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A329

Dissertation

What is a Welshman? Nationalism and R. S. Thomas.

Contents

Abbreviations

HC Deb   .... House of Commons Debate.

HL Deb   .... House of Lords Debate.

MAC   .... Mudiad Amiddiffyn Cymru.
                                                         (Movement for the Defence of Wales).

MP   ....   Member of Parliament.

Chapter 1   Introduction

A quote from a poem by R.S.Thomas, published in a small volume entitled 'What is a Welshman?' (1974, p.8) exemplifies the theme of this dissertation namely the theories applicable to nationalism as observed by Thomas in his poetry. The quote :

'If I told you that Catraeth

Has always to be re-fought;'

- resonates with Renan's (1992 [1892]) 'What is a Nation'? in which he defines a nation as having a spiritual soul in two parts, one in the past and one in the present. The past is the battle of Catraeth (Catterick), where the men of the king of Votadini and the men of Gwynedd were 'gloriously defeated' by the Saxons in circa CE 595 and recorded in the poetry of Aneirin (Thomas, 2012, pp.9-33). For Thomas, the present when the battle had to be re-fought was his poetry writing period up to the release of 'What is a Welshman?', approximately 1945 to 1974.

In addition to Renan, there are some further complex theories of nationality and nationalism which will be central to this dissertation. Renan, Smith, Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm have all produced substantial works on nationality and nationalism. There will be no intention within this dissertation to dissect and analyse these authors' works in detail, merely the outlines of their arguments will be compared with the examples of nationalism studied. Indeed, Marsden suggests 'the real challenge is to link these complex academic definitions to the actions and feelings of real people' (Open University, 2017a). The rationale behind this dissertation is to provide just such a link through the 'Welshmen' depicted in R.S. Thomas' poetry of this period and, by association, to Thomas himself. Where appropriate, theoretical aspects of nationalism will be discussed in later chapters.

Johnes (2011, p.605) maintains 'there is a limited base of published research to draw on'. Nevertheless, there were politicians' views. In 1945 Clement Atlee, after a General Election formed a Labour government where central planning and direct investment were the order of the day, with nationalisation seen as the crucial first

step. (Jones, 2001, p.232). Between 1945 and 1951 acts were passed to nationalise, in the name of the British State, the Bank of England, coal, gas, electricity, railways and hospitals (Davies, 2007 [1990], p.597). Aneurin Bevan wrote that 'questions of national policy affecting the rest of the country as well as Wales can only be settled by decisions which embrace all' (Bevan, 1947, p.151). Clearly Bevan's priority was of a British nation state which, as will be shown, corresponds to one theory of nationalism : a British nationalism.

The rise of an identity based on the working class began to emerge in twentieth century Wales pre- World War One, especially after protests such as the 'Tonypandy Riots', which acquired a 'venerable reputation in the history of the British working class' (O'Brien, 1994, p.67). The Labour Party dominated politics in the whole of Wales in the interwar period (Scully, 2013a) but were, like their pre-war predecessors, more concerned with class based, internationalist issues rather than Welsh institutions and policies (Jones, 1992 p. 341).

Welsh nationalism, Marsden argues, arose in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Open University, 2017b), whilst Morgan (1971 pp.158-159) outlines the development of a Welsh national movement in this period from a series of disparate radical causes including the disestablishment of the Church. In 1868 Henry Richard declared 'Wales should be regarded as a nation of nonconformists, with a political agenda' (Cragoe, 2004a, p. 2). Later in the 1890s Cymru Fydd placed home rule on the agenda, which was supported by the distinguished Liberal David Lloyd George (Morgan, 1971, p.165). However, Lloyd George's idea of home rule sought to work within the British imperial framework (Morgan, 1974, pp.36-37). This association of support for some autonomy by Welsh people over aspects of their own affairs, both political and cultural, will be the definition of Welsh nationalism used in this dissertation.

Merfyn Jones (1992, p.337) sees the rise of nationalism in the late nineteenth century as a recruitment of Welsh identities into vigorous political campaigning by radical liberals. This link of nationalism to national identity was suggested by, among others, Anthony D. Smith (1991, p.13) in one theory of nationalism and will be discussed further in chapter three. Smith's point is important to this dissertation as it asks what grouping of identities defines a Nation and suggests these groupings can change with time (ibid.). Hobsbawm made a similar observation :

'National identification and what it is believed to imply, can change and shift in time, even in the course of quite short periods'.

(Hobsbawm, 1992, p.11).

This dissertation will provide evidence that the notion of a 'Welshman' also changed over time and on occasion very quickly.

The rise of the Labour party in the interwar period almost annihilated the Liberal/nonconformist version of Welsh nationalism which may have prompted Morgan to declare that by 1945 Welsh nationalism was 'as dead as the Druids' (Morgan, 1980, p.90). Morgan was almost correct though he was mainly taking a political rather than a cultural viewpoint.

In 1925, at the National Eisteddfod Pwllheli, the nationalist Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru (The National Party of Wales) was formed which, at the time, did concentrate on cultural issues (Williams, 1999, p.9). Land and language were central to this version of Welsh national identity. (Griffith, 2010, p.177). Gwyn Williams argues that the leader of this movement, Saunders Lewis, made the party a 'right wing force' prepared to use direct action (Williams, 1985, pp.282-283). However, Davies argues Lewis had by 1938 little support for his views and was deeply offensive to left- wing nationalists like D.J. Davies and further suggests it was D.J. Davies' views that dominated after the Second World War (Davies, 2007 [1990], pp. 574-575). After 1945 and some internal conflict (Williams, 1985, pp.290-291) this party emerged as Plaid Cymru with a new president and an embittered and isolated Saunders Lewis. However, Plaid Cymru between 1945 and 1951 were politically dominated by Labour and concerned only with cultural issues such as linguistic nationalism (Broughton, 2017).

As cultural issues such as land and linguistics were the post war issues concerning Plaid Cymru and electoral politics seem to have come later, cultural nationalism and political nationalism will be debated separately in this dissertation. Nationalisms based on linguistics, politics and land will be discussed in separate chapters.

The Labour Party lost the 1951 General Election to the Conservatives but remained dominant in Wales (Scully, 2013b). However, despite sympathy from some Welsh Labour M.P.s like Goronwy Roberts toward their socialist views

(Edwards, 2004, pp.126-127), Plaid Cymru as a party of political representation were totally ineffective in the 1950s (Scully, 2013b). They were bolstered by the national outcry over the use of Welsh land when Liverpool Corporation were permitted to 'drown' the Tryweryn valley to supply water to Merseyside (Davies, 2007 [1990], p.640). Eventually Plaid Cymru did achieve electoral success in 1966 and 1968 with Morgan commenting that Welsh nationalism has become academically respectable and marketable (Morgan, 1971. p.153).

The period 1945 to 1974 in Wales showed a very slow growth of Welsh political nationalism mainly through Plaid Cymru but also marginally through direct action. Even so, the Labour Party was still overwhelmingly dominant. For the purposes of this dissertation this Labour dominance from 1945 to 1951 will be regarded as a form of 'Britishishness' akin to nationalism. The term British nationalism will be avoided because of its association with far right wing politics. However, Aneurin Bevan's comments do suggest that Labour at this time were giving the interests of the British state primary consideration. Indeed, Dafydd Iwan ventured his opinion that the Labour Party became very much a British based anti -Welsh movement (Open University, 2017c). The construction of a dam across the Tryweryn valley suggests Labour policies regarding Wales continued under the next Conservative Government. Even though some historians claim that looking at a British perspective is inadequate for the understanding of Welsh politics (Balsom et al, 1983, pp. 300-304), others disagree and argue the need for Wales to be examined within a British context (Tanner, in Johnes,2011,p.604). This dissertation will show that Welsh Nationalism, to some degree, was a direct response to control from Westminster.

Links between the Welshmen (they were mainly men) depicted in R.S.Thomas poetry between 1945 and 1974 and the theories of Renan, Anthony D. Smith and Gellner concerning the origin of nations, will be highlighted in the following chapters. Anderson's 'imagined communities' is briefly discussed but Hobsbawm's theories mainly concern the application of myth in creating nations and a more than a cursory study seems superfluous as Thomas himself dealt in myth.

Primary evidence will come directly from Thomas' poetry but only where the gist is obvious without the need of recourse to literary analysis. The direct evidence

from poetry will be supplemented by a collection of letters to his friend Raymond Garlick and also Thomas' autobiographies which were written in Welsh and the translations by Jason Walford Davies of Bangor University will be used in this study. Both the letters and autobiographies show Thomas' opinions and bias and it is the opinions and bias that are useful for this dissertation. Additional information will be provided by selected newspapers but only for basic facts and not the interpretations of the writers. Further evidence comes from House of Commons Parliamentary Papers and regarded as accurate.

Chapter 2, R.S. Thomas' changing beliefs, linguistic nationalism and myth.

R.S. Thomas was born in Cardiff in 1913, his earliest memory was talk of a German Zeppelin over Liverpool where he then lived with his mother, his father being away at sea (Davies, 1997, p.27). From the age of five he was brought up in Holyhead and then later attended Bangor University and St Michaels College, Llandaff, where he qualified as an Anglican Priest (Davies, 1997, p.vi). His early duties were as vicar at Tallarn Green in Flintshire from 1940 to 1942 (Brown, 2013 [2006], p.5). From there he looked back at the hills of Wales and 'realised it was not my place on the plain amongst Welshmen with English accents and attitudes' (Davies, 1997, p.10). Thomas began Welsh lessons at Tallarn Green (Davies, 1997, p.11) but then moved to Manafon near Welshpool where most of his parishioners spoke English with a Shropshire accent, though some could speak Welsh (Davies, 1997, p.11). Thomas remarks: 'The odd thing about Manafon was that it appeared so Welsh even though the language was no longer there' (Davies, 1997, p.16). Ironically, at Manafon, in an English speaking area, possibly Thomas' best known Welshman Iago Prytherch was created. Thomas relates how the character was conceived in a letter to Raymond Garlick in 1969 (Davies, 2009, p.75). After visiting a farm in the hills, he saw a labourer docking swedes in a cold November afternoon. He named this labourer Iago Prytherch and that evening wrote 'A Peasant' (ibid.) :

> ... His clothes, sour with years of sweat
>
> And animal contact, shock the refined,
>
> (...)
>
> Yet this is your prototype (...)
>
> Enduring like a tree under the curious stars.
>
> [R.S.Thomas, 1983 [1973], p.3]

Iago Prytherch, although based on the observations of Thomas, was a fictional character. The spelling of his name was the English 'Prytherch' not the Welsh 'Prydderch'. Nevertheless, it was Iago who portrayed Welsh identity in the minds of many Englishmen. The Times of 27 September 2000 not only carried Thomas'

obituary but contained an article discussing Iago Prytherch as the 'archetypical Welshman' (The Times, 2000).

Although determined to learn, Thomas was not a natural Welsh speaker, as he reveals in a letter to Ffowc Elis, dated September 1952 and comments 'Welsh would have been my medium if I had been brought up correctly' (Davies, 2009, p. xiv). After her death Thomas recalls in a letter that he had a difficult relationship with his mother (Davies, 2009, p.93). Tony Brown, Thomas' biographer, suggests his increasing enthusiasm for the Welsh language was a means of 'trying to locate himself within Welsh culture (Brown,2013 [2006], p.5). The last few lines of his poem 'It hurts him to think', seem an apology for not being born a native Welsh speaker:

...The

industrialists came burrowing

in the corpse of a nation

for its congealed blood. I was

born into the squalor of

their feeding and sucked their speech

in with my mother's

infected milk, ...

(Thomas, 1974, p.12).

There seems sufficient evidence to conclude that Thomas was, linguistically at least, becoming a disciple of Welsh nationalism. He learnt Welsh, according to his autobiography in order to 'return to the true Wales of his imagination' (Davies, 1997, p.10) or perhaps this could be written 'return to the mythical Wales of his imagination' as he had already invented Iago Prytherch by this time.

It is also this fusion of myth and reality that has occupied the minds of the many academics studying the development of nationality and nationalism. The basic debate is between primordialism and modernism regarding the birth of nations. Primordialism regards nationalism as having very deep roots going back into the mists of time whilst modernists believe that nationalism is an entirely modern

concept (Spencer and Wollman, 2002, p.27). However, as Hobsbawm and Kertzer (1992, p.4) point out, modernists require a past 'but not the past of an academic historian'. A.D. Smith challenges this modernist approach by arguing that some forms of nationalism have real, not mythical, continuities with earlier forms of cultural identities (Smith, 2002, p.6). Smith is, thereby, adopting an intermediate position between the primordial and modern approaches to nationalism. Smith's theory of continuities with the past seems applicable to Welsh linguistic nationalism if Geoffrey of Monmouth is to be believed when he states his source for 'The History of the Kings of Britain' was written in the British language (Thorpe,1966, p.51). This places Welsh linguistic identity back to at least a date of 1136 when Geoffrey's manuscript was released (Thorpe, 1966, p.9).

The approach R.S. Thomas began to develop regarding linguistic Welsh nationalism appears to have deeper roots after he wrote 'A Peasant.' The mythical nature of 'Prytherch' with an Anglicized spelling, seems to place Thomas' nationalism in the theoretical realm of modernists like Hobsbawm (1992, p.3) or possibly Anderson (2006 [1983], pp. 6–7) with his imagined communities. In the much later poem 'He has the vote' (Thomas,1974, p.4) Thomas refers to cynghanedd. This is a form of poetic meter in Welsh, dating back to the fourteenth century (Lewis, 2014) and may well indicate that Thomas was becoming more dedicated to the Welsh language tradition and recognising its deeper roots in accordance with the theories of Smith.

In the years of the 1945- 1958, with both Labour and Conservative taking turns in government at Westminster, very little was done to promote the Welsh language apart from some money given to the Welsh Arts Council for the publication of Welsh books (Morgan 1980, p.380). It was agreed in 1958, that a Welsh television channel would be set up which would broadcast in English and Welsh (Medhurst, 2010, pp.77-78) but this did not become a reality until 1962 (Davies, 2007 [1990], p. 627). In 1962 Saunders Lewis, the disgraced former leader of Plaid Cymru, reappeared on the scene with a BBC radio lecture promoting the everyday use of the Welsh language (Davies, [1990] p.626). This led to the formation of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (The Welsh Language Society) (ibid.). Saunders Lewis also influenced Thomas who wrote in a letter to Raymond Garlick in 1971 that he thought Lewis was correct that bilingualism would be the end of the Welsh Language (Davies, 1997,

p.83).Indeed by 1970 the percentage of Welsh speakers had fallen to 20.8 per cent (IWA factfile, 2016) Thomas appears to have developed a more radical approach to the use of the Welsh language by the early 1970s, reflecting how normally Welsh speaking undertakers and carpenters, when it came to payments and invoicing, always wrote in English (Davies, 1997, p.93). Thomas records his increasing annoyance at this practice and identified it as the 'split in a Welshman's soul'. Harold Wilson's Labour government passed the Welsh Language Act of 1967 where, in theory, Welsh had the same legal force as English within Wales (Davies, 2007 [1990], p.626-627). Marriage registers were written in both Welsh and English but this did not satisfy Thomas, who protested that English appeared first on the Order of Marriage service sheets (Davies, 1997, p.94).

Thomas demonstrates a gradual change in attitude towards Welsh linguistic nationalism. At the start of his career as an Anglican minister he had some romantic ideas about the Welsh hills and seemed to have some feelings of repression against his mother, which resulted in him blaming her for his inability to speak Welsh. He did move to the Welsh hills, where Thomas learned Welsh and seemed to tolerate the use of English and at the same time invented the archetypical Welshman Iago Prytherch. By the time of his retirement Thomas had developed a much more radical form of linguistic nationalism even complaining about the relative placement of English and Welsh in the order of service for a marriage. Because of his changing attitudes it is difficult to tie Thomas to any theoretical idea of nationalism. In his younger days he appears to conform the modernist approaches of Hobsbawm or Anderson. Later, toward the end of his career Thomas' increasing annoyance with his perceived mis-use of English suggests a deeper rooted nationalism as portrayed   by the theories of Anthony D. Smith.

Chapter 3. The British State and Gellner's theories.

Between 1945 and 1951 the Labour government concentrated on centralisation and economic and social planning (Morgan, 1980, p.376). As early as 1946 it became clear that Labour were going to support, first and foremost, the Nation State of the United Kingdom rather than the constituent individual nations like Wales. Emmanuel Shinwell, post war Fuel Minister, made a speech in Cardiff in 1946 extoling miners to produce more coal for the sake of the country (British Pathe´ Film Archive 1946). The striking point in the film is the manner of the speech- almost like a church minister preaching from a pulpit. He especially emphasises the role of the miners in getting the country back on its feet and gives the impression of talking about the United Kingdom, not primarily his native Scotland or about Wales. Most Welsh voters must have agreed with this approach as shown by the election results from 1945, when Labour polled over fifty per cent of the vote, to 1970 when Labour's share of the vote fell below fifty per cent (Scully, 2013b). Politically, there was no dominant Welsh nationalism. It was British nationalism that prevailed in the form of a class based society.

However, there were some among Labour Members of Parliament who did support a Welsh Labour programme, which could be regarded as Welsh nationalism as there were elements of self-determination. Goronwy Roberts, the 1945 Labour candidate for Caernarvonshire, said in an election speech that he 'looked forward to a growing measure of self-government in Wales' (Liverpool Daily Post, 1945, p.1). This led him in 1950 to support the 'Parliament for Wales' campaign (Edwards, 2004, p.132). The Parliament for Wales movement came to an unceremonious end in the second reading of the 'Government for Wales Bill' in 1955 (HC Deb. 4 March 1955). The interesting point was some of the leading Labour members for Welsh seats who voted against it, namely , James Griffiths, Ness Edwards, Herbert Morrison and Percy Morris (ibid.). It appears the senior Welsh Labour Parliamentarians did not agree with a Parliament for Wales.

Plaid Cymru had made very little political progress at this point. R.S.Thomas in a letter dated September 1952 regarding a meeting of Plaid Cymru in Pencader wrote that he was not going because Plaid meetings are ' never larger than a village

flower show' (Davies, 2009, p.13). It was the early 1960s when Thomas noted that the political situation had worsened, and younger Welsh people were taking direct action against political oppression (Davies, 1997, p.67). Thomas though seems to have taken the promotion of the British nation state as English oppression because he admits this period was the time he wrote some of his most bitter anti-English poems (ibid.). Saunders Lewis advised him not to get involved in direct action but to keep writing (ibid.).

The advice to take no direct action may well have been a response to the more radical factions that did use violence as a protest. There were violent protests from the Movement for the Defence of Wales (Mudiad Amiddiffyn Cymru [MAC]) (Davies, 2003 [1990], p.646) especially after arrangements had been made for the Investiture of the Prince of Wales at Caernarvon in 1969. Two members of MAC died in an explosion while attempting to blow up the railway line at Abergele on the morning of the investiture (Humphries, 2008, pp.123-125). The organiser of MAC was an ex-soldier called John Jenkins who pleaded guilty at his trial at Mold Crown Court in April 1970. The judge in sentencing Jenkins stated that Wales would not approve or applaud what he had done and gaoled him (Birmingham Post, 1970). However, R.S. Thomas continued to send letters to John Jenkins even though they were returned by the prison governor unopened. This led Thomas to complain unsuccessfully to the Home Secretary (Davies, 2007, p.95). Perhaps Thomas was writing to applaud Jenkins.

It was not until the by-elections of 1966 and 1968 that Plaid Cymru achieved any electoral success (Morgan, 1971, p.153) with high polls. Gwynfor Evans won Plaid Cymru's first parliamentary seat at the Carmarthen by-election in 1966 (BBC Wales, News, 2016). Later the Kilbrandon Commission reported in favour of some regional devolution of powers to both Scotland and Wales but there were fears among both main political parties about the effects devolution would have on Westminster and the essential unity of the United Kingdom (The Times, November 1973). Parliament was asserting the politics of the British Nation State over nationalism in Wales.

This view is very evident in R.S. Thomas' poetry particularly in 'He Lives Here' (Thomas 1974, p.1). In this poem Thomas recognises the politics of the industrial coal mining areas, where, according to his poem he is going to preach to the lost souls of the coal face, reminding them of their abandonment of the national for the class

struggle. In another poem he sarcastically tells his fellow Welshmen to 'VOTE LABOUR to protect your class' (Thomas, 1974, p.4). Thomas later moved to Aberdaron on the Llyn Peninsula and was very saddened by the attitudes of Welshmen in his own urban area which he expressed in a letter to Raymond Garlick in 1967;

> 'It is the most servile to the English area I have come across. The effect of tourism and low employment. What would we do without the English? They either can't or won't see that years of English government has failed to give them employment in their own area. A perfect argument for home rule – but no. My respect for Welsh intelligence grows less every year'.

> (Davies, 2009, p.70)

Later Thomas declares that 'this area is a dead loss to nationalism and yet they speak Welsh as their first language... - a strange mixture' (Davies, 2009, p 82). Thomas appears to be very frustrated that his version of Welsh Nationalism was not being adopted by the majority of his fellow Welshmen. Only eleven point five per cent of the electorate voted for Plaid Cymru in the 1970 General Election (Scully, 2013b),which indicates Welsh political nationalism was not seen as viable by the majority of Welshmen and women.

Ernest Gellner was Professor of Philosophy at the London School of Economics and wrote extensively on nationalism (Lukes, 2004). His theories on nationalism and nation building indicate an entirely modern approach, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent (Gellner, 2006 [1983], p.1). Attempts to make the British State and Wales politically congruent were rigorously pursued by the 1945 t0 1951 Labour government as discussed above. These attempts were largely successful and continued by Conservative governments. In that sense Gellner's political argument holds true for the British State. However, Gellner also recognised that this principle could be violated if the rulers of a political state belong to a nation other than that of the ruled (Gellner, 2006 [1983], p.1). O'Leary's interpretation of Gellner's theory was that building of nations in such circumstances would break down any traditionalist approach of those ruled (O'Leary, 1997, p.204). This would explain why Thomas', whom some regard as a traditionalist (Davies, 2001-2002, pp.50.77), suffered because of the inevitable exchange of Welsh political

nationalism for British political nationalism, particularly in post war Britain after the Labour government of 1945 prioritised the rebuilding of the British State. Thomas refused to accept this situation and blamed his fellow Welshmen for their compliance with, what he interpreted as, English domination. It is these 'compliant' Welshmen that provide the match of real people to Gellner's theory of nationalism. The 'compliant' were also the majority.

Chapter 4.   The Question of Land.

The question of land, in Wales, arose in the late nineteenth century, partly in response to the grievances of nonconformist tenant farmers having to pay tithes to the Anglican Church. (Howells, 2013, pp.85-86). Thomas Ellis, Liberal Member of Parliament for Merionethshire, wrote a series of letters and speeches which included his notes on evidence tendered to the Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire in 1893 (Ellis, 1912, pp.251-272). A question was raised concerning the use of revenues from common land that had been enclosed. Were the revenues being used for the common good of the community? The references to community, common land and common good seem to imply a rudimentary notion of Welsh people having territorial rights over their homeland, especially common land that had been enclosed.

Morgan (1980, p.84) suggests Ellis' questioning of land use was basically social, concerned with the tenant/landlord rather than economic benefits. Morgan may well have a point as Ellis does not appear to have raised any great objection to the flooding of Llanwyddyn and forming the Vyrnwy reservoir for supply of water to Liverpool. The Parliamentary committee set up in 1880 to discuss these proposals received some objections but these were mainly from Shropshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, who were concerned that their own supply of water from that region via the River Severn would be disrupted (House of Commons, 1880). A search of Welsh newspapers from around 1880, archived in the National Library of Wales' database, reveals few objections from Welsh people. One significant claim, that of 'stealing water' appeared in the Wrexham Guardian, claiming that Liverpool Corporation were an example of 'purloining water by large towns from lesser ones' (Wrexham Guardian, 1878). Similarly, construction of the Elan Valley dams in Powys, mid-Wales, which began in 1893 to create a water supply for Birmingham (Elan Valley, 2015), was only objected to by towns such as Hereford, which could have suffered a reduction in their own water supply via limitation of the flow into the River Wye (Evening Express, 1904). It is reasonable to conclude the question of land

in the late nineteenth century did not extend to Welsh lands being flooded to provide water for English cities.

More than sixty years later the prospect of Welsh land being flooded to provide water for Liverpool re-emerged but this time with a great deal of protest. In January 1956 Liverpool City Council approved a plan to build a reservoir at Tryweryn in North Wales and agreed to sanction the drawing of plans in preparation of a Bill to be put before Parliament (The Times, 1956a). The initial protests were led by Gwynfor Evans, president of Plaid Cymru, who claimed that the reason Liverpool City Council wanted to 'drown' the village of Capel Celyn was that the Council wanted more water for resale at a profit (The Times, 1956b,). Mr. Harvey the Deputy Town Clerk retorted 'Whose water is it? After all, God provided it (The Times, 1956 c) .

It seems the political attitude was that water belongs to the British Nation as shown by parliamentary debate. At the first reading of the Liverpool Water Bill in the House of Lords, Lord Chorley stated :

'the actual requirements of the Welsh people are important factors, but they cannot be 100 per cent. After all, Wales is just one part of these Islands.'

Lord Chorley (HL Deb 22 Feb 1957).

At the second reading of the Liverpool proposal in the House of Commons, in 1957. T.W. Jones, member for Merioneth, argued against the proposal, stating that Liverpool already sold 11.79 million gallons per day (HC Deb 03 July 1957). The Bill, supported by the then Minister of Welsh Affairs, Henry Brooke,(The Times, 1957) was passed although no Welsh members of any party voted in favour of the Bill (HC Deb 03 July 1957).

During the eight years it took to build the Tryweryn dam there was 'uproar' (Jenkins, 2007, p.294). Plaid Cymru favoured peaceful protest with a 250,000 signature petition, demanding Wales be given control of its internal affairs (Humphries, 2008, p.15). However, this was not enough for some and direct action was taken with the blowing up of a transformer at the Tryweryn dam in 1963 (Birmingham Post, 1963). Owen Williams was convicted of stealing explosives to blow up a pylon feeding electricity to the dam. In 1966 the new dam at the Clywedog Reservoir, built to supply water to Birmingham, was bombed (The Times, 1966). Plaid Cymru's response was :

'No one should be unduly surprised that this has happened. The destruction of Welsh speaking communities and the exploitation of Welsh water resources without material return is a symbolic example of the outrageous way in which Wales is treated by successive London Governments....The Clywedog explosion was caused by the Labour and Conservative parties. They should be put in the dock.'

(Gwynfor Evans, President of Plaid Cymru in The Times 1966)

Like Tom Ellis eighty years before, Evans expresses disgust at the exploitation of Welsh land, implying the concept of communal ownership. Unlike eighty years before there were massive protests.   Despite the objections and uproar over the Tryweryn project R. S. Thomas did not produce much comment on the use of Welsh land for supply of water to English cities. His only reference in 'What is a Welshman?' seems to refer to the servile pacifism of his fellow Welshman in 'He lies down to be counted'

'And in Tregaron Henry Richard

Still freezes, cast in shame to preside

Over the pacifism of a servile people.

Thomas Charles, too, has seen the bible

Petrified. Nothing can stir the pages

Of the book he holds not even the draught from Tryweryn.'

(Thomas, 1974, p.6) .

He expresses the same feelings of 'a dead nation' in an earlier poem entitled 'Reservoirs' (Thomas, 1983 [1973], p.117). R. S. Thomas appears to believe it is too late to save the land and blames the servility of his fellow Welshmen for this state of affairs. He may have been influenced by Saunders Lewis, who stated, in his 1962 radio broadcast that saving the language was more important than 'any kind of self-government for Wales' (Saunders 2014 [1962]). Whatever his motives Thomas was prioritising the national identities that he thought should be the focus of Welsh nationalism and the question of land was not one of them.

Many of the theories of nationality include definitions of nationalism and most require a territory with a marked boundary. Smith (1993 [1991], p.43), for

example, relates 'national identity to a shared historic territory. Gerald of Wales saw Wales as a defined territory in his 'Journey through Wales' in 1188 (Thorpe 1978 pp.74-209). The supply of water to Liverpool and Birmingham at the expense of Wales seems to comply with the arguments of Gellner, where the nation state was more important than Wales. The nationalists objecting to the flooding of Welsh land seem to be implying that Wales was a historically defined country along the lines of Anthony D. Smith's model of nationalism with its own territorial boundaries possibly going back to the time of Gerald of Wales. The Gellner model also requires boundaries but those of the nation state not the eastern territorial boundary of Wales.

Chapter 5   Conclusion

By asking the question 'What is a Welshman?' in 1974, the poet R.S.Thomas opened a window into the complex subject of nationalism. Following the trail of poems, letters and comments of R.S. Thomas over a relatively short period of time, this dissertation provides some insights into the links between the theory, development and practice of nationalism in Wales. Mindful of the multiplicity of national identities that can become the focus of nationalism, only three forms of nationalism have been analysed in detail. These are linguistic, territorial and political nationalisms, all set within the context of post war Britain between 1945 and 1974.

It appears from the evidence presented in chapters two and three, that both Thomas' linguistic and political nationalistic tendencies changed with time. He admitted that his poetry became more embittered toward the English in the 1960s. Chapter four demonstrates that Welsh MPs could also have a change of national allegiance from British to Welsh over a short period of time. In 1955, Welsh Labour MPs voted against a Parliament for Wales Bill, on the grounds that it could weaken the unity of the British Nation, yet two years later voted against supplying Liverpool with Welsh water. This capacity for a change of attitude over nationalistic ideas by Thomas and Welsh MPs supports Hobsbawm's observation that 'national identity and what it is believed to imply, can change and shift in time' (Hobsbawm, 1992. p.11).

Chapter four of this dissertation, regarding the conversion of Welsh valleys to reservoirs, highlights how Thomas saw many of his fellow Welshmen as servile and uncaring. Thomas paid far less attention to this territorial aspect of nationalism compared with linguistic or political grounds, which suggests nationalism did not, in this period at least, necessarily focus on the same issues for all Welsh nationalists. It becomes very difficult to answer the question 'What is a Welshman?' when the nature of Welsh nationalism changes over time not only within a single person like Thomas but also within a group such as MPs. This dissertation strongly suggests that it is not possible to provide such a definition. It is however, possible to ascertain a majority viewpoint on one aspect of nationalism, namely politics.

The British state effectively imposed a reservoir on Wales in the Tryweryn valley. This was a decision that had a direct impact resulting in objections by Plaid Cymru using democratic means while others preferred direct, sometimes violent, action. The implication is that Welsh nationalism has to be analysed from a partly British perspective. However, the salient fact is that Plaid Cymru supporting a Welsh view of both cultural and political nationalism were consistently outvoted in favour of the centralistic British state view. Plaid Cymru's share of the vote increased in this period but only to 11.5 per cent. The electoral evidence from 1945 t0 1974 is that the majority of Welshmen (and women) adhered to the concept of the British nation state not a specifically Welsh nationalism.

As seen in chapter three, there is sufficient evidence to link electoral supporters of the British Nation state with Gellner's theory of nation building. It is more difficult to ascertain where Welsh Nationalists placed their votes, with Thomas describing a Plaid Cymru meeting as 'no bigger than a village flower show'. In the General Election of 1970 only about half the votes of the Welsh speakers indicated by the 1971 census voted for Plaid Cymru. The Welsh Nationalism displayed by Thomas was partly attuned to the past, as in Smith's theories of nationalism but there cannot be the same level of certainty about other Welsh nationalists.

The challenge suggested by Marsden to link complex definitions and theories of nationalism to the actions and feelings of real people can only be partly achieved by examining the poetry, letters and autobiographies of R.S. Thomas. Ironically this connection is made by associating the Welsh voters who supported the British Nation state with the theory of Ernest Gellner. The evidence correlating Welsh Nationalism with any theory of nation building is inconclusive because of the ever changing nature of Welsh Nationalism. As Thomas himself demonstrated, being a linguistic nationalist did not result in any territorial nationalism. Future study of possible interrelationships between different forms of Welsh nationalism could be rewarding.

6o59 Words

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