiate their countrymen from national movements throughout Europe that often turned to violence, Welsh cultural leaders promoted the idea that Wales was an inherently peaceful and liberal nation given their embrace of Christianity. Scholars such as Goronwy Jones have pointed out that "'Nonconformist Christianity...[has] helped construct an image of the Welsh as a Christian people whose antipathy towards war was grounded upon religion and its own melancholy history of English conquest and domination."⁷³ Much of this arose from some of the more violent excesses of Welsh working class movements in the first half of the 1900s, including the Rebecca Riots and protests for Chartism. To gain political influence, Welsh nationalists leaned into the image of Wales as a pacifistic people committed to liberal causes such as democracy and abolition. Widespread opposition to the Boer War at the turn of the 20th century solidified the popular view that the Welsh people opposed war and violence on principled, religious grounds.

However, this pacifism, though prominent, was not ubiquitous. David Lloyd George had risen to prominence in the late 19th century due to his fierce opposition

⁷² John Ellis, "A pacifistic people – a martial race," in *Wales and War*, eds. Matthew Cragoe and Chris Williams (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 2007), p. 21.

⁷³ Ellis, p. 15.

to the Boer War, but the outbreak of the First World War posed a clear and present danger to the rights of small nations. A kinship was felt between Wales and nations such as Belgium that now found their safety threatened by great, militaristic empires. Lloyd George, near the start of the war and before he had become Prime Minister, spoke of the importance of these small nations in a speech he gave to Welshmen at Queen's Hall in 1914 in an attempt to rally support for the war effort, declaring that "The heroic deeds that thrill humanity through generations were the deeds of little nations fighting for their freedom. Yes, and the salvation of mankind came through a little nation. God has chosen little nations as the vessels by which He carries His choicest wines to the lips of humanity."⁷⁴ Lloyd George sought to rally his countrymen to arms to defend the cause of small nations and free people throughout Europe.

The narrative resonated with the Welsh people. They saw in Germany's invasion of Belgium a declaration of war against all small nations and peoples who had endured oppression and contempt from larger countries. At their countryman's call, whose own efforts in supporting Welsh nationalism did not go unrecognised and disrespected by the Welsh people, support for the war effort grew, and more and more young men signed up to fight for what they saw as the cause of little nations. Lloyd George would go on to celebrate what he saw as "the martial spirit that has been slumbering for centuries, but only slumbering...The great warlike spirit that maintained independence of these mountains for centuries woke up once more."⁷⁵ The call to arms had been sounded, and the Welsh people answered. According to Williams, "272,924 men from Wales (including Monmouthshire) served in the British Army during the Great War, representing 21.52 per cent of the male

⁷⁴ David Lloyd George, *The Great War* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Limited, 1918), pp. 10-11.

⁷⁵ Ellis, p. 26.

population of the country.”⁷⁶ This percentage, similar to numbers throughout Great Britain, nevertheless marked a significant increase in military participation in Wales. All across Wales, boys and men enlisted in an effort to defend the rights of small nations such as their own.

As the war continued, however, enthusiasm declined in Wales. By 1915, “the Welsh Regiment was finding that recruiting was drying up” as the initial fervor dwindled and more people grew weary with the war’s progression.⁷⁷ Recruitment had dwindled to such a point that in 1916 Lloyd George and his coalition government introduced conscription. His efforts, though successful in increasing the British forces, would go on to forever tarnish Lloyd George’s legacy, as many viewed conscription as a betrayal of his commitments and loyalties to the Welsh people. Opposition arose prominently in the Welsh poetic circles, so fiercely tied to Welsh national identity. T. Gwynn Jones, for example, wrote against the war “on conscientious and humanitarian grounds.”⁷⁸ In his 40s, Jones was exempt from conscription and could not be compelled to serve, but other poets of Wales were not so fortunate. To reduce their chances of dying in the battle, conscripted poets “such as A. E. Jones (Cynan), Lewis Valentine and David Ellis (who disappeared without a trace in Salonika), joined a specially formed Welsh unit of the R.A.M.C and served as stretcher-bearers.”⁷⁹ Poetry that had early in the war praised the heroism and bravery of men going to battle now turned towards lament and grief at the cost of the conflict. Cynan, for example, wrote “The Funeral” in which he concluded that “I stood at night to watch his resting place,/The night of Victory, the night of peace,/Asking so many questions, but my sad words/Were stolen by the wind, and

⁷⁶ Chris Williams, “Taffs in the trenches: Welsh national identity and military service, 1914-1918” in *Wales and War*, eds. Matthew Cragoe and Chris Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 126.

⁷⁷ Neil Evans, “Loyalties: state, nation, community and military recruiting in Wales, 1840-1918” in *Wales and War*, eds. Matthew Cragoe and Chris Williams (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 2007), p. 51.

⁷⁸ Alan Llwyd, *Out of the Fires of Hell* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2008), p. xvii.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

went unheard.”⁸⁰ The martial might of Wales had passed to grief in the fires and trenches of the First World War.

Ellis Evans himself represented this changing perspective. Early in the war, for a smaller eisteddfod competition, Evans had composed a poem titled “Gwladgarwch” or “Patriotism,” in which he declares that “Once more, love of country calls to the fight,/As it did in days gone by;/Calls in the name of Britain and its might,/In the name of the Lord of Hosts, from bright/Heaven up on high,” indicating at least some support for the cause of the war, if not for war itself.⁸¹ However, the legacy of Ellis Evans is one of pacifism and opposition to war. Evan’s two most famous poems outside of Wales, known because before 2017 they were the only two widely translated into English and available to non-Welsh audiences, both speak heavily of the effects and tragedies of war. “War” laments for the horrors of his present age, even referencing Psalm 137 with its talk of silent harps being hung on willow trees by a people too heartbroken to rejoice anymore, and “The Black Spot” decries the evils perpetrated by humanity against Creation. Alan Llwyd maintains that Evans was an ardent pacifist dedicated to nonviolence, though other scholars maintain Evans’ views on the war were more nuanced and became more opposed as the violence dragged on through the years.⁸² Regardless of how his views on the war came to develop or evolve, it is clear that Evans longed for peace and prayed that he might escape the conflict.

Fate dictated otherwise, however. Following the beginning of conscription, Evans signed up to serve so that his younger brother, Bob, might escape the conflict of the war. After enlisting in Blaenau Ffeisteniog, Evans was sent to Litherland Camp near Liverpool for training, the same camp where war poets Siegfried Sassoon

⁸⁰ Llwyd, *Out of the Fires of Hell*, p. 215

⁸¹ Antur, p. 49.

⁸² Llwyd, *The Story of Hedd Wyn*, p. 51.

and Robert Graves received training. Perhaps unsurprisingly for a man whose absentmindedness had made him a poor farmer and shepherd, Evans often found himself in trouble during his training. His friend and fellow poet, Simon Jones, recounted that Evans was “rather idle and untidy in appearance, and was often reprimanded by his superiors at Litherland and Fléchin.”⁸³ During his time at Litherland, Evans worked tirelessly on the awdl he intended to submit for the National Eisteddfod that year, but he was deployed to France before he could finish the poem. While across the Channel, he wrote in a letter to his family that “the most beautiful thing I have seen since coming here is an old shell-case that had been adapted to grow flowers...And doesn’t that prove that beauty is stronger than war, and that loveliness will survive the madness.”⁸⁴ The story of Hedd Wyn survived the madness, but Ellis Evans did not. On the morning of July 31, 1917, the Battle of Passchendaele began, and around midday, Ellis Evans was struck by a nose-cap shell and died in a field of Belgium, so far from home.

About six weeks later, the National Eisteddfod of Wales took place at Birkenhead Park in Liverpool. With Prime Minister Lloyd George in attendance, the Archdruid Evan Rees announced the victor’s creativity and originality. Twice he called for the winner using the pseudonym “Fleur-de-Lys,” and only on the third call for the victor did he announce that Ellis Evans had won the contest but had perished in Belgium weeks before. Evans’ mentor, Silyn Roberts, depicted the scene as one in which “the wave of emotion that swept over that vast throng is undescrivable and can never be forgotten. The bards enfolded the chair in a great black shroud.”⁸⁵ Huw Edwards of the BBC, at a centenary memorial to Evans in Liverpool in 2017, emphasized that the symbolism was that of legend. “The horror of war, brought right

⁸³ Llwyd, *The Story of Hedd Wyn*, p. 67.

⁸⁴ Llwyd, *Out of the Fire of Hell*, p. 49.

⁸⁵ Rees, p. 4.

into the precincts of the national eisteddfod, with the political class on the national stage, and a single death representing loss of life and tragedy on a much bigger scale. Everything came together to produce a cauldron of sadness, resentment, anger and yes, patriotism in the eyes of some.”⁸⁶ One man’s death, in that moment, came to represent the horrors of war for an entire nation and transformed a shepherd-poet from Trawsfynydd into a cultural icon.

“Yr Arwr,” for which Evans posthumously won the chair, embodies much of the heroic imagery of the Welsh national identity, another facet that explains why he became a national hero after his death. In it, Evan’s “Hero” is, as T. Gwynn Jones described him at the Eisteddfod in 1917, “scarred, battered, weather beaten, a combination of Prometheus and the Man of Nazareth.”⁸⁷ The “Hero” is sent from the assembly of gods into a world of violence where he is broken and slain, only to return resurrected and call his beloved into a new realm of peace and joy, a land with a “throne like the sun in a peaceful evening vale.”⁸⁸ The “Hero” echoes the traditional Welsh folklore in his claim of having stood beside Arthur and Urien Rheged in their own battles before entering his own. “Yr Arwr” declares “Bûm y ddraig pan godai gad,” that he “was a dragon when conflict arose” and that he was “A bûm darian I’r gwan gynt,” a “shield to the weak.”⁸⁹ With such imagery, “The Hero” takes on the role of the ancient bards as declared by Iolo Morganwg and other Welsh nationalists, speaking wisdom to an entire people and inspiring a just but tragic fight in the hopes of achieving a true, long-lasting peace. He does not value war for its own sake, preferring instead the “heulwennau euraidd a thelynorion” (golden sunlights and harpists) of his own home. But he does go to battle because it

⁸⁶ Huw Edwards, “1917 and the L.G. Legacy,” in *Hanes Gwyl Hedd Wyn and the Black Chair Festival*, 2018, p. 43.

⁸⁷ Rees, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Textual references from “Yr Arwr” are all provided from Ellis Evans, “Yr Arwr,” translated by Len Shurey, Liverpool Welsh, 2017.

⁸⁹ Ellis Evans, “Yr Arwr,” translated by Len Shurey, Liverpool Welsh, 2017.

is his duty, because he must, becoming “yn rhan o wynt chwerw y nos (part of the bitter wind of the night” in the hopes that his sacrifice might have purpose and resurrecting power for his people.

Evan’s Hero himself embodies the heroic figure of Welsh nationalism, for in his being is found *y mab darogan*, a warrior poet, and the embodiment of the *werin*. He is a man of destiny, sent forth from a heavenly realm by gods who declare “Merchyg fel drycin ar flaen y trinoedd,/A baidd a’I anadl yswgwyd byddinoedd (He shall ride his horse like a tempest at the front of the battles/And dare with his breath to shake armies). His purpose is to rescue his people from the darkness of war and destruction, even at the cost of his own life. But while he is a dragon in battle, he is also a poet himself, a protector of secret knowledge and truth like the bards of the Gorsedd. He declares that in his battles “Heliais I ti feddyliau;/Erod pob rhyw wybod ros/Anwyd om deall dinos (I gathered thoughts for you;/For you every kind of rose knowledge/Was born of my understanding undarkened.” So “Yr Arwr” appears as both a hero of prophecy like Arthur or Owain Glyndwr, as well as a poet bearing the sacred flame of knowledge for generations beyond himself; yet, there is in his bearing a simplicity as well. When “Yr Arwr” appears to his beloved following his journey to war, he returns broken as “Rhywy welw rwyg rywelwr oedd/Ar hyn yn dod o’r tinoedd: Nid oedd hud na golud gwyn/I’w grwm olwg, wr melyn” (Some pale and tattered warrior he was/Then coming from the battles:/There was no magic or blessed opulence/To his bowed look, a sallow man). There is in “The Hero” a simplicity, a mirroring of the *werin* in Wales, those common folk whose everyday efforts to make a better life for themselves and preserve their culture possesses a greater value than any could individually understand. He is the mythological made human, the ideal made manifest, and as such embodies the national identity of his people as he seeks to bring about their sanctification from war and destruction to peace and prosperity.

But Evans' character also echoes the messianic imagery common to the poetry of his time, battling against injustice and perishing to defend the weak and helpless against evil itself, not simply a single battle or group of foes, only to return, resurrected and restored to glory to usher in a new era of peace. The narrator, the hero's beloved who rejects him in his broken countenance, sees him later "a rei grog draw yn crogi – yn ei waed/Gwelwn e far drengi" (On yonder cross hanging – in his blood/I saw him about to die." Rejected by the ones he loved, "Yr Arwr" nevertheless sacrifices himself in the hopes that his blood might bring about a new age of peace and joy and an end to the conflict of this world. Like Christ who promises his followers an eventual banquet in heaven, "Yr Arwr" eventually is resurrected and calls his beloved "I'w neithior tros y moroedd" (to his wedding feast across the seas). There is thus the thematic shift of heroic warrior, like the Owain Glyndwr's of Welsh history, to the messianic figure imitating Christ, echoing the central role of the church to Welsh life in the early 20th century. "Yr Arwr" is thus the synthesis of the very Welsh nation, the old pagan, Celtic ways finding fulfilment in the Nonconformist, culturally distinct church.

With the creation of "The Hero" in his final piece of poetry, Evans established a literary symbol representing the sacrifice being made by his fellow soldiers in the First World War. It is easy to draw comparisons between Evans and his creation, both poets whose desire for peace is superseded by their duty to defend those they love in the hopes of harkening a better world. But "Yr Arwr" is more than one man marching off to war and searching for meaning in his fear. "The Hero" is the culmination of the Welsh experience of a grief-borne purpose that never loses hope for a future in which the troubles of life can be overcome and the beauty of peace known by all. At the end of the awdl, "Yr Arwr" declares that "Nid oedd yn fy enaid i/Onid wyneb a daniwyd/Yn nef pob anfarwol nwyd" (I will be shown forth by fire/In every flaming countenance/In a heaven of all immortal passion). Evans

invites his readers to join in that purposeful fight for a better world, for that “heaven of all immortal passion” that transcends all the struggles and destruction of war. It is both a hopeful elegy for all the men who died in the First World War, as well as an offer for all to become heroes of their own lives.

“Yr Arwr” thus demonstrates the fullness of Welsh national imagery, combining the fierce pride of ancient Welsh heroes with the Christian imagery found so widely in the Nonconformist chapels in which Evans and so many other Welsh people had been raised. It is full of natural imagery that conjures up comparisons to the most prominent of the Romantics, but it possesses a bitterness and fear for reality found in Modernist writings, especially those influenced by the First World War. As a piece of art, “Yr Arwr” represents maturation of Welsh national literature and the complicated themes with which it dealt while too often critiqued by outsiders as quaint or backward-looking. But more than this, “Yr Arwr” captures the grief and struggles of the First World War as experienced by both the men in battle and the women they left behind to suffer their loss. The “Hero” thus came to embody, in a way that is not naïve or untouched by grief, all those young men who had perished in France and Belgium in the hopes of securing peace, and the poem concludes with the declaration that “A better age is about to dawn/on fire from fame of my death.” Like the heroic figures of Welsh nationalism, Evan’s “Hero” is one whose life and death are spent in the service of his people, sacrificing everything that they might come to know peace in a world too often torn apart by violence and destruction.

But of course, for Ellis Evans to pass into the legend of Hedd Wyn required intentional cultivation on the part of his friends after his death. They, like all crafters of national identity, ensured that his legacy was remembered in such a way as to inspire the Welsh people. Within weeks of the Eisteddfod, “a committee was formed immediately to begin the process of commemoration... The first responsibility of the

Remembrance Committee was to publish a volume of Hedd Wyn's poetry."⁹⁰ Within the year following Evan's death, *Cerddi'r Bugail* (The Shepherd's Poems) had been published, and the proceeds of the book were turned into a fund for a statue of Evans that was unveiled in Trawsfynydd in 1923 and still remains there today. The statue to this day is certainly a Romantic depiction of Evans, a depiction of the poet as a shepherd with a stoic gaze and furrowed brow that is ironic given how poor of a shepherd he was in real life. But this embodiment was intentional. His supporters who wanted to continue his life into legend intentionally had the statue designed in such a way as to be universal and mythological, heroic and larger than life. The unveiling of the statue was a great success, however, as "hundreds of people arrived at the village to be present at the unveiling ceremony...E. Vincent Evans, said that the memorial was a nation's tribute to one of the most gifted young men ever produced by Wales, and that Hedd Wyn's story would inspire future generations."⁹¹ Ellis Evans had been immortalised in his home village as Hedd Wyn, a national symbol for the Welsh people.

It is easy to see how Evans became this national symbol following his death. Because he was himself not well known, he was an easy figure upon which to place the dreams and aspirations of all the young men of Wales who had perished in the First World War. When his friend and fellow poet R. Williams Parry wrote "Brothers, remember in earnest the lad,/When the moon shines brightest:/Sadder it was than sadness/To lay the frail poet to rest," he helped transform Evans from an individual man of Trawsfynydd to the embodiment of the Welsh experience of the First World War.⁹² Every man who died in the war was now Evans, immortalized alongside him. Every woman who waited in vain for her husband or son to return

⁹⁰ Llwyd, *The Story of Hedd Wyn*, p. 147.

⁹¹ Llwyd, *The Story of Hedd Wyn*, p. 155.

⁹² Llwyd, *Out of the Fire of Hell*, p. 229.

from a war that had claimed his life was Evans' mother and sisters. The Black Chair itself became a symbol of this loss, a potent image of the beauty of peace that was stolen from young men in the fires of war. Evans, as Hedd Wyn, is immortal, and the Black Chair "epitomises the waste, the futility and the horror of war. It has become a national icon, and has always been a symbol. Hedd Wyn himself represents all the young men of Wales, and ultimately of Europe, who were slaughtered in vain on the killing fields of the Great War."⁹³ Evans' status as a hero of the Welsh national identity, and a symbol of its sufferings during war, was thus firmly established by those who knew and loved him following his death.

But more than this, what makes Evans a uniquely Welsh figure, and thus so popular among the Welsh people today, is his undeniable Welshness. He was certainly not the only poet inspired by the First World War, nor the only to serve in the conflict. The war was filled with countless poets such as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Edward Thomas, Robert Graves, Francis Ledwidge (who died on the same day in the same battle as Evans), and many others. Some of these (Owen, Thomas, and Graves in particular), even came from Wales or were connected to Wales (Sassoon served in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, though he was not himself Welsh). But Evans was Welsh through and through. Born in Trawsfynydd, he existed as the agrarian representation of *y werin*, poor shepherd though he was. He was raised in Nonconformist chapels and possessed the liberal, even radical leanings that so often marked Welsh national politics. His background was humble and connected him to the collective experience of the Welsh people as cultivated and praised by nationalists. Here was not some university educated, gentrified Welshman made too English. He was Welsh, through and through, and claimed thus by his fellow Welsh people.

⁹³ Llwyd, *The Story of Hedd Wyn*, p. 167.

Evans also represented the continuation of the bardic orders. As a young man with little formal education, he represented the potential of the poetical elements of the Welsh nation to bring forth greatness from the most common of individuals. Given his name of Hedd Wyn by a fellow member of the Gorsedd, he was an heir to a lineage whose history had been cultivated to connect back for centuries. That a man from such humble beginnings could accomplish so much, that he could reach the pinnacle of Welsh literary recognition, stood as a testament to the national traditions of the Welsh people and the bardic orders' role in preserving growing Welsh culture, no matter what opposition they might face. And Evans was a warrior, though he died in his first battle. He died defending his countrymen and the rights of all people of small nations, as Lloyd George put it in his rallying calls to the Welsh soldiers. Like Owain Glyndwr, he was established as a tragic martial hero who desired only peace but fought so that peace might be established. Evans, as Hedd Wyn, thus embodied in various ways the many strains of Welsh national heroes in a story that resonated through a nation grief-stricken by war.

Evans also possessed a quality that differentiated himself more importantly from his fellow poets of the war. Soldiers like Wilfred Owen and Robert Graves possessed ties to Wales that were celebrated, but they were also celebrated throughout the United Kingdom. These poets wrote in English, and thus their writings were adopted and embraced by people throughout Britain. Evans, however, wrote in Welsh, and the vast majority of his poetry has been published exclusively in Welsh throughout the century following his death. He thus embodied that essential aspect of the Welsh language in the Welsh national identity. The Welsh people laid claim to him; he was theirs through and through, and is much still to this day. Thus, as Khelif's studies demonstrate, his work furthers the national consciousness of

Wales.⁹⁴ It provides uniquely Welsh space in which the national identity can be furthered and upheld, shaped throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Such has been the continued importance of Evans to the Welsh people that in a popular survey of Welsh heroes, Evans was ranked 37th out of a hundred, coming before more widely known figures such as Sir Anthony Hopkins and TE Lawrence.⁹⁵

This importance placed on Evans and the role he plays in the Welsh national identity to this day is also demonstrated in ways that he has been commemorated in the recent years surrounding the centenary of his death. In 2013, Gillian Clarke, then the National Poet of Wales, commemorated Evans with her poem “Eisteddfod of the Black Chair.”⁹⁶ She remembers him as a man of peace who “foretold blood in the rain reddening the fields under the shadows of crows.”⁹⁷ Beyond the works of contemporary poets, people and groups throughout Wales hosted events dedicated to Evans in 2017, one hundred years following his death. His home of Yr Ysgwrn, following a period of renovation for several years, reopened in 2017 for visitors to once more step into Evan’s life and see the home he left behind. The house exists as it did during Evan’s life (even the wallpaper of the kitchen has been meticulously restored to how it likely would have appeared in the year before his death), and the estate gives visitors the opportunity to see how the Evans family lived at the turn of the 20th century.⁹⁸ A new collection of Evan’s translated poems was also published that year, featuring the translations and introduction of Gruffudd Antur.⁹⁹ For the first time, English-speaking audiences could gain a closer look into the work and inspiration of Evans to better understand the man behind the legend.

⁹⁴ Khleif, p. 64.

⁹⁵ Allison Coleman, et al. *100 o Arwyr Cymru* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 2004.)

⁹⁶ Kenneth Morgan, *Revolution to Devolution: Reflections on Welsh Democracy* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), p. 155.

⁹⁷ Clarke, Gillian. “Eisteddfod of the Black Chair,” in *Zoology* (2017), p. 105.

⁹⁸ Snowdonia National Park Authority. Yr Ysgwrn: the Home of Hedd Wyn, Trawsfynydd, Blaenau Ffeistiniog.

⁹⁹ Gruffudd Antur, *The Shepherd War Poet: Hedd Wyn (Ellis H. Evans 1887-1917)*. Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2017)

Elsewhere, the National Eisteddfod of Wales in 2017, hosted in Anglesey, paid homage to Evans throughout much of its proceedings. They featured a theatrical production of his final days in Belgium that was held in the first evenings of the weeklong festivities, and the theme for the Chairing of the Bard ceremony was “Yr Arwr” to honour the work Evans submitted that earned him the Black Chair. Even to one illiterate in Welsh, the proceedings were moving, full of respect to a man whose “very death has come to embody the impact of the First World War on Wales.”¹⁰⁰ In September of 2017, on the weekend closest to the anniversary of his posthumous victory at the Eisteddfod of 1917, the Liverpool Welsh society hosted its own memorial and local eisteddfod to honour Evans. Leonard Shurey’s English translation of “Yr Arwr” was featured for English (and in this case, American) audiences, and historians such as D. Ben Rees, Huw Edwards of the BBC, and Peredur Lynch spent a sunny Saturday speaking to a group of almost two-hundred guests from all around the world. A renovated memorial was unveiled in Birkenhead Park, where the National Eisteddfod of 1917 had taken place. The family of Eugene Vanfleteren, the Belgian refugee who had carved the Black Chair, even sent a letter detailing their ancestor’s gratitude to men such as Evans whose battles and deaths helped him to eventually return home in peace. A moving ceremony for all gathered there, it was an example of the respect and honour paid to Evans and the special role he plays in the hearts of the Welsh people even a hundred years after his death.

These ceremonies and memorials reveal how Evans serves as an excellent case study into the Welsh national identity as constructed following the 19th and 20th centuries. He is part of the nation’s history, particularly a time where great suffering was endured but bravery demonstrated. The pacifism exhibited in his work and emphasized by his friends and historians further the image of a peace-loving Welsh

¹⁰⁰ Antur, p. 4.

people who are nevertheless willing to fight for justice and freedom. He is a hero upon whose shoulders the weight of history can be placed, a figure whose life was cut short and thus can serve as a legend beyond himself. The careful cultivation of his memory transformed him from a single shepherd from Trawsfynydd to a national icon, and the works of poets from his time and today such as R. Williams Parry and Gillian Clarke emphasise his role in his people's national consciousness. Even more than other Welsh national icons such as Owain Glyndwr, Evans is beyond reproach. He fought for Britain but lived a uniquely Welsh life, dying in service of king and country and representing "all the young men of Wales" who perished in the First World War.¹⁰¹ And the fact that he wrote almost exclusively in Welsh, and until 2017 was almost impossible to read in any other language, helps him serve as defender of the Welsh language, a figure of its beauty and its nobility. The English translation of "Yr Arwr" is beautiful enough, but it is nothing compared to the craft and expertise demonstrated in the original Welsh. That Evans, in his almost legendary role of Hedd Wyn, meets all three criteria presented under Althusser's framework of national identity, explains why he sits in such a prominent place in the Welsh consciousness. He is a hero for the nation, a son of Wales who represents its best qualities and can be co-opted by no other nation.

¹⁰¹ Llwyd, *The Story of Hedd Wyn*, p. 167.

Conclusion

The story of Ellis Evans, and his immortalisation as Hedd Wyn throughout Wales, thus serves as an excellent case study into the development and persistence of Welsh Nationalism under the frameworks provided by Althusser, Foucault, and Anderson. National identity arises through the careful cultivation of a shared history, often inventing traditions and practices that are then claimed to inherently belong to the national heritage.¹⁰² In Wales, antiquarians and nationalists demonstrated this through an emphasis on the Celtic past of the Welsh people, looking back to the bardic traditions and creating new practices they claimed belonged to their druidic ancestors. Elsewhere, historians such as John Rhys embraced an enthusiasm on the part of scholars such as Matthew Arnold to respect what they viewed as Celtic ethnic characteristics, boasting about the idea that the Welsh people “participate in this greater impulsiveness and liveliness of imagination.”¹⁰³ Welsh nationalists used practices such as the gorsedd and eisteddfodau to emphasise the Welsh people as enthusiastic, pacifistic people whose creativity and vision were worthy of respect. In Evans, they found the perfect image of a poetic shepherd who loved peace but was struck down by war and violence defending his people and the freedom of other small nations.

Alongside Evans, Welsh nationalists embraced other national heroes, turning specifically to men like Owain Glyndwr whose efforts and exploits ever sought the advancement of the Welsh people. The emphasis on redeemer-heroes, almost messianic figures seemingly fated to return one day, gave an enthusiasm to the Welsh national movement to work towards a brighter future worthy of such

¹⁰² Eric Hobsawm and Terence Rangers, p. 1.

¹⁰³ John Rhys and David Brynmor-Jones, p. 591.

heroes.¹⁰⁴ As the emphasis on pacifism grew throughout the Welsh national movement, led by many of the Nonconformist chapels and ministries throughout the nation, the Welsh people turned to men like Evans, peaceful figures who stood for the Welsh experience. Evans' "Yr Arwr" exhibits this passion for heroic figures destined to return and usher in a brighter future for the people of Wales, culturally as well as politically.

Finally, the Welsh national identity became more and more tied to the Welsh language, finding in the language the national "pedigree" that separated it from its English neighbours.¹⁰⁵ Specifically following attacks on the language from the English, Welsh national leaders promoted it as a lively language full of power and passion, one that deserved respect in a modern society rather than being tossed into the waste bin of history. Again, Evans serves as a perfect example of the role the language plays in the Welsh national movement. For one hundred years after his death, Evans' work was accessible only in Welsh. He belonged to the men and women of his nation in a way that no other nation could ever attempt to claim him, a facet that separated him from other wartime poets such as Wilfred Owen. Even now, with translations being published, he remains uniquely Welsh, with the translations only directing readers to the increased beauty in the original Welsh. Though a wider audience can begin to appreciate his story and honour him, he belongs to Wales as that shepherd-poet from Trawsfynydd.

Through the life and legend of Ellis Evans, particularly in the memorials and commemorations of him as Hedd Wyn even a century after his death, the nature of the Welsh national identity is demonstrated more thoroughly. The work of Althusser demonstrates why Evans should retain such a special place in the hearts of the Welsh people, and how his connection to their cultivated, Celtic past establishes him as

¹⁰⁴ Henken, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ Khleif, p. 64.

national icon. He is thus an essential case study into the development of Welsh nationalism and how it has transformed and shifted throughout the years, a poet worth studying and remembering both for his work itself and the beauty and tragedy in conveys, as well as the way his memory is maintained and honoured throughout Wales. In Yr Ysgwrn, Y Gadair Ddu might sit empty, forever awaiting the return of its champion who perished in the fields of Passchendaele, but the memory of Ellis Evans persists, just as persists the national identity of Wales in the hearts of its countrymen.

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