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**To what extent do the treatment of adultery and the practice of
the *ceffyl pren* reflect nineteenth century Welsh social values?**

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Introduction

The nineteenth century experienced a gradual separation of the spheres of home and work.¹ In this separation women stayed in the former whilst men dominated the latter. This separation could be established and lived only due to an increasing emphasis on, and promotion of the institutions of family and marriage which came to be at the centre of people's everyday lives. Its influence extended to all areas so that it provided the basis on which society was established.² The effects Victorian ideas of marriage had on both genders were felt by them in both the public and private spheres and influenced their roles and behaviour for decades.

Historians have discussed a wide-ranging variety of topics related to marriage, from a history of the institution to laws concerning Victorian marriages and the ideals in the era. In the forefront is the masterful chronicler of the Victorian time G. M. Young to whose work historians still frequently refer.³ Perkin discusses the evolution of marriages throughout the Victorian period and the ever-changing laws concerning the institution.⁴ Historians such as Tosh, Mintz and Wohl detail the topic of the private lives of married couples in this period and Atkinson and Horstman discuss divorce and the following social implications for women.⁵ Most research regarding adultery in the nineteenth century has been done by

¹ Rosemary Jones, 'Women, Community and Collective Action: The Ceffyl Pren Tradition' in *Our Mother's Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's History, 1830-1939*, A. John ed. (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 24-47.

² G. M. Young, *Victorian England: A Portrait of an Age* Kindle Edition (Reading Essentials, [1939] 2018), position 2723.

³ Young, *Victorian England*.

⁴ Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth Century England* Kindle Edition (Taylor & Francis e-Library, [1989] 2003).

⁵ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (Bath, 1999); Steven Mintz, *A Prison of Expectations: The Family in Victorian Culture* (New York, 1983); Anthony S. Wohl, *The Victorian Family* Kindle Edition (Abingdon, 2016); Diane Atkinson, *The Criminal Conversation of Mrs. Norton: Victorian England's "Scandal of the Century" and the Fallen Socialite Who Changed Women's Lives Forever* (Falkirk, 2013); Allen Horstman, 'Victorian Divorce', in *New York: St. Martin's Press*, 20 (1985). Note however, that I was not able to access the works of Mintz, Atkinson and Horstman due to Covid-19 restrictions.

focusing on its portrayal in literary works. Leckie for instance looks at Joyce's *Ulysses* and compares its representation of adultery to Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.⁶ Edelstein on the other hand discusses adultery by August Egg's triptych.⁷ Moreover, historians have discussed the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 that introduced judicial divorce in England and Wales particularly regarding a woman's perspective and consequently how adultery was being dealt with on an official level.⁸

However, this is mostly done in an English or wider British context rather than a particularly Welsh one and despite the attempts by historian such as Davies to remedy this, there is still much to be done to fill this gap. The same applies to research regarding the policing of and responses to adultery on a more informal level in Wales. Social historians seem to have been preoccupied with formal political institutions that tended to distract from the persistence of earlier political forms of community protest and therefore have neglected the importance of informal policing such as the *ceffyl pren*. It seems therefore that less formal strategies and networks for the regulation of community affairs and the formation and reaffirmation of collective political consciousness need to be addressed. Amongst the historians working in this area are Ireland, Davies, and Jones. While Ireland focuses on the change of the *ceffyl pren* practice during the nineteenth century to show that it was not particularly old nor Welsh in nature, Davies studies the emotions and life experiences of individual people within Welsh society giving insight into a large range of social topics.⁹ Particularly relevant for this

⁶ Barbara Leckie, 'The Simple Case of Adultery', in *James Joyce Quarterly*, 40 (2003), pp. 729-752.

⁷ T. J. Edelstein, 'August Egg's Triptych: A Narrative of Victorian Adultery', in *The Burlington Magazine*, 125 (1983), pp. 202-2012.

⁸ Isabel Crowhurst, Sasha Roseneil et al., *The Tenacity of the Couple-Norm: Intimate citizenship regimes in a changing Europe* (UCL Press, 2020), p. 46.

⁹ Richard Ireland, 'Absence of Evidence or Evidence of Absence? Welsh Extra-Curial Dispute Settlement revisited', in *Welsh History Review/ Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru*, 30 (2020), pp. 56-87; Russell Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak, a Social History of Wales and the Welsh, 1776-1871* (Cardiff, 2005), Russell Davies, *Secret Sins: Sex, Violence and Society in Carmarthenshire 1870-1920* Kindle Edition (Cardiff, 2012), Russell Davies, *Sex, Sects and*

dissertation are his insights into the connection between morality, the institution of family and adultery. Jones looks at the *ceffyl pren* to assess the role of women in the day-to-day affairs of their immediate communities and more overtly political expressions of communal solidarity.¹⁰

Among others she considers issues such as adulterers and wife-beaters.

This dissertation will, by looking at the ways in which Welsh society saw and treated adultery, show that although it was a patriarchal society in which men wielded power and courts clearly favoured them, nevertheless a bottom-up change towards women as well as amongst women could be detected in certain contexts. It will show that although there was not necessarily a change in the way the courts or men saw women there was nevertheless a change in the way the community was rallying to support people they perceived had been wronged. By considering social values first by means of the portrayal of court cases regarding adultery in newspaper articles and later by analysing *ceffyl pren* occurrences and attempting to show a link between the custom and morality, this dissertation offers a slightly different angle both on the study of adultery, particularly in a Welsh context, as well as to the *ceffyl pren*.

With this it aims to contribute to the work of those historians who have considered the social implications based on informal political forms namely recent works by Jones, Davies, and Ireland. In doing so it will provide a different approach to the topic of marriage, family, and adultery in nineteenth century Wales.

The first chapter will define, contextualise, and discuss British nineteenth century social values. For this, it will look at the institutions of marriage and family, their evolution, the expectations they brought with them and imposed on society as well as ask how adultery fit

Society: 'Pain and Pleasure': A Social History of Wales and the Welsh, 1870-1945 Kindle Edition (Cardiff, 2018).

¹⁰ Jones, 'Women, Community and Collective Action', pp. 24-47, Rosemary Jones, 'Popular culture, policing, and the 'disappearance' of the *ceffyl pren* in Cardigan, c. 1837-1850', in *Ceredigion, Journal of the Cardiganshire Antiquarian Society*, 11 (1992), pp. 19-39.

in. It will look at the status of these institutions as the most powerful image of Victorian Wales and consider how following the *Reports of the Commissioners of Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales* in 1847 they were given a particularly Welsh nature as they were used to defend Welsh morality by supporting Evangelical Christianity to achieve moral purity.¹¹

Chapter two will look at a variety of English and Welsh court cases reported in Welsh newspapers. By focusing on how they are being portrayed it will seek to identify nineteenth century social values. To accommodate possible change throughout the century this will be done in three-time spans. First, 1804-1836, the Georgian time. Second, 1837-1870 the beginning of the Victorian period and thus the official advent of Victorian values. Thirdly, 1871-1900 as the beginning of this period has seen the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 in place for some time, is situated right between the Married Women's Property Act of 1870 and the Infant Custody Act of 1973, as well as witness to social changes caused by the Amendment to the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1878 and the Married Women's Property Act of 1882.¹² It will then consider the double standard that stressed the importance of sexual restraint for girls whilst allowing young men 'the freedom of their senses' and consider the emphasis on outward respectability.¹³

The third chapter collects data on *ceffyl pren* appearances with a particular focus on adultery by looking at English and Welsh newspapers. It will go on to discuss how these findings relate to social values of the time and seek to assess the extent to which these findings might offer insights into wider social structures and changes and therefore help in understanding the means whereby social and gender values and relations are constructed and reinforced. It will consider how the *ceffyl pren*'s treatment of adultery demonstrates wider social values that are

¹¹ Davies, *Secret Sins*, position 3250.

¹² For an explanation of the consequences of these Acts see Jennifer Phegley, *Courtship and Marriage in Victorian England* Kindle Edition (Santa Barbara, 2012), positions 78-84.

¹³ Davies, *Secret Sins*, position 3328.

intimately entwined with a society built around believes in the institutions of family and marriage.

Chapter One:

Setting the scene - Marriage, family, and social values.

Until the nineteenth century adultery had, at least on the part of men, been something that was not talked about but was also not frowned upon overly much. Men thus had been rather free to seek their fleshly pleasures outside their marriage beds and often did so. Adulteresses were a completely different matter. If a woman cuckolded her husband, not only did she potentially threaten his family line with another man's child, but she also ridiculed him and exposed his masculinity to question.¹⁴ As one newspaper asserts the 'injured husband' has lost 'his peace and honour'.¹⁵ The same article attests to the large number of transgressions by calling adultery a 'fashionable vice'. It continues stating that 'at present, the laws though severe, are almost obsolete; and the punishment commonly inflicted upon adulterers, is so trivial and inadequate to the crime, that we cannot but recognize in it a near approach to the popish practice of indulgencies'.¹⁶ This article was written in 1812 and a connection to the increasing belief in the need for love and companionship in marriage starting at the beginning of the nineteenth century can be drawn from its harsh judgement on adultery. While before the mid-seventeenth century families had been largely patriarchal and authoritarian, by the dawn of the nineteenth century companionate marriage had become a common aspiration in Britain bringing with it a whole new set of expectations for both husband and wife. Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries families had slowly evolved, transforming into tighter units based as much on affection as on social status or economics. The ideal became the companionate marriage, and love was considered a crucial component thus giving those

¹⁴ Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 3.

¹⁵ 'The Punishment of Adultery', *North Wales Gazette* (23 January 1812) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3872130/3872131/3/adultery> (Accessed 10 May 2021).

¹⁶ 'The Punishment of Adultery', *North Wales Gazette* (23 January 1812) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3872130/3872131/3/adultery> (Accessed 10 May 2021).

who married more control over choosing their partners but also more responsibility to make the marriage work. Marriage was no longer only a transaction between families that was agreed upon and decided by the heads of households; instead, it was considered as a 'union of companions who were supposed to emotionally enrich each other's lives'.¹⁷ Coontz argues that love's sentimentalisation of marriage in the Victorian period was a radical social experiment as it was the first time in history that love in marriage was the primary focus of emotions, obligations and satisfactions.¹⁸ This ideal of companionate domesticity seemed to be exemplified by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Although it was, her holding power over her husband and the nation was not part of public aspirations, they nevertheless seemed to embody Victorian family values and served as a model for Britain. Whether their example was as important to the Welsh as to the British is questionable. Coontz argues further, that unfortunately 'hopes for love and intimacy were continually frustrated by the rigidity of nineteenth century gender roles and many struggled with the contrast between ideal and the reality of marriage'.¹⁹

From 1837 onward, a new era dawned in which people considered it axiomatic that the home was a family's foundation and the family the cornerstone of Welsh life. As such, it was within the bounds of this institution that moral, religious, ethical, and social precepts of good citizenship were first learned and its importance was seldomly questioned.²⁰ Few aspects were regarded with greater reverence than the home and the family so that it was generally agreed that it should be nurtured within the bounds of matrimony. William Williams, Pantycelyn, believed it to be '*rhodd sanctaidd o Dduw*' (a holy gift from God) and about eighty four

¹⁷ Phegley, *Courtship and Marriage in Victorian England*, position 114.

¹⁸ Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* Kindle Edition (New York, 2005), position 3557.

¹⁹ Coontz, *Marriage, a History*, position 3560.

²⁰ Anthony S. Wohl, 'Introduction' in *The Victorian Family, Structure and Stresses*, Anthony S. Wohl ed. Kindle Edition (Abingdon, 2016), position 93.

percent of females aged fifteen during 1850-2 in Wales could expect to have been married at least once when reaching their fifties.²¹

Most obsessive in their search for love were Christians of all denominations as God's love was above and beyond earthly human love. Yet it was this emphasis on love that led to tensions in Welsh religions in the nineteenth century. While needs of the soul were freely and with emphasis disclosed, the needs of the body were met with strong prohibitions as they were believed to be potentially dangerous to the social order. Davies refers to William Williams, Pantycelyn's marriage guidebook as it elucidates that living without sin meant that all sexual behaviour should be confined into the private walls of marriage, they should be lived without pleasures and never on Sundays.²² He warned that to lead a good and godly life people should protect themselves from the sinful lusts of the flesh. Adulterous relationships thus were unacceptable. In this context some historians even suggest that Victorians were not very good at sex and have portrayed them as rather repressive and repressed.²³ Gay however proposes that Victorians did enjoy mutual satisfaction in their marriage beds.²⁴ Zisowitz Stearns and Stearns, amongst others, link this possible misconception to the amount of literature the Victorians published on the lack of female sexuality and argue that this might not reflect the reality accurately.²⁵ The *South Wales Press* for instance stated 'the highest manhood and the noblest womanhood are not compatible with the pleasures of the senses'.²⁶

²¹ Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak*, p. 286.

²² Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak*, p. 272.

²³ For example, Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-19th Century England* (New York, 1977), and Peter Cominos, 'Innocent Femina Sensualis in Unconscious Conflict' in *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, Martha Vicinus ed. (Bristol, 1972).

²⁴ Peter Gay has insightfully analysed this topic. See, for example *Education of the Senses Vol I: The Bourgeois Experience, Victoria to Freud* (Oxford, 1984). For a discussion on the recent views of historians, see Carol Zisowitz Stearns and Peter N. Stearns, 'Victorian Sexuality: Can Historians Do It Better?', in *Journal of Social History*, 18 (1985), pp. 625-34.

²⁵ Stearns and Stearns, 'Victorian Sexuality', p. 627.

²⁶ *South Wales Press* (3 November 1898), quoted in Davies, *Secret Sins*, position 3241.

The expectation of a sin free live that restricted physical love led incompatible notions of love and lust ‘for although children were frequently born, they were never made’.²⁷ This had far-reaching consequences for Welsh society as the perception of the Welsh people’s moral character was central. While it is often thought that the beginning of the nineteenth century saw happy and hedonistic Georgians who were ‘romping and revelling in ‘an age of scandal’’, and ended with ‘holy and hypocritical Victorians’ who placed much emphasis on being earnest,²⁸ it is the years following the *Reports of the Commissioners of Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales* in 1847 that transformed the concepts of family and marriage and gave them a particularly Welsh touch as they were used to counter the report’s accusations.

The Treachery of the Blue Books as the reports came to be referred to by the Welsh proved to be a turning point in many spheres one of which was for women in Wales.²⁹ Besides being bigoted in religious and cultural terms, they contained a level of misogyny that reveals much about contemporary social values. Welsh women were accused to be unchaste and described as follows:

They learn anything but delicacy of thought and feeling, and when they grow to womanhood and marry, they know next to nothing of the management of a house ...

The loss of chastity before marriage (the scandal of the principality) is the rule rather

²⁷ Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak*, p. 263.

²⁸ Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak*, p. 263.

²⁹ The phrase ‘Treachery of the Blue Books’ refers to the apocryphal ‘treachery of the long Knives’, during which Saxon invaders are supposed to have betrayed and murdered Welsh chieftains around fifteen hundred years earlier. It was minted by the Baptist writer Robert Jones who in 1854 published a furious rebuttal to the reports in Welsh. See Richard Marsden. (2021), Block 5: ‘Wales awakening?’, *A329 The Making of Welsh History*, [online] available at <https://openedx.open.ac.uk/courses/course-v1:ou+A329+2020J/courseware/24ee74fc9b434a63811aa91b616db554/50dce9e317a0438a994d7d704ad9a242/> (Accessed 20 May 2021).

than the exception. I do not think the duties of wives and mothers are well understood, still less fulfilled.³⁰

To disprove these allegations a strengthened emphasis was placed on the values and virtues of purity, chastity, and marriage. Especially for women these characteristics were seen as essential and were often paired with sobriety, honesty, faithfulness, cleanliness and thrift.³¹ The concept of separate spheres which had become increasingly powerful, that considered women as *'yr angel ar yr aelwyd'* (the angel on the hearth) who belonged in the home- *'yn y tŷ, dyna lle y dylai merched fod'* (in the house, that is where women should be)-³² where they were responsible for everything moral was now the guideline along which ideal domesticity could be realised. As *Y Gymraes* elucidates in 1998:

. . . *Cartrefi Cymry i raddau helaeth sydd yn gyfrifol am yr hyn ydyw cymeriad y Cymru. [and added] A'r mamau i raddau mor helaeth a hyny, sydd yn gyfrifol am yr hyn yw y cartref.*³³

The family with the angel mother as 'God's policewoman' at its heart thus became inextricably linked with the Christian cause and it was the base provided by the religious household from which the outside world's evils could be faced.³⁴ It needs to be stressed that although often associated with middle-class society, the concept of separate spheres was not a class-specific ideology but was embraced and supported by a wide cross-section of Welsh

³⁰ R. R. W. Lingen, Symons, J. C. and Johnson, H. R. V. (1847) *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales* (London, 1847), quoted in Richard, Marsden. (2021), Block 5: Competing identities, *A329 The Making of Welsh History*, [online] available at <https://openedx.open.ac.uk/courses/course-v1:ou+A329+2020J/courseware/24ee74fc9b434a63811aa91b616db554/a0dfed6d1f834b108ec1ba4140b0ddac/> (Accessed 20 May 2021).

³¹ Davies, *Sex, Sects and Society*, position 3704.

³² *Y Gymraes* (1851), quoted in Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak*, p. 264.

³³ 'It is the homes of Wales which are responsible for the Welsh character . . . And it is the mothers to a great extent who are responsible for the character of the homes.' *Y Gymraes*, (1898), quoted in Davies, *Secret Sins*, position 3250.

³⁴ Davies, *Sex, Sects and Society*, position 3711; Davies, *Secret Sins*, position 3282.

society, from working-class and middle-class background.³⁵ Transgressing against or undermining the family's strength and cohesion meant violating what society was built on. As Edwards and Pryse wrote:

Na thwyller chwi; ni chaiff na godinebwyr, nac eilyn-addolwyr, na thorwyr-priodas, na masweddwyr, na gwrw-gydwyr, na lladron, na chybyddion, na meddwon . . . etifeddu teyrnas Duw . . . bydd eu rhan yn y llyn sydd yn llosgi a thân a brwmstan, yr hwn yw yr ail farwolaeth . . . yn ddiâu os na caiff y bygythion sobr a dychrynlyd hyn o lyfr Duw effaith arnat dos rhagot . . . Dos rhagot, ddyn aflan . . . Dos rhagot yn dy lwybrau aflan . . .
*Groesaw Uffern! Groesaw fflamiau! Groesaw gythreiliaid.*³⁶

These strong words emphasise the vulnerable state of the Welsh in the years after the Blue Books. As a meeting organised to protest these allegations reported on in a newspaper in 1848 'It is a wrong thing to blacken the character of one man, but to blacken the character of a whole nation, is a wrong that cannot be borne'.³⁷ This shows that by portraying the whole Welsh nation as 'an unchaste, lying, and dishonest nation, and one that was sinking fast into barbarism' the English had injured the pride of many and triggered a desire to disprove and

³⁵ Rosemary Jones, 'Separate Spheres?': Women, Language and Respectability in Victorian Wales', in *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains 1801-1911*, Geraint H. Jenkins ed. (Cardiff, 2000), p. 180.

³⁶ 'Do not be deceived; neither adulterers, nor the worshippers of false gods, or marriage-breakers, or homosexuals, or thieves, or misers, or drunkards will inherit God's kingdom . . . Their place will be in the lake, which is consumed by fire and brimstone, this which is the second death . . . undoubtedly if these frightening warnings from the word of God have no effect on you then go away vile man . . . Go away along your vile roadway and prepare to Welcome Hell! Welcome flames! Welcome Devil.' Ewyllyswyr Da (E. Edwards and W. Pryse), *Y Sefyllfa Briodasol: Neu Cyfarwyddiadau a Chynghorion i Wy' r a Gwragedd Er Meithrin a Chynnal Heddwch Teuluoedd* (Newport, 1851), p.19, quoted in Davies, *Secret Sins*, position 3288.

³⁷ 'Education in Wales, and the Reports of the Commissioners', *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent* (19 February 1848) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3643856/3643860/16/> (Accessed 15 May 20212).

counter what they perceived as ‘the most bare-faced falsehoods’ in the reports.³⁸ The question of whether the domestic ideal portrayed by Victoria and Albert and largely associated with English middle-class society was as influential to the Welsh as to the English posed earlier is particularly interesting as it seems that its popularity was reinforced by the Blue Books so that in order to contradict the accusations of three Englishmen the Welsh looked at and adopted concepts from their “nemesis”. However, as Davies reinforces the Welsh did not simply copy these notions but instead adapted them to their own circumstances and needs.³⁹

³⁸ ‘Education in Wales, and the Reports of the Commissioners’, *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent* (19 February 1848)
<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3643856/3643860/16/> (Accessed 15 May 20212).

³⁹ Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak*, pp. 265-66.

Chapter Two:

A men's world – The portrayal of court cases of adultery in Welsh newspapers.

During the nineteenth century the rise of local newspapers and religious journals not only provided an outlet for moralists to denounce sexual misdemeanours, but also a forum for public shame through the reporting of cases coming before courts, particularly in respect to adultery. It needs therefore to be kept in mind that newspapers are subject to bias, inaccuracy and prejudice. However, in this chapter's context it is partly these shortcomings that will reflect Welsh social structure and values.

The cases of adultery reported between 1804 and 1836 and viewed in the context of this dissertation were mostly divorce cases. They contain detailed information of the causes leading to the suit. Often, they inform the reader when and where the couple had been married. They show that in this time men seem to have been more easily pardoned if they had committed adultery. If a man had cheated on his wife, the articles often give reasons for his transgressions and make excuses. In a suit promoted by Mrs. Heathcote against her husband on the ground of cruelty and adultery that later ended by him being found guilty the newspaper article contains a detailed statement of Mr. Heathcote about her 'most provoking and insulting manner' which, according to him, had started soon after her marriage.⁴⁰ Overall, the article transmits an image of Mrs. Heathcote as a greedy, manipulating, and mean woman whose sole purpose was to profit off her husband. This is reflected by the article's statement that 'the Court was disposed in such cases to give as much latitude as possible (without

⁴⁰ 'Consistory Court', *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality* (11 June 1833) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4459605/4459606/4/> (Accessed 13 May 2021).

violating the rules of the Court) to the husband to meet the charges.’⁴¹ Another instance is the case *Kendrick v. Kendrick*. Here the wife had started proceedings against her husband on the grounds of cruelty and adultery. In the article however, nothing is revealed as to her story apart from the judge’s decision that ‘the wife had failed to make good charge’.⁴² His counter accusation of her having committed adultery on the other hand is followed up on in more detail. Moreover, based on the testimony of a single male witness whose relationship to either Mr. or Mrs. Kendrick is not stated, the judge decided that the husband had proved his wife’s adultery and ‘declared in favour of the divorce at the suit of the husband’. ‘It was not necessary, as had been argued by the learned counsel for the wife, that there should be two witnesses to establish a charge of adultery. One witness was sufficient if there were any corroborative circumstances to establish such charge.’⁴³

If in contrast a woman had been charged with having committed adultery no excuses were looked for. In a divorce case promoted by Mr. Baring against his wife on the ground of adultery her position to this accusation is not mentioned. Only the circumstances of her adultery and its discovery are thematised. The decisive evidence in form of letters for example had been found by searching her carriage and confiscating her private writing-desk.⁴⁴ This case therefore is not only indicative as to how accusations of a woman having committed adultery were reported about- nothing is being said about her side of the story- but also points the reader to the fact that everything a wife owned also belonged to her husband as there is no

⁴¹ ‘Consistory Court’, *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality* (11 June 1833) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4459605/4459606/4/> (Accessed 13 May 2021).

⁴² ‘Court of Arches’, *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality* (29 May 1832) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4461420/4461421/2/adultery> (Accessed 15 May 2021).

⁴³ ‘Court of Arches’, *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality* (29 May 1832) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4461420/4461421/2/adultery> (Accessed 15 May 2021).

⁴⁴ ‘Untitled’, *The Cambrian* (19 February 1825) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3325870/3325874/19/adultery> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

question as to his right to search her private desk. It demonstrates how women upon their marriage became 'sunk into and merged' with their husband's person.⁴⁵

In other cases where the wife had committed adultery it seems that the articles without questioning further ascribed her transgression to her weak character and when the adultery had been committed by a married woman with a younger man, as evidenced by the case in which Mr. Mortimer accused his wife of adultery, the young man was thought not guilty at all as the woman had clearly seduced him.⁴⁶ In this particular case the thirteen years younger man was decided to have been victim of her seduction on the grounds that he did not elope with her even though the 'adulteress had recourse to the last artifice of her sex, and threatened violence upon herself'.⁴⁷ If the woman was very young however, such excuses were not made as it seems she ought to have known better. Mrs. Bolger for example left her husband shortly after their marriage on the grounds of cruelty. Her young age is not considered to pardon her actions as her husband only a few years older and having lost his father around this time, nevertheless acted properly and directly applied for a restoration of conjugal rights.⁴⁸

This article is of further interest as it is written in a tone that clearly favours Mr. Bolger. It concedes to his adultery but excuses him based on his efforts to get back his wife amongst which he had prosecuted 'this suit, at a very great expense'. It asserts further that although 'it was a deviation from the laws of God, and a breach of his matrimonial vow' it is questionable whether this was his fault: 'But who broke that vow first? Was it the woman who left him to the corruption of the world, or the man, who, thus abandoned, fled to an adulterous

⁴⁵ Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth Century England*, position 28.

⁴⁶ 'Court of King's Bench', *The Carmarthen Journal and South Wales Weekly Advertiser* (14 December 1811) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3676784/3676788/22/adultery> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

⁴⁷ 'Court of King's Bench', *The Carmarthen Journal and South Wales Weekly Advertiser* (14 December 1811) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3676784/3676788/22/adultery> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

⁴⁸ 'Consistorial Court, Feb. 3, 1815', *North Wales Gazette* (30 March 1815) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3872940/3872941/3/adultery> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

connection as a refuge from his sorrows and disappointment.’⁴⁹ The wife thus is blamed for leaving her husband to the corruptions of the world. This fits the then prevailing view that women were to attend dutifully to the needs of their husband. In abandoning him she had not only compromised her own morality but also condemned her husband.

Overall and as particularly the suit of Mrs. Mytton against her husband who had over years treated her cruelly and repeatedly had committed adultery demonstrates, it seems that the court was more inclined to allow for a divorce if it was the man who promoted the suit. In this particular example the article states ‘It is not necessary for the Court to detail the facts of the case; indeed no expressions can be found that could describe them in general terms, and to detail them would be disgusting, and offensive, and injurious to public morals’.⁵⁰ However, despite this rather untypical clear concession to her being without fault whatsoever the article concludes in a rather regretful tone stating ‘I am under the necessity of proceeding to pronounce the sentence of separation prayed on the part of the wife’. Additional evidence can be found in the Right Hon. Dr. Duigenan’s reported statement that ‘It is not conducive to the end of marriage that adulterous people should live together, particularly where it occurs on the part of the women’⁵¹ Note that divorces were granted on the ground of adultery alone if the woman had committed adultery. If a woman petitioned for divorce however, adultery alone was insufficient. In cases where the adultery was committed with a sister of the wife, thereby

⁴⁹ ‘Consistorial Court, Feb. 3, 1815’, *North Wales Gazette* (30 March 1815) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3872940/3872941/3/adultery> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

⁵⁰ ‘Arches’ Court. Nov. 11.’, *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality* (22 November 1831) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4459460/4459461/3/adultery> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

⁵¹ ‘Consistorial Court, Feb. 3, 1815’, *North Wales Gazette* (30 March 1815) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3872940/3872941/3/adultery> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

adding an incestuous notion to the case, a divorce could be sued for by the wife on the grounds of adultery alone.⁵²

In cases where children were involved the case of Mr. and Mrs. Smith shows that it was the husband who decided where the child was and what was best for it.⁵³ This injustice seems to have prevailed into this dissertation's next chosen time span 1837-1870. In 1848 in response to a very public case in which a wife, who had for a long time endured her husband's cruelty and adultery was only granted a separation from her husband and no custody for her children, an article states the necessity of a change in the law. The author further complains that 'the attainment of a divorce is almost hopeless, not only on account of the expense and difficulty of proceedings; but because Parliament, though it has often granted divorce, at the suit of husbands, has hardly ever been known to do so at the suit of wives, however great the injuries they may have sustained.'⁵⁴ Although the article is rather unique in its favourable tone towards the female gender, it does show the devastating situation most women found themselves in before the series of Acts, referred to in the introduction, was released.

The research of newspaper articles about adultery in the period 1837-1870, the beginning of the Victorian era, with all its social values attached, seem to differ from the previously analysed articles in that many articles seem to report about bigger court cases following their course instead of just notifying the public after the trial's conclusion.⁵⁵ This might be related

⁵² See 'Consistory Court', *Monmouthshire Merlin* (24 July 1830) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3390906/3390910/38/adultery> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

⁵³ 'Cruelty and Adultery', *North Wales Gazette* (14 July 1814) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3872755/3872756/2/adultery> (Accessed 02 May 2021).

⁵⁴ 'The Law of Divorce', *Monmouthshire Merlin* (06 May 1848) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3394423/3394426/27/> (Accessed 05 April 2021).

⁵⁵ See for example *Codrington v. Codrington and Geils v. Geils: 'London Sayings and Doings'*, *Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser and Cheshire Shropshire and North Wales Register* (26 November 1864) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4579391/4579395/20/> (Accessed 09 May 2021), 'The Codrington Divorce Case', *The Illustrated Usk Observer and Ragland Herald* (26 November 1864) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3081327/3081330/11/> (Accessed 09 May 2021), 'Town

to the passing of the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 which altered the procedure for obtaining a divorce and cheapened it, so that it became available to more people.⁵⁶ Several articles include information on bigger divorce cases in columns about news from London. This information is provided in a very light and entertaining manner interwoven with other news so that the overall article very much resembles a gossip page.⁵⁷ This manner of coverage very much differs from earlier treatment of divorce cases and alludes to changes of the law that gave divorce a different place within society. Divorce it seems, had become more common and adultery on both sides was, in light of the trend of marrying for love, considered to unpardonably disrupt the values marriage was built on and thus it was deemed better to dissolve the marriage than have it continue and thereby threaten the principles society was built on. Note however, that reformers criticised the fact that the 1857 Act made divorce easier for men but not women and thus sanctioned two standards of morality. Furthermore, even the cheaper procedure was too expansive for many working people.⁵⁸ As one article in 1865 observes, 'it is easy to get a wife, but excessively costly to get rid of her, even if she be the sorriest prostitute that ever walked'.⁵⁹

Talk', *The Illustrated Usk Observer and Ragland Herald* (28 January 1865) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3081408/3081410/2/> (Accessed 10 May 2021), 'The Codrington Divorce Case', *The Brecon Reporter and South Wales General Advertiser* (18 February 1865) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3679705/3679708/23/> (Accessed 09 May 2021); 'Law and Police Intelligence', *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independence* (05 February 1848) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3643838/3643840/6/> (Accessed 07 April 2021), 'Miscellaneous Intelligence' *The Welshman* (05 May 1848) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4346599/4346600/4/> (Accessed 16 April 2021), 'Archers Court', *Monmouthshire Merlin* (06 May 1848) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3394423/3394427/53/> (Accessed 16 April 2021).

⁵⁶ Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth Century England*, position 4874.

⁵⁷ See for example 'London, Thursday Evening', *Monmouthshire Merlin* (26 November 1864) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3401271/3401279/62/> (Accessed 15 May 2021); 'Town Talk', *The Illustrated Usk Observer and Ragland Herald* (28 January 1865) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3081408/3081410/2/> (Accessed 10 May 2021).

⁵⁸ Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth Century England*, position 4892.

⁵⁹ 'The Divorce and Probate Courts', *The Illustrated Usk Observer and Ragland Herald* (28 January 1865) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3081408/3081414/60/> (Accessed 06

Still, in 1859 the Monmouthshire Merlin reported ‘300 suits for divorce pending in the Supreme Court in this district, and probably half as many more in the Superior Courts, and Common Pleas’, with adultery being the only legal reason for divorce, and added in 1864 that ‘the Divorce Court appears likely to become the most fashionable Court in all Europe’.⁶⁰ *The Illustrated Usk Observer and Ragland Herald* contributed in 1865 that ‘during the first seven years of the existence of this new Court, no less than two thousand petitions have been presented and tried’.⁶¹ This amount of divorce cases granted as a response to adultery however clearly did not always meet with approval. One commentator on the Codrington v. Codrington suit for instance remarked ‘that charges of assault are easily made by women against men, and that they are very difficult to disprove’.⁶² This author clearly suspects many women of initiating a request for divorce to end a marriage that they no longer wanted to be “trapped” in and therefore resolved to lie about their husband which in turn would have ruined his reputation. He suggests that ‘If it goes on like this, we must have a “Society for the Protection of Men,” with ladies patronesses’.⁶³

Another difference to the time span up until 1836 is that from then onwards in cases of adultery on part of the wife the suit is often extended to include the man the wife allegedly committed adultery with as co-respondent, often ending, if the adultery could be proved, with

April 2021); ‘London, Thursday Evening’, *Monmouthshire Merlin* (26 November 1864) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3401271/3401279/62/> (Accessed 15 May 2021).

⁶⁰ ‘Untitled’, *Monmouthshire Merlin* (05 February 1859)

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3398826/3398827/8/> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

⁶¹ ‘Town Talk’, *The Illustrated Usk Observer and Ragland Herald* (28 January 1865)

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3081408/3081410/2/> (Accessed 10 May 2021).

⁶² ‘London Sayings and Doings’, *Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser and Cheshire Shropshire and North Wales Register* (26 November 1864)

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4579391/4579395/20/> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

⁶³ ‘London Sayings and Doings’, *Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser and Cheshire Shropshire and North Wales Register* (26 November 1864)

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4579391/4579395/20/> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

the co-respondent having to pay the suit as well as compensation to the husband.⁶⁴ If it was a suit instigated by the wife against her husband the woman or women with whom he allegedly committed adultery was often referred to by name but not called defendant.⁶⁵

The biggest change of reporting cases of adultery after 1871 is that until 1900 they increasingly became shorter until in the 1890s, they often seem to have been but a few sentences long. In addition, the same lines seem in several cases to have been published in different newspapers only a few days apart. These short articles usually only contain who had instigated the suit and what the outcome was.⁶⁶ Moreover, longer articles seem to concern

⁶⁴ See for example 'Alleged Shameful Conspiracy', *The Western Mail* (14 July 1870) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4467635/4467638/45/> (Accessed 09 May 2021), 'Court of Probate and Divorce, Nov. 27.', *The Pembrokeshire Herald and General Advertiser* (04 December 1863) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3303766/3303769/26/> (Accessed 09 May 2021), 'Court of Probate and Divorce', *The Western Mail* (08 May 1869) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4465618/4465624/75/> (Accessed 09 May 2021), 'The Codrington Divorce Case', *The Brecon Reporter and South Wales General Advertiser* (18 February 1865) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3679705/3679708/23/> (Accessed 09 May 2021), 'The Codrington Divorce Case', *The Illustrated Usk Observer and Raglan Herald* (26 November 1864) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3081327/3081330/11/> (Accessed 09 May 2021), 'The Lady and the Groom', *The Brecon County Times Neath Gazette and general Advertiser for the Counties of Brecon Carmarthen Radnor Monmouth Glamorgan Cardigan Montgomery Hereford* (22 February 1868) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3870700/3870702/5/> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

⁶⁵ See for example 'Adultery by a Clergyman', *The Welshman* (09 June 1843) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4345839/4345840/6/> (Accessed 09 May 2021), 'Homer v. Homer', *The Illustrated Usk Observer and Raglan Herald* (07 April 1860) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3079428/3079432/74/> (Accessed 09 May 2021), 'Mawdsley v. Mawdsley', *The Illustrated Usk Observer and Raglan Herald* (02 June 1860) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3079474/3079477/47/> (Accessed 09 May 2021), 'The Chetwynd Divorce Case', *The Illustrated Usk Observer and Raglan Herald* (28 January 1865) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3679678/3679680/6/> (Accessed 09 May 2021).

⁶⁶ See for example 'A Jockey Divorced for Adultery and Cruelty', *South Wales Daily News* (18 December 1885) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3518601/3518604/60/> (Accessed 13 May 2021), 'A Jockey Divorced for Adultery and Cruelty', *South Wales Echo* (17 December 1885) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4405337/4405340/24/> (Accessed 13 May 2021); 'A Scotch Divorce Case', *Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser and Cheshire Shropshire and North Wales Register* (25 January 1890) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4590895/4590900/47/> (Accessed 13 May 2021); 'Cruelty and Adultery', *South Wales Daily News* (07 July 1896) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3737637/3737642/56/> (Accessed 13 May 2021), 'Cruelty and Adultery', *South Wales Echo* (07 July 1896) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4603671/4603675/111/> (Accessed 13 May 2021),

mostly sensational cases like the trial of Mr. Formille in Rome who committed adultery and pressured by his jealous mistress ended his marriage by murdering his wife or an international case in which adultery charges against a wife, who committed adultery in Paris, had already been confirmed by a French Court and punished by imprisonment.⁶⁷ The husband petitioned for a dissolution of his marriage based on the judgement passed by the French Court. Davies alerts to the fact that in many issues of local papers that reported local divorce cases an advertisement for a private detective's services was also included as the fears and suspicions that were coupled with married life thrived.⁶⁸ All these cases seem to suggest that towards the latter part of the nineteenth century people had started to perceive certain cases as entertainment despite or maybe because of the moral outrage associated with adultery. In 1898 the morning train from Llanelli to London for instance was crowded with people wanting to serve as witnesses and others simply looking for entertainment.⁶⁹

While divorce continued to be coupled with social ostracism almost 2,000 individual cases in the administrative county of Carmarthen between 1887 and 1914 chose to apply for separation and maintenance.⁷⁰ This option had become available for people who had discovered they could no longer continue living with each other under the Married Women's Maintenance

'Cruelty and Adultery', *The Cardiff Times* (11 July 1896) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3426199/3426202/48/> (Accessed 13 May 2021); 'The Queensberry Divorce Case', *South Wales Echo* (07 January 1887) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4407638/4407641/21/> (Accessed 13 May 2021); 'Very like Him' *South Wales Daily News* (25 November 1896) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3738726/3738730/42/> (Accessed 13 May 2021), 'Very like Him' *South Wales Echo* (24 November 1896) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4604266/4604269/91/> (Accessed 13 May 2021).

⁶⁷ 'Adultery-Jealousy-Murder', *Weekly Mail* (23 May 1891) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3366645/3366659/117/adultery> (Accessed 13 May 2021); 'Imprisonment for Adultery', *The Western Mail* (21 January 1891) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3981447/3981453/67/adultery> (Accessed 13 May 2021).

⁶⁸ Davies, *Secret Sins*, position 7404.

⁶⁹ Davies, *Secret Sins*, position 3643.

⁷⁰ Davies, *Secret Sins*, position 3654.

Desertion Act (1886), the Summary Jurisdiction (Married Women's) Act (1895) and the Matrimonial Causes Act (1898) and offered a cheaper alternative to a divorce.⁷¹ These statistics suggests that the extreme separation between the sexes, brought on by the idea of ideal domesticity throughout the century had prepared women for more independence as they had already experienced a considerable amount of freedom and responsibility within the sphere of their home.⁷² As Coontz asserts in the long run it was due to the Victorian focus on romantic love that 'the doctrine of separate spheres for men and women and the ideal of female purity' was eventually undercut.⁷³

Nevertheless, considered in its entirety, this chapter suggests that during the nineteenth century and particularly towards its end, a whole range of conceptualisations of society that surrounded the area of marriage, morals, and manners, the most influential of which were the ideal of separate spheres for men and women and the operation of a double standard, were prominent. It seems that men could, due to this inconsistent code escape the obloquy heaped upon women. So, while men in Wales were to an extent free to engage in extramarital activities, women were condemned and reprimanded for their immorality. The fact that many reported cases feature English people rather than Welsh might not only show an increasing focus on and interest in what was happening in England brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation, but also underline the fact that divorce remained outside the reach of most Welsh people. Furthermore, it shows that as asserted at the end of chapter one, an assimilation of values from the "nemesis" that can be traced back to the Blue Books had resulted in the absorption, transformation, and subsequent implementation of Victorian values to such an extent that Wales at the end of the century had become known for its moral pureness.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Davies, *Secret Sins*, position 3649.

⁷² Phegley, *Courtship and Marriage in Victorian England*, position 467.

⁷³ Coontz, *Marriage, a History*, position 3558.

⁷⁴ Davies, *Secret Sins*, position 3248.

Chapter Three:

The community strikes back – The *ceffyl pren* and Welsh social values.

The practice of the *ceffyl pren* and the transgressions it punished seem to suggest that the double standard central to the above court cases, was not universally Welsh nor accepted everywhere and that indeed moral purity was expected from both genders. This hypothesis will be tested after a short introduction to the practice of the *ceffyl pren*.

A *ceffyl pren* procedure was usually composed of a wide cross-section of the local community and a collective acquiescence and consensus seem to have been essential. Owen states that often the neighbourhood's approval was expressed at a formal 'mock court', taking place before or during the ritual.⁷⁵ *The Cambrian* highlights the structured nature of such courts by explaining that 'by the exertions of a few well-disposed individuals, a Society has been formed in this town, for the suppression of vice, but more especially for the total abolition of Matrimonial infidelity'.⁷⁶ Jones gives the example of a female servant who was suspected of having poisoned her mistress. After sentence was announced an 'effigy was suspended from a mock gallows and ceremonially burnt'.⁷⁷ Although some historians suggest that this custom can be viewed in line with others of its nature that slowly but surely stopped being used during the course of the nineteenth century, or was transformed into bigger and more formal protest movements such as Rebecca and the scotch cattle, reports of *ceffyl pren* occurrences in

⁷⁵ Trefor M. Owen, *The Customs and Traditions of Wales* (Cardiff, [1991] 2016), p. 82.

⁷⁶ *The Cambrian* (06 April 1839), quoted in Jones, 'Popular culture', p. 25.

⁷⁷ Jones, 'Women, Community and Collective Action', p. 128.

newspapers suggest otherwise.⁷⁸ In a letter to the editor of *The Welshman* for example the correspondent stated his worries that amongst other sorts of violence ‘the barbarous custom of “*Ceffylau pren*”’ increasingly occurred.⁷⁹ Some historians and particularly Ireland who goes as far as to suggest the *ceffyl pren* was neither old nor particularly Welsh, agree that occurrences increased during the nineteenth century.⁸⁰ As an informal but nevertheless highly effective moral policing mechanism it helped communities monitor the sexual or marital behaviour of their neighbours.

Moreover, the causes the *ceffyl pren* sought to punish reflect social changes leading from patriarchal marriages to companionship. While it had been used largely to reinforce patriarchal authority by punishing the behaviour of ‘scolding’ or ‘unruly’ women before the nineteenth century it increasingly started to be a means to punish transgressions by men.⁸¹ Although adultery received punishment unrelated to the gender of the offender, the practice focused more and more on unfaithful and wife abusing men. This might show the increasing romanticisation of the domestic role of the Christian wife and mother portrayed by her vulnerability and fragility because of which she needed chivalrous compassion and protection. On the other hand, it might also demonstrate that men no longer felt threatened by women as the latter had effectively been removed from the public sphere. This notion is backed by an article in 1834 which asserts that a *ceffyl pren* was a reaction to ‘any serious domestic strife happening in a family’ and that it would ‘go to the man’s residence, or to whatever other

⁷⁸ See Jones ‘Popular culture’, p. 19. She argues for example that the general trend was one of increasing ‘marginalisation’ and ‘folklorisation’ and David Williams *The Rebecca Riots, A Study in agrarian discontent* (Cardiff, 1955) states ‘It can, indeed, be said with complete certainty, that the Rebecca riots were an extension of the *ceffyl pren*’.

⁷⁹ ‘To the Editor of the *Welshman*’, *The Welshman* (26 April 1850) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4347114/4347117/22/> (Accessed 06 April 2021).

⁸⁰ Ireland, ‘Absence of Evidence or Evidence of Absence?’, p. 56.

⁸¹ Jones, ‘Women, Community and Collective Action’, p. 149.

place they are likely to find him'.⁸² Thus, no matter the nature of the strife, it was the man who was taken to justice as it was he who was responsible to protect his family. As Thompson suggests regarding English 'rough music' rituals, many attacks on wife-beaters and adulterers were initiated and executed by men as they increasingly considered women to be weak, passive, and defenceless creatures.⁸³ In 1856 for example, a man suspected of having beaten his wife was seized by neighbours despite his wife's assurances that he was innocent and in the village of Rhostrehfa seven men had made Owen Owens ride the *ceffyl pren* as he had lived apart from his wife and was suspected of being entangled with another woman.⁸⁴ Interestingly Hammerton has shown that often men who abused their wives also actively encouraged popular sanctions against others guilty of the same crime.⁸⁵

Viewed in contrast to the press coverage, that, as shown in the previous section, seemed to begrudge female plaintiff's success in divorce courts the shift in focus of the *ceffyl pren* might be interpreted as a sort of protest against the evident double standards. It might even indicate a bottom-up change in attitude towards women's rights and a break with the ideal of separate

⁸² 'The Markets', *Morning Post* (18 October 1834) <https://go-gale-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/ps/i.do?p=BNCN&u=tou&id=GALE|R3209859021&v=2.1&it=r&sid=BNCN&asid=23fa8e1f> (Accessed 02 March 2021).

⁸³ E. P. Thompson, "' Rough Music": Le Charivari anglais', in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 27 (1972), pp. 301-4.

⁸⁴ *Carmarthen Journal* (03 October 1856), quoted in Jones, 'Women, Community and Collective Action', p. 153; 'Vindicating Moral Principles in North Wales', *Weekly Mail* (26 March 1887) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3373527/3373533/117/'ceffyl%20pren'> (Accessed 15 March 2021), 'On Monday afternoon, at Llangefni, Anglesea, summonses were heard against seven men who had engaged in lynching Owen Owens by cusing him to ride the Ceffyl Pren (wooden horse), through the village of Rhostrehfa', *Leicester Chronicle*, (26 March 1887) <https://link-gale-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/apps/doc/R3208358243/BNCN?u=tou&sid=BNCN&xid=5f7294c8> (accessed 11 Mar 2021); See also Jones, 'Women, Community and Collective Action', p. 153, she refers to an incidence at Tregaron in which a notorious adulterer and wife-deserter was ducked in a river after being paraded on the *ceffyl pren*.

⁸⁵ A. James Hammerton, 'The targets of "rough music": respectability and domestic violence in Victorian England', *Gender & History*, 3 (1991), pp. 23-44.

spheres that is indicative of a changing view on social values. It is a magnificent example of the extent to which a community would go to preserve its moral principles.

Moreover, it is an important reminder that despite the effective marginalisation of women in political terms as well as in wider social, cultural, and economic circumstances through the gradual separation of the spheres of work and home, women continued to occupy important roles within earlier political forms. Although sanctions like the *ceffyl pren* reflected a co-operative effort on the part of the wider community, women increasingly started playing leading parts reflecting a fundamental shift in gender values and relations. For instance, many were actively involved in wider neighbourhood affairs, participating, and arranging public displays of communal solidarity and demonstrations against individuals who disrespected established social norms. As Jones suggests women in this respect were central in structuring popular values at a neighbourhood level.⁸⁶ Some wives for instance, made use of the *ceffyl pren* to bring a transgressing husband to justice as well as humiliate him in public. A *ceffyl pren* in Solva was instigated by a wife who had suspected her husband of adultery. She had therefore paid some young men to watch him and when his ‘illicit affair’ was discovered he was paraded on a ladder.⁸⁷ But women did not only pull the strings from behind the windows of their homes, on the contrary they actively participated as a *ceffyl pren* procedure in 1845 shows. Here three women from Cardiganshire were prosecuted after having entered an offender’s home, having dragged him to the door and with help of some young men paraded him on a *ceffyl pren*.⁸⁸ In 1856 two women were part of a group of people who were

⁸⁶ Jones, ‘Women, Community and Collective Action’, p. 122.

⁸⁷ ‘The Wooden Horse’, *The Illustrated Usk Observer and Ragland Herald* (15 March 1856) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3078335/3078339/64/'wooden%20horse'> (Accessed 05 March 2021).

⁸⁸ *The Welshman* (03 January 1845), quoted in Jones, ‘Women, Community and Collective Action’, p. 139.

prosecuted for having attacked a man suspected of having beaten his wife.⁸⁹ In 1861, a man was paraded through the streets only wearing his nightshirt. When he was permitted to go home, he was ‘in a state of nudity, the women who had formed part of the procession having torn his shirt off his back’.⁹⁰

Two other examples from Cardiganshire show that women did not only fervently participate alongside others but sometimes were even responsible for carrying the *ceffyl pren* through the neighbourhood. In 1861 the horse was ‘borne along chiefly by females (who)... bore a conspicuous part in the affair’ during a procession in Llandysul.⁹¹ Similarly, did four women carry the *ceffyl pren* at Llanfair Orwell in response to a man who was believed to have an ‘illicit connection’.⁹² In 1850 *The Welshman* reported an occurrence in which a woman had even assumed the role of spokesperson:

A ‘CEFFYL PREN’ was carried through the village of St Dogmells [*sic*], in open daylight on Monday last. It was ridden by a female, who harangued the crowd at different places through which the exhibition was carried. This is the second instance of female oratory this town and neighbourhood has lately witnessed directed against two of the most crying evils of the times – drunkenness and adultery. A strong hope can now be entertained of their being rapidly suppressed.⁹³

⁸⁹ *Carmarthen Journal* (03 October 1856), quoted in Jones, ‘Women, Community and Collective Action’, p. 139.

⁹⁰ *Carmarthen Journal* (04 October 1861), quoted in Jones, ‘Women, Community and Collective Action’, p. 139; See also ‘Local & District News’, *North Wales Chronicle* (19 March 1887) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4453145/4453153/94/> (Accessed 16 March 2021).

⁹¹ *Carmarthen Journal* (18 October 1861), quoted in Jones, ‘Women, Community and Collective Action’, p. 139.

⁹² *Carmarthen Journal* (17 October 1862), quoted in Jones, ‘Women, Community and Collective Action’, p. 139.

⁹³ *The Welshman* (26 April 1850), quoted in Jones, ‘Women, Community and Collective Action’, p. 140.

Female self-determination and many women's assertiveness and resourcefulness in using the *ceffyl pren* as a collective defence mechanism can also be observed in 1843. Here around forty women gathered around a man's house 'who was in the habit of rather ill using his better half'.⁹⁴ They commanded him to change his manner and threatened that if he would not do so they would duck him in a river. The *Chester Chronicle* reported about another case in 1855 where married women gathered to hold a mock court to decide how to stop a man from abusing his wife.⁹⁵

But it was neither heroic men protecting women nor women resorting to take matters into their own hands and punish those who had done them injustice or transgressed the moral norms of their immediate surroundings alone who opposed double standards. On the contrary, *Ceffyl pren* occurrences tell the extent to which a whole community, neighbours and family members would go to seek justice for a wronged woman.⁹⁶ This is demonstrated by the case of a Solva woman mentioned above. The *ceffyl pren* provided many vulnerable women with practical support and protection. The mechanics of such a procedure are further indication of this as well as of the importance to seek justice and ensure the upkeep of a community's moral norms. In the nineteenth century Welsh rural communities were very small.

Occurrences such as the one in Solva, where 'forty or fifty people entered the house' of the offender and '300 or 400 men, women, and children' were in the street show great devotion to

⁹⁴ *Carmarthen Journal* (01 December 1843), quoted in Jones, 'Women, Community and Collective Action', p. 141.

⁹⁵ *Chester Chronicle* (17 March 1855), quoted in Jones, 'Women, Community and Collective Action', p. 142.

⁹⁶ Note that the *ceffyl pren* also sought justice for other people and children as well as punished those who told on the community by cooperating with the authorities. This would however go beyond the scope of this dissertation. For more information see Trefor M. Owen *Welsh Folk Customs* (Llandysul, [1959]1987), Owen, *The Customs and Traditions of Wales* (Cardiff, [1991] 2016); Thompson, "'Rough Music'", pp. 285-312., E. P. Thompson, 'Rough Music Reconsidered', in *Folklore*, 103 (1992), pp. 3-26.

and collective support for the cause of morality.⁹⁷ Likewise, does an article from the *Morning Post* that refers to a large mob of five hundred people taking part in a *ceffyl pren* procedure.⁹⁸ These numbers of attendance that could in most cases only be reached if several communities took part, suggest that adultery and domestic violence was perceived to be a major threat to Welsh social values and was not in fact being ignored in favour of keeping the illusion of pureness and chastity intact. On the contrary, it suggests dissatisfaction with the double standards on the part of women as well as men.

Considering all *ceffyl pren* appearances reported in newspapers and viewed in the context of this dissertation, it seems that although wife-beaters were also high up on the agenda of the *ceffyl pren*, that it was adultery which received most attention. This is an interesting fact as many sources state that it was particularly the wife-beater who was punished throughout the nineteenth century.⁹⁹ If we assume that to be correct, it begs the question why the news coverage seems to have favoured *ceffyl pren* procedures caused by adultery. It seems that it was indeed this transgression that was most dangerous to the principles society was built on.

Another issue putting the extent to which the *ceffyl pren*'s punishment of moral transgressions and adultery in particular reflects nineteenth century Welsh social values into question is Ireland's hypothesis that 'the *ceffyl pren* was essentially a creation of the nineteenth century.'¹⁰⁰ If the *ceffyl pren* can indeed be considered to a certain degree as a counter to the favouritism of official justice toward men then Ireland's thesis that the *ceffyl pren* only really emerged during the nineteenth century is crucial. If so, this would reflect ongoing social

⁹⁷ 'The Wooden Horse', *The Illustrated Usk Observer and Ragland Herald* (15 March 1856) <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3078335/3078339/64/'wooden%20horse'> (Accessed 05 March 2021).

⁹⁸ 'Extraordinary Riot at Cardigan', *Morning Post* (22 April 1850) <https://go-gale-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/ps/i.do?p=BNCN&u=tou&id=GALE|R3211632976&v=2.1&it=r&sid=BNCN&asid=4fc79873> (Accessed 03 March 2021).

⁹⁹ See for example Thompson, 'Rough Music Reconsidered', in *Folklore*, 103 (1992), pp. 3-26.

¹⁰⁰ Ireland, 'Absence of Evidence', p. 67.

change that made it necessary for families and communities to establish a regulation method to counter this imbalance and keep the double standard promoted within the legislation of the nineteenth century Welsh men's world in check. This suggests that despite the emergence of the separate spheres, that banned women from politics and economics, a deep-rooted feeling of injustice that went counter to the patriarchal conditioning emerged in Welsh society. It is traceable to an emerging emphasis on love and companionship, but also religious values strongly promoted and implemented following the Blue Books. Furthermore, it indicates that women were not the weak and meek creatures society was trying to make them and instead used the *ceffyl pren* as an outlet to seek justice for other females as well for their community as a whole.

Conclusion

This dissertation has introduced nineteenth century Welsh society as one built around the institutions of home and family and the ideal of separate spheres similar to, but still distinct from that of Victorian England. It has identified the *Reports of the Commissioners of Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales* to be pivotal for the adoption of these ideals. An emphasis of love in marriage and many of its implications have been discussed.

In contrast to these envisioned societal concepts most articles discussed in this dissertation show that although the Welsh were keen on keeping up outward appearances the perfect family living in contented domesticity with the angel mother at its heart was an ideal and often not reality. As Davies asserts ‘with a single jerk of his pelvis, a man could transform a woman from respectability into a pariah without detriment to his own moral standing’ and women as ‘obsessed with sex as the average man’, were stamped ‘nymphomaniacs’ or ‘prostitutes’.¹⁰¹ This is a double standard that is also apparent in the analysed cases of adultery brought before court, which clearly paint the picture of a men’s world in which women are easily accused of immorality due to them being considered the weaker sex. This has also been made evident by the example of newspaper articles that focus on the men’s side of the story and the favouritism of courts towards men.

The *ceffyl pren* has been introduced as an alternative way in which communities policed transgressions of social norms, bypassing the official legal channels. Evidence has been presented in favour of the interpretation of *ceffyl pren* as an attempt to fill a gap that the contemporary legal system was not able to cover and a counter movement to the double standard present in the patriarchal Welsh society of the time. The involvement of large numbers of people including all genders and ages and spanning multiple villages or

¹⁰¹ Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak*, p. 268; Davies, *Sex, Sects and Society*, position 3716.

communities was used to propose the notion of a bottom-up advancement of women's rights. This was linked to Ireland's theory that the *ceffyl pren* was a creation of the nineteenth century. To confirm this thesis further investigation into the advancement of women's rights in this time is needed. While this dissertation has demonstrated that both the treatment of adultery and the *ceffyl pren* are very much reflective of nineteenth century Welsh social values, a comparative approach investigating Welsh courtship rituals, cohabitation as well as clandestine and informal marriages might, when added to this dissertation's findings, allow for an even more comprehensive view on these values as well as include factors such as illegitimacy and infanticide.

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