"Wale, Wale, Wales, What Do We Have Hear:" The Role of the Welsh Language in 20th

Century Welsh Nationalism

Sydney Byro
History 3000: Nations, Nationalism, National Identity
November 7, 2017

"Land! Land! I am true to my land! As long as the sea serves as a wall for this pure dear land, May the language endure forever..."[1] Titled *Mae Hen Wlad fy Nhadau* (Land of my Fathers), the Welsh National Anthem highlights the core of Welsh national sentiment-the Welsh language. While other anthems seek to show power and strength, the Welsh National Anthem is a humble ode to the distinguishing language and feature of Wales. At its core, the goal of Welsh nationalism is the success and survival of the Welsh language and culture.

Wales is a country, but due to its place in the United Kingdom it is a legal subject under a separate state. The United Kingdom as a whole is commonly called Britain, due to its location on the island of Great Britain. Wales is often called "British" due to both its location on the island and its place within the state of the United Kingdom; yet recognizing Wales as just British would be an overly simplistic misconception. Wales is not politically independent from the state of Britain, but functions as a distinct nation within Britain, making itself both Welsh and British. England, another country in the United Kingdom, holds profound influence in the depiction of Britain. It is seen as the historical center of the United Kingdom, as the Kingdom of England is the original facilitator of the United Kingdom, as well as the political center, with the central British parliament being located in London, England. Despite oversimplification and common misconceptions, Britain is not only England and not all British are English. While England and Wales may be linked historically and geographically, they are two distinct nations with their own unique national ideologies.

Anthony Smith defines a nation as an entity that "must reside in a perceived homeland of its own, at least for a long period of time;" as well, "to aspire to nationhood and be recognized as

[1] "Welsh National Anthem," Welsh Government, accessed October 20, 2017, http://www.wales.com/national-anthem

a nation, it also needs to evolve a public culture and desire some degree of self-determination."[2] The Welsh have succeeded at residing in their homeland. They also have a public culture and desire recognition as a nation. Yet, among a majority of the Welsh people, a desire for self-determination has only emerged within the last twenty years. It is from this mindset that Welsh nationalism deserves to be looked at, a perspective interested in the disconnect between self-determination and nation present in Wales. Why have the Welsh failed to create a cohesive political identity or state when they have continued to successfully strengthen their Welsh language? Using language as a rallying cry, Welsh nationalists have resisted anglicization enough to witness repeated devotion to its distinct native tongue and culture. The Welsh have historically lacked a significant and unified nationalist movement due to the overbearing presence the English have had on the Welsh culture and psyche. To the Welsh, retaining a different culture than the English is more important than a state outside of the United Kingdom. This is evident in the historical emphasis and maintenance of the Welsh language within Wales, despite the attempts by the English to deprecate its use. This paper will look at the varying foci Welsh identity and politics have had toward the Welsh language, as well as the adverse effects the English language has had on the Welsh national psyche during the 20th century.

Despite its failure to fit Smith's definition, Wales is a powerful example of a state. To me, a nation's priority should be on the cultural community it inspires, not the political desires it requires. Yet the relationship between Wales and England during the 20th century allows Wales

---

[2] Smith does say that a nation does not need to be autonomous, only the aspiration to be autonomous. Wales is a hard country to place within this definition by historically lacking a majority desire for autonomy until the late 1990s. Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010) Kindle Locations 367-371, Kindle.

little opportunity for grand political desires. Welsh historian, Jan Morris, thoroughly summarizes

this complex relationship between the Welsh and English,

> The effect of these attitudes and acquaintances, over a thousand years and more, has been to leave the neighbours in an uneasy equilibrium. It is almost a miracle, given the odds, that Wales survives as a recognizable entity at all, still a different place, still cherishing a separate culture, still speaking Welsh, just across that open frontier. Of course it is an uneven balance. The English by and large know little, and care less, about the Welsh, but the Welsh are all too knowledgable about the English, and most of them would probably admit that if they have to live within the shadow of a mighty Power, better the English Power than most.[3]

Setting the Stage for Welsh Nationalism

The Welsh see themselves as the last of the true 'Britons,' because unlike the English,

they never fell to the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, or the Franks. While they were occupied by the

Romans and the Celts, they retained the majority of their social arrangement and language. They

still spoke ancient British, which has since evolved into Welsh. It was this unity that created the

Welsh identity, as Morris states, "Only they honoured the customs and traditions which had

flourished throughout the British Isles before the Romans came. They considered themselves the

only natives of the soil, of the spirit too, and this conviction made a nation of them."[4] Eventually,

they were conquered by the Normans in the 11th century. Despite attempts by the

Anglo-Norman kings who doused the country with their culture and English language, the Welsh

held onto their identity. "They never lost their sense of separateness and specialness, never

allowed their language to diem and never altogether abandoned their perennial vision of a golden

age."[5]

---

[3] Jan Morris, *The Matter of Wales: Epic Views of a Small Country*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 381-382

[4] Morris, *Matter of Wales,* 3.

[5] Morris, *Matter of Wales*, 4.

Wales became a principality of England in 1284 under the Statute of Rhuddlan, making the Welsh subject to English laws and government.[6] In 1535 Wales was unified with England under the Laws in Wales Acts of 1535 and 1542, commonly known as the Acts of Union. These acts called for Wales to be "incorporated, annexed, united, and subject to and under the imperial crown of this realm as a very member and joint of the same…"[7] These acts gave Welsh representation in the English parliament, incorporated English laws into Welsh society, and importantly banned the use of Welsh in official and legal business.

In the 1560s, the Tudors did allow the Bible and Prayer Book to be translated into Welsh, commanding that a "Welsh version of the Bible and the Prayer Book should be available in every one of the parish churches of Wales."[8] Subsequently, in 1567, William Salesbury printed the first edition of the New Testament in Welsh. This translation was an important success for the language after the Acts of Union banned the use of Welsh in public business. John Davies, esteemed Welsh historian, wrote that "While banning the public use of Welsh might appear to be an act of cultural genocide, the later, more benign, policy towards the use of the language in worship goes a long way to explain why Welsh today is a far more widely spoken language than is Irish."[9] Allowing for the translation of religious texts helped continue the Welsh language and

---

[6] "Historical Timeline of Welsh Law," Law Wales, Welsh Government, accessed October 15th, 2017,
http://law.gov.wales/constitution-government/how-welsh-laws-made/timeline-welsh-law/?lang=en#/constitution-government/how-welsh-laws-made/timeline-welsh-law/?tab=overview&lang=en

[7] Great Britain, *Statutes at Large ...: (43 v.) ... From Magna charta to 1800 Volume 4 of Statutes at Large, Great Britain*, (1763), 388, Google Books.

[8] John Davies, "Wales Under the Tudors," BBC, accessed December 1st, 2017,
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/wales_tudors_01.shtml

[9] Davies, "Wales Under Tudors."

prove that the Welsh held a separate identity from the English due to language.[10] This difference

in language is the single most important factor of Welsh nationalism, creating a symbiotic

relationship between Welsh-language intellectuals and nationalism.[11]

Welsh religion and religious identity changed as a result of the rise of the Anglican

Church. The Welsh became a Nonconformist majority. Nonconformity arose out of opposition to

the Anglican church, leading the Welsh to worship in chapels opposite the church. The

relationship between Nonconformity and the Anglican Church is similar to Protestantism and the

Catholic Church. Most Welsh Nonconformists were originally Calvinist Methodists who

worshipped within chapels, not the church. The religious census of 1851 shows that roughly 80%

of the religious Welsh worshipped in chapels.[12] At the time, chapels were local meeting houses

where a congregation could meet for worship.[13] Kenneth Morgan, Welsh Historian and Life Peer

in the House of Lords notes the importance of Nonconformity within the Welsh nationalist

movement,

> Welsh nationalism and Welsh nonconformity were now united in a crusade for
> national self-respect… For the rest of the century the Welsh national causes were
> to be promoted by a nonconformist intelligentsia. The national movement in
> Wales was to be cradled in the chapels, while the Anglican church was to appear
> isolated from it, and even to be its enemy.[14]

---

[10] Alan Butt Philip, *The Welsh Question: Welsh Nationalism in Politics*, (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1975), 1.

[11] R. Merfyn Jones, "Beyond Identity? The Reconstruction of the Welsh," *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 4 (October 1992): 343.

[12] "Census of Great Britain, 1851. Religious worship. England and Wales. Report and tables," The Open University, accessed October 15, 2017. https://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/resource-guide/source-guides/1851censusreport.pdf

[13] Huw Owen, "Welsh Chapels," Addoldai Cymru, accessed December 1st, 2017. http://www.welshchapels.org/welsh-chapels/

[14] Morgan, "Welsh Nationalism," 157.

Chapels provided Nonconformists an established location to voice anti-Anglican sentiment. Nonconforming Welsh sought to advance the Welsh cause by establishing a distinctly Welsh political party. Liberalism was the most popular political party within Wales from 1868-1905. Welsh Liberals sought to unite liberalism and nonconformity to create "a mobilized nation with its own manifesto and political heroes. The Welsh liberal-nonconformist assault on the citadels of landed wealth and Anglican religion was central to the defining credo of the Welsh people."[15] Accomplishments of the Liberal party were the Welsh Sunday Closing Act of 1881 that required all pubs in Wales to be closed on Sunday, for the first time since the Acts of Union, Welsh received legislative rights separate from England; The Local Government Act of 1888 established county councils, which gave legitimate status and rights to the Nonconformist majority in Wales; and the creation of a Welsh department in the Board of Education in 1907, which gave Wales the right to control affairs in their public education.[16]

Welsh National Identity

In an article on Welsh identity, R. Merfyn Jones, points out that,

The Welsh identity has not, historically, appeared to be much in doubt either to the Welsh themselves or to be observers of Wales. English visitors...viewed the Welsh in a benign in patronizing fashion as an honest, industrious, pious people wedded to their mountains and to the Welsh language and its culture.[17]

This interpretation of the Welsh follows that of the *gwerin*, the folk/common people of Wales. These people were "men and women with their roots in the locality for centuries and the native

---

[15] Jones, "Beyond Identity," 335.

[16] Morgan, "Welsh Nationalism," 159.

[17] Jones, "Beyond Identity," 331.

language on their lips"[18] In his work on Welsh nationalism, Morgan makes the point that as a result of industrialization, a Welsh working-class emerged, contributing to the growth of new towns outside of the peasant culture and assisting in the growth of modern Welsh nationalism. Examples of modern nationalism were now found in the new nonconformist chapels, Welsh-language newspapers, local *eisteddfodau* and choral festivals.[19] Unique to the Welsh, an *eisteddfod* is a festival to showcase poetry and music, and dates back to 12th century Wales. *Eisteddfodau* were revived through the growth of modern nationalism.[20]

Pyrs Gruffudd, in his work on the nation-building of Wales, suggests that the new industrial working classes were "grafted onto the pre-existing ideal of the *gwerin* who were the true heirs of Welshness,"[21] This connection is important because it shows the moldability of Welsh identity to encompass the majority of the Welsh at any given moment. Identity is not stagnant, nor should it be, as it is the people themselves that make a nation possible, not the political prowess of the people.

Since 1918, culture has been the focus of Welsh nationalism as an attempt to protect and encourage the Welsh language, as its usage and knowledge has been deteriorating.[22] According to census results, in 1901 49.9% of the population was able to speak Welsh whereas only about 20% of the adult population could speak Welsh in 1961. Welsh was essentially dead in industrial

---

[18] Pyrs Gruffudd, "Remaking Wales: nation-building and the geographical imagination, 1925-50," *Political Geography* 14, no. 3 (1995): 227.

[19] Morgan, "Welsh Nationalism," 156.

[20] Morgan, "Welsh Nationalism," 157.

[21] Gruffudd, "Remaking Wales," 221.

[22] Morgan, "Welsh Nationalism," 170.

regions along the English border.[23] In 1981 only 18.9% of population knew Welsh. However, it

should be noted that since 1971 there has been positive growth within the youngest age groups.

The strongest growth being in age categories 5-9 and 10-14 seeing 10.2% and 9.9% growth,

respectively, from 1971 to 1991.[24] Language has historically been the basis of Welshness, and

with its gradual demise it became a cause for the Welsh to save. Thus creating a "cause to which

one adhered, rather than a country to which one belonged."[25] When comparing the importance or

prevalence of national cultural identity to national political identity it is obvious that for the

Welsh, cultural cohesion outweighs political power or gains. Through its status within the United

Kingdom, Wales is assured some political power, yet its cultural power is not protected within

this body, creating a need for a strong national identity.

In an effort to assure and protect a separate identity for Wales, it has been said that the

Welsh had become "incorrigibly and perhaps dangerously Welsh."[26] Typically, the use of Welsh

alone was enough to satisfy Welsh identity. Welsh scholars saw the 20th century as a period of

fractured identity as the knowledge and use of Welsh began to fade. An argument can be made

that with the decline of Welsh, what it meant to be Welsh changed as well. Whereas the use of

Welsh used to be the measure of Welshness, Welsh identity has had to expand to other

characteristics common of nations, such as residency and political participation.[27] The death of a

---

[23] Jones, "Beyond Identity," 350.

[24] "Wales Factfile," Institute of Welsh Affairs, accessed September 9, 2017. http://www.iwa.wales/click/wp-content/uploads/5_Factfile_Language.pdf

[25] Jones, "Beyond Identity," 338

[26] Morris, *The Matter of Wales*, 237.

[27] Neil C. Sandberg, *Identity and Assimilation: The Welsh-English Dichotomy, A Case Study,* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), 21.

nation that differentiates and prides itself by its language can only come when the language has died. Saunders Lewis, in his speech *Tynged yr Iaith* or "Fate of the Language," warned his audience of this very concept.

> I shall presuppose that the figures which will shortly be published will shock and disappoint those of us who consider that Wales without the Welsh language will not be Wales. I shall also presuppose that Welsh will end as a living language, should the present trend continue, about the beginning of the twenty-first century, assuming that there will be people left in the island of Britain at that time.[28]

Another factor in the death of Welsh and the frantic state of Welsh identity is English migration into Wales. The onset of industrialization brought new jobs and population growth to the cities. An example of this is the city of Aberystwyth. Despite its proportion of Welsh speakers being higher than the national average, and its importance as a center of Welsh nationalism and language activism, Aberystwyth is still threatened by the anglicization from travelers and English speakers, facing the pressures of both Welsh isolationism and Anglo-assimilation. This led to bilingualism becoming popular among academics, students, and some working and middle class people. Unfortunately, bilingualism is the most popular among the Welsh speakers. Contributing factors are the English immigrants who tend to refuse to speak the language, and intermarriage between the two groups which typically lead to the Welsh having to speak English.[29] This has created a national inferiority complex that is very evident within the schoolchildren of Aberystwyth. Within schools there is a lack of Welsh history being taught, yet the children are inundated with English history and values within the school. Students also learn that speaking Welsh gets you ridiculed outside of the classroom and called a *sionean.*

---

[28] Saunders Lewis, "Tynged yr Iaith," (Radio Lecture, BBC, February 1962) https://morris.cymru/testun/saunders-lewis-fate-of-the-language.html

[29] Sandberg, *Identity and Assimilation*, 3-4.

This environment leads most children to speak English, even those from Welsh and Welsh speaking families.[30]

The extreme exclusivity of the language itself is also contributing in the death of the Welsh language. Along with the push for more language use there should be an equal push for language education. Lack of language education prevents non-Welsh speakers from not only speaking Welsh. But from gaining the ability to learn and read the wealth of Welsh poetry, prose and history. The Welsh have a case for being one of Europe's "most absolute minorities" by keeping the exclusivity of their language, history, and culture amongst its own people and their own country. With this lack of knowledge and understanding, there are few outside people that can speak up for the wellbeing of Welsh.[31]

Language and National Politics

The Welsh have always prioritized the existence of the Welsh language, which has remained a pillar in the national movement. "Welsh language was Wales' foremost political issue and the essence of her being...every political problem was secondary compared with that,"[32] spoke Lewis. Morgan had written that despite the "awareness of an identity of language, culture and race" the Welsh "lacked any institutional focus."[33] Morgan also stated that the "supreme object of these Welsh national leaders was essentially equality within the United Kingdom and an expanding empire, not severance from it."[34] Separatists have historically had a minor voice in

---

[30] Sandberg, *Identity and Assimilation,* 5.

[31] Morris, *The Matter of Wales*, 382.

[32] Lewis, "Tynged yr Iaith."

[33] Morgan, "Welsh Nationalism," 154.

[34] Morgan, "Welsh Nationalism," 165.

Welsh politics because in order to be separate, the Welsh first need the respect they deserve within parliament. This idea of respect began to change with the rise of one particular nationalist party in Wales. *Plaid Cymru* is the leading Welsh nationalist party, and is inarguably the most important part of Welsh nationalism in the 20th century.

Saunders Lewis founded the party in 1925 seeking a "common ethnic identity through the defence and promotion of the Welsh language," employing 'organic' nationalism instead of 'state' nationalism and striving for cultural continuity.[35] In *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, Smith cites Hans Kohn's model of organic nationalism, which gives individuals no choice in their nationalism, that "Individuals are born into a nation, and wherever they may migrate, they remain an intrinsic part of their nation of birth."[36] Organic nationalism is a form of cultural nationalism, where the nation is made up of people with a similar culture and ethnic origin, as opposed to more voluntaristic national movements with common laws and geography creating the nation.[37] Within organic nationalism, it seems that cultural gain and influence is more important than political or military prowess. The Welsh have always moreso focused on keeping an independent Welsh culture and identity, than an independent political entity outside of the United Kingdom.

During WWII, Welsh men were conscripted to fight in British military units, while Welsh women were pushed toward England for work. This created two opposing effects for

---

[35] Pyrs Gruffudd, "Remaking Wales: nation-building and the geographical imagination, 1925-50," *Political Geography* 14, no. 3 (1995): 223.

[36] Smith, *Nationalism*, Kindle Locations 973-974.

[37] Smith, *Nationalism*, Kindle Locations 963-964.

Plaid Cymru and Welsh national sentiment. Some naturally took a liking to the English world outside of Wales, leading them to stay and lose their identity, while those who did not like the English world became strong nationalists upon their return.[38]

In the 1950s, Welsh language advocates gained respect and levels of national celebrity for their roles in national awakening. Eileen Beasley is the greatest example of this. Eileen and her husband, Trefor, lived in Llangennech, where 90% of the area's population spoke Welsh, including the councillors and council officials on the local council. The Beasley's were sent a note in English demanding the local rates. Eileen wrote back, requesting the note to be written in Welsh. Her request was denied. As an act of retaliation, Eileen refused to pay the rates until she received a Welsh written note. Soon after they were called to appear before the Magistrates Court, when the Beasley's refused to attend until the proceedings were conducted in Welsh. For eight years, bailiffs continued to take furniture from the Beasley's home, while they continued to refuse payment. They finally received a bilingual note in 1960.[39] The Beasley's championing the Welsh language inspired many Welsh, especially Saunders Lewis.

In 1962 Lewis gave his infamous Fate of the Language speech, calling on the Welsh to recognize what is happening to their language and to rise up to protect it from death. He accused Welsh politicians as leaders in the ignorance of the Welsh language. Welsh language "is the creation of Welsh-speaking Wales, the only remaining symbol of the historical unity of the Welsh nation, the only Welsh mythos. But several of the leaders of the political parties and local

---

[38] Philip, *Welsh Question*, 45-46.

[39] "Eileen Beasley to be honoured in Cymdeithas yr Iaith's Language Festival," Cymdeithas Yr Iaiths Gymraeg, last modified June 5, 2006. http://cymdeithas.cymru/2006/06/05/eileen_beasley_to_be_honoured_in_cymdeithas_yr_iaiths_language_festival.html

authorities in Wales are full of poison towards the Welsh language."[40] This is because their main priority is aid, especially economic aid which can only come from the British parliament. "There is no need to add that the whole economic tendency in Great Britain, with the ever-increasing centralization of industry, is to drive the Welsh language into a corner, ready to be thrown, like a worthless rag, on the dung-heap."[41] This speech is full of language to incite action and national sentiment from the Welsh people who were suffering from complacency.

> First, that from the death of Elizabeth until the threshold of the twentieth century there was neither an attempt nor an intention by anyone of importance in Wales to undo in any way the bond that united Wales to England, nor opposition of any account to the principle of a united indivisible kingdom. After 1536 the concept of Wales as a nation, as an historical unit, ceased to be a memory, an ideal or a fact. Secondly, as a result neither was there any political attempt until the twentieth century to restore the status of the Welsh language or to win for it recognition in any way as an official or an administrative language. All Wales was satisfied with its complete suppression.[42]

Lewis' speech successfully called some Welsh to action and saw the creation of the more radical and active *Cymdeithas yr Iaith*, Welsh Language Society, consisting chiefly of young Welsh frustrated with *Plaid Cymru* and the status of Welsh politics. The Society saw *Plaid Cymru* failing to advance the nationalist movement. The failure to gain recognition of Welsh as an official language was a result of focusing too much on gaining respect from England than gaining advancement for Wales, inciting weakness. The Society saw Welshness and Britishness being incompatible and aspired to strengthen Welsh consciousness in the political struggle with England.[43]

---

[40] Lewis, "Tynged yr Iaith."

[41] Lewis, "Tynged yr Iaith."

[42] Lewis, "Tynged yr Iaith."

[43] Sandberg, *Identity and Assimilation*, 13-15.

Another result of Fate of the Language, was the Trefechan Bridge protest of 1963. Gareth Miles' arrest for riding a motorcycle with his friend, sparked the protest. Miles refused to attend court as the case would only be conducted in English. This led students at Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities to get themselves arrested and refuse court as well. After the first attempts at arrest did not work out, around 30 Welsh speakers decided they would close Trefechan Bridge to stop any traffic from entering or leaving Aberystwyth. Although no one was arrested and it only lasted 30 minutes, the protest received huge attention throughout Britain. People were forced to recognize the necessity for legal equality between Welsh and English.[44]

Parliament was pressured to take action in regard to these disputes. In 1967 the Welsh Language Act was passed as "An Act to make further provision with respect to the Welsh language and references in Acts of Parliament to Wales."[45] This essentially allowed equality for Welsh, allowing it to be used in legal, official and public matters, as well as calling for Wales to be distinguished from England in future Acts of Parliament. However, it should be noted that there is a provision upholding English over Welsh if there is a discrepancy between the two translations. Another Welsh Language Act of 1993 called for the creation of a Board to promote and encourage the use of Welsh, furthering equality between English and Welsh.[46] Parliamentary progress for the protection of the language was not something Lewis expected in his 1962 speech, "The tradition of defending the Welsh language politically is a tradition of suffering,

---

[44] "The Welsh Language Society," People's Collection Wales, accessed October 20, 2017. https://www.peoplescollection.wales/content/welsh-language-society

[45] "Welsh Language Act 1967 (repealed 21.12.1993)," UK Legislation, accessed October 15, 2017. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/66/introduction

[46] "Welsh Language Act 1993," UK Legislation, accessed October 15, 2017. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/38/introduction

obloquy and persecution...In Wales everything can be forgiven except being seriously concerned about the language."[47]

The relationship between *Plaid Cymru* and the Society shows the strong effect that England has on the Welsh psyche. *Plaid Cymru* was started by Lewis to protect the Welsh language. With time, the party gained seats in parliament, leading to increased interactions with and within England, similar to World War II, this interaction could either create a liking for English lifestyles and values or increase disdain toward them. Nonetheless, it is evident that some within *Plaid Cymru* eased up on their goals for Wales, as Lewis' speech or the creation of the Society would not have been necessary had that not been the case. The impact England has on Wales deserves to be looked at more thoroughly.

The English Effect

If one was to pinpoint the most lingering impact of the English on the Welsh psyche, the *1846 Royal Commision on the State of Education in Wales* has to be close to the top. This commission gave the task of inspecting the status of Welsh schools to three young men, all Anglican and non-Welsh speaking. However, it was really a way for the English to point out what was "wrong" with the Welsh with some legitimacy. Historically, the English are quick to blame Welsh "backwardness" on the use of Welsh in an attempt to undermine the Welsh culture and create a shift toward English and English values. Just as well, the commission infuriated many Welsh, sparking a surge in national sentiment and a renaissance of Welsh culture. The reports became known as *Brad y Llyfrau Gleison*, or the Treachery of the Blue Books, to these Welsh who saw it as an invalid inspection by unqualified Englishmen.[48]

---

[47] Lewis, "Tynged yr Iaith."

[48] Morris, *The Matter of Wales*, 239-240.

The strongest impact was the debilitating success the commission had on convincing other Welshmen that their language was failing and had failed them, leading them into the idea that Englishness was essential for success and could save them. Private English schools were created to teach English language and skills in Wales. To this day parents send their children to English schools with the expectation that through the use and knowledge of English, their children will receive future opportunities that Welsh can not offer. At first this was not as debilitating, as most people still spoke Welsh at home when the report came out, allowing for a bilingual generation. Unfortunately, this is just not the case anymore, especially with the increasing stigma on the use of Welsh within schools. England always had a looming physical presence on the Welsh, due to its proximity and political connectedness, yet the commission allowed England to successfully become a looming presence within the mind of the Welsh who simply wanted better for their children. The words of R.W. Lingen loom large,

> Whether in the country or among the furnaces, the Welsh element is never found at the top of the social scale . . . Equally in his new as in his old home, his language keeps him under the hatches, being one in which he can neither acquire nor communicate the necessary information. It is a language of old-fashioned agriculture, of theology, and of simple rustic life, while all the world about him is English . . . He is left to live in an under-world of his own, and the march of society goes . . . completely over his head.[49]

From 1847-on, English was seen as the way to rise up in the world, acting as "the key to an international corpus of knowledge and culture in which hundreds of millions of people in the world share."[50]

---

[49] Taken from Lewis, "Tynged yr Iaith." also found in "The Blue Books of 1847," National Library of Wales, accessed October 20, 2017. https://www.llgc.org.uk/en/discover/digital-gallery/printed-material/the-blue-books-of-1847/carmarthen-glamorgan-and-pembroke/

[50] Philip, *Welsh Question*, 43.

The insecurity set by the commission began within education and continued to spread itself, deeply resonating in all factors of Welsh identity and political well-being during the 20th century. Ireland and Scotland were seen as somewhat independent within the United Kingdom, due to their strong and unified national presence. The Welsh were not seen in this same way by the United Kingdom,

> There was simply no 'Welsh question'... Despite the vigorous survival of the Welsh language, despite the perpetuation of a distinct Welsh society based mainly on small farms of the peasant type, the official mind still saw Wales and England as inseparable. Or, in the reiterated litany of Westminster politicians, 'there was no such place as Wales.'[51]

This ignorant stance of the English could be a result of Wales not pushing for autonomy within the United Kingdom, or more realistically, because the English did not care to educate themselves about Welsh culture outside of what they had heard about it.

Toward the later half of the century, Welsh nationalists turned their attention to devolution. Devolution would grant the Welsh limited local power to an elected assembly of elected Welsh authorities in Cardiff. This would make parliament recognize the validity of Welsh nationality and existence without dissolving the Union.[52] However, devolution supporters were working against an insecure populace. A former president of the National Association of Head Teachers said in 1968

> ... I am not a Welsh Nationalist. I do not believe that Wales would fare better under a Welsh Parliament sitting in Cardiff or wherever; for I doubt whether the aggregation of Welsh nonconformist ministers and trade unionists who would inevitably be elected to form such a parliament would lead their people into an age of lesser problems that those which now confront us.[53]

---

[51] Morgan, "Welsh Nationalism," 155.

[52] Sandberg, *Identity and Assimilation*, 10-11.

[53] Sandberg, *Identity and Assimilation*, 12.

Despite being Welsh and holding high status within a national organization, this person lacked

faith in Welsh leadership. The Welsh are a proud people, yet they are likely to be confused about

their Welshness. They consequently see themselves as incapable of self-government and being

too corrupt to be trusted.[54] England is similar to an annoying, overachieving, oppressive big

sister and regardless of intent, she creates an apprehensive little sister always in her shadow.

When the first push for devolution came in March 1979, only 25% of the public supported it,

suppressing itself as an issue.[55]

With time, the little sister grows up and takes a step out of big sister's shadow. As some

Welsh grew more aware of their place in Britain, created by England, they become agents in

their identity and encourage others to gain awareness as well. There is an upside to prejudice and

discrimination when it creates "group consciousness and solidarity. The rejection of the Welsh

by the English contributes to an insecurity which may be a powerful factor in encouraging the

Welsh to identify with their own group."[56] The Labour Party came back to power in 1997 and

with it came enough support, 50.3%, for devolution. This led to the creation and eventual

passage of the Government of Wales Act of 1998. A new Government of Wales Act was passed

in 2006 to answer the problems caused by the 1998 act. The intent was to specifically to separate

the powers and institutions of the Government of Wales, and to keep it in check through the

National Assembly.[57]

---

[54] Morris, *The Matter of Wales*, 245.

[55] "The history of Welsh devolution," National Assembly for Wales, accessed October 15, 2017. http://www.assembly.wales/en/abthome/role-of-assembly-how-it-works/Pages/history-welsh-devolution.aspx

[56] Sandberg, *Identity and Assimilation*, 22.

[57] "The history of Welsh devolution."

Conclusion

Currently, the Government of Wales has an initiative to protect the language with a new and specific language agenda. Its goal is to reach 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050 by increasing the number of speakers, the usage of it, and creating favourable environments for the language. Success will be sought from education and reinforcement within education.[58] Remembering the negative impact schools used to have on Welsh, this is a welcome change, with hope for positive change within these powerful institutions.

Throughout its long history, Wales has never been a foreign offender, only a national defender. While outside powers have tried to threaten the Welsh culture and language, the Welsh have retained their Welshness, in the way they decide to define it. Levels in desire of power or independence vary throughout Wales and the Welsh, but nationalist sentiment among the people stays strong.

Gwyn Williams, in his collection on Welsh history wrote that "Wales is a process, a process of continuous and dialectical historical development, in which human mind and human will interact with objective reality. Wales is an artefact which the Welsh produce; the Welsh make and remake Wales day by day and year after year. If they want to."[59] The Welsh mind and the Welsh will interact with outside forces by enclosing themselves within their Welshness. Perhaps they would need to open themselves, culturally and linguistically, to outsiders in order to survive, and yet, I think that would just be an alternative death to Wales. Since its inception, no

---

[58] Success will be measured through census results of the number of citizens aged 3 and older, as well as results from The Annual Population Survey, which also questions about their ability to speak Welsh and how often they use it. "Cyrmraeg 2050: Welsh language strategy" Welsh Government, last modified July 10, 2017, gov.wales/topics/welshlanguage/welsh-language-strategy-and-policies

[59] Gwyn Williams, *The Welsh in Their History*, (Kent: Croom Helm, 1982), 200.

matter what it implicitly is, Wales has remained explicitly Welsh by protecting itself from outside influence. The National Anthem is an example of the priorities of the Welsh- to retain its spirit and language from enemies. "Though the enemy have trampled my country underfoot, The old language of the Welsh knows no retreat, The spirit is not hindered by the treacherous hand Nor silenced the sweet harp of my land."[60] If a Welsh nation is to survive, it should survive by staying true to its core values. If a Welsh nation is to die, it should die by staying true to its core values.

---

[60] Welsh Government, "Welsh National Anthem."

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Cymdeithas Yr Iaiths Gymraeg. "Eileen Beasley to be honoured in Cymdeithas yr Iaith's
    Language Festival." Last modified June 5, 2006.
    http://cymdeithas.cymru/2006/06/05/eileen_beasley_to_be_honoured_in_cymdeithas_yr_
    iaiths_language_festival.html

Great Britain. *Statutes at Large ...: (43 v.) ... From Magna charta to 1800 Volume 4 of Statutes at
    Large, Great Britain*. 1763. Google Books.

Institute of Welsh Affairs. "Wales Factfile." Accessed September 9, 2017.
    http://www.iwa.wales/click/wp-content/uploads/5_Factfile_Language.pdf

Lewis, Saunders. "Tynged yr Iaith." Radio Lecture, BBC, February 1962.
    https://morris.cymru/testun/saunders-lewis-fate-of-the-language.html

National Assembly for Wales. "The history of Welsh devolution." Accessed October 15, 2017.
    http://www.assembly.wales/en/abthome/role-of-assembly-how-it-works/Pages/history-we
    lsh-devolution.aspx

National Library of Wales. "The Blue Books of 1847." Accessed October 20, 2017.
    https://www.llgc.org.uk/en/discover/digital-gallery/printed-material/the-blue-books-of-18
    47/carmarthen-glamorgan-and-pembroke/

Open University, "Census of Great Britain, 1851. Religious worship. England and Wales. Report
    and tables," Accessed October 15, 2017.
    https://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/resource-guide/source-guides/1
    851censusreport.pdf

People's Collection Wales. "The Welsh Language Society." Accessed October 20, 2017.
    https://www.peoplescollection.wales/content/welsh-language-society

UK Legislation. "Welsh Language Act 1967 (repealed 21.12.1993)." Accessed October 15,
2017.
    http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/66/introduction

UK Legislation. "Welsh Language Act 1993." Accessed October 15, 2017.

    http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/38/introduction

Welsh Government. "Historical Timeline of Welsh Law." Law Wales. Accessed October 15,
        2017.
        http://law.gov.wales/constitution-government/how-welsh-laws-made/timeline-welsh-law/
        ?lang=en#/constitution-government/how-welsh-laws-made/timeline-welsh-law/?tab=over
        view&lang=en

Welsh Government. "Welsh National Anthem." Accessed October 20, 2017.
        http://www.wales.com/national-anthem

Secondary Sources

Davies, John. "Wales Under the Tudors." BBC. Accessed December 1st, 2017.
        http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/wales_tudors_01.shtml

Gruffudd, Pyrs. "Remaking Wales: nation-building and the geographical imagination, 1925-50,"
        Political Geography 14, no. 3 (1995): 219-239.

Jones, Merfyn R. "Beyond Identity? The Reconstruction of the Welsh," *Journal of British
        Studies* 31, no. 4 (October 1992): 330-357. http://www.jstor.org/stable/175884.

Morgan, Kenneth O.. "Welsh Nationalism: The Historical Background," *Journal of
        Contemporary History* 6, no. 1 (January 1971): 153-172.
        https://doi.org/10.1177/002200947100600109

Morris, Jan. *The Matter of Wales: Epic Views of a Small Country*. Oxford: Oxford University
        Press, 1986.

Owen, Huw. "Welsh Chapels." Addoldai Cymru. Accessed December 1st, 2017.
        http://www.welshchapels.org/welsh-chapels/

Philip, Alan Butt. *The Welsh Question: Welsh Nationalism in Politics*. Cardiff, University of
        Wales Press, 1975.

Sandberg, Neil C.. *Identity and Assimilation: The Welsh-English Dichotomy, A Case Study*.
        Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1981.

Smith, Anthony D.. *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010.
        Kindle.

Williams, Gwyn. *The Welsh in Their History*. Kent: Croom Helm, 1982.