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Nicholas Jacob Bell

A Canary in the Mine?

Emerging South Wales Identity in 1980s
Community Film

European Studies



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A Canary in the Mine? Emerging South Wales Identity in 1980s Community Film

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Master of Arts in European Studies: Identity and Integration

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by

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Preface by the chairs of the University of Amsterdam Alumni Association (AUV) and the Amsterdam University Fund (AUF)

Each year, the best thesis written in the context of the Master's in European Studies programme is awarded the University of Amsterdam Alumni Association (AUV) thesis prize. This tradition, started by the European Cultural Foundation in 1985, is regarded as a great incentive by both students and faculty members. In 2006, the granting of the thesis prize was taken over by the AUV and a generous donation by a member of the academic community guaranteed the continuation of the prize.

The Amsterdam University Fund (AUF) is responsible for managing the European Studies fund. The AUF provides support for special academic and student facilities that cannot be covered by government funding alone. Through this fund, alumni and friends of the UvA can contribute to strengthening the University, upholding its unique character and academic traditions and ensuring that it remain fertile ground for exploration and new ideas. The financial support given to the thesis prize of the European Studies programme falls completely within this mission.

The Boards of the AUV and the AUF are delighted to announce that the AUV thesis prize has been awarded to Nicholas Bell for his thesis entitled: '*A Canary in the Mine? Emerging South Wales Identity in 1980s Community Film*'. The jury praised the thesis for being very well written and having a solid base of responsible, methodologically executed research. The source material that Bell found in the film collection of the Chapter Arts Centre of the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales is remarkable and special. Furthermore, Bell distinguished himself through the nuanced way in which he researched how the change in perception and representation of the South Wales identity is depicted in films. He showed how films reveal how individuals saw themselves and their surroundings, exposing the basis of South Wales identity. In his thesis, Bell shed light on a theme that fits in well with the European Studies programme, namely a regional development which was influenced by local, national and international processes.

In addition to the prize money, Nicholas Bell will receive a one-year membership to AUV and the European Studies 'alumni circle'. Members of the AUV and alumni circles are kept informed of developments within the University, their faculty and their discipline. In this way, alumni maintain their connection with the University and receive invitations for interesting meetings concerning their professional discipline. Alumni can join the AUV and the European studies circle for €35 per year.

On behalf of the Boards of the AUF and the AUV, we would like to thank the organisers and jury of the thesis award for their hard work in preparing the award presentation and selecting the best thesis. Finally, we would like to congratulate Nicholas Bell on the award and wish him success in his future career.

Congratulations!

Willem F. Korthals Altes
Chair, Amsterdam University Association

Michaëla Ulrici
Chair, Amsterdam University Fund

Amsterdam, October 2014

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Abstract

The miners' strike of 1984-85 and the eventual closure of the pits had far-reaching social and economic impacts on mining communities in the UK. These effects were particularly pronounced in South Wales, where the traditional mining community remained an important part of group identity narratives. The loss of the mines as social and economic centers forced individuals to reassess their sense of self and community, developing new identities that both remembered the miners' strike with pride and adapted to new societal conditions. This process of reexamination was captured by amateur filmmakers working at the Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff, which provided training and equipment for the production of works with local and regional agendas. The films use a documentary style that emphasizes the intersubjectivity of the filmmaker and the film's subjects, building a cinematic narrative which reveals the symbols and images that came to make up South Wales identity after the miners' strike. This thesis examines six films from the Chapter film collection using a semiotic approach to uncover the new identity narratives emerging in South Wales during the 1980s. Narratives of the loss of the coal-based community, an empowered economic and social role for women, and reestablishing a sense of place are particularly prominent. Together, the inclusivity expressed by each of these narratives allows them to form a broader narrative of a post-strike South Wales identity. These narratives are also combined with notions of kinship, which indicates the beginning of the ethnicization of South Wales. These developments would have important implications for the political future of Wales through to the present day.

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This thesis is the product of the support and assistance of a great number of people. Above all, I must thank my advisor, Guido Snel, for his astute insights, gentle encouragement, and patience with my sometimes loose adherence to deadlines. I greatly enjoyed our many conversations about this topic and others – each time they reminded me of why I have chosen a career in academia. Thanks also go to Menno Spiering, who led our extraordinary program of thirteen students. I could not have asked for a more warm-hearted, supportive group of friends during my year abroad. Whether in the classroom or over a beer (or several), they never failed to bring a smile to my face. I learned as much from them as I did from my courses, a testament to the quality of both.

I would not have even been in Amsterdam this year without the generous support of the Rotary Foundation, which sponsored me as an Ambassadorial Scholar. The Amsterdam Hoog-Zuid Rotary Club, and in particular my incredible host counselor Ab Schols, did everything they could to make me feel welcome and comfortable in The Netherlands. Back home, I enjoyed the well-wishes of the Rotary Club of Erie and my sponsor counselor Tom Tupitza, who never hesitated to help me when I had a question. My fellow Rotary Scholars gave me a taste of America whenever I was missing home, and I integrated into Dutch culture as best as I could with my Hoogte Kadijk neighbors and BC Schrobbelaar basketball teammates. And to all those who put up with my terrible Dutch accent: *hartelijk dank!*

David Melding, who has dedicated his career to public service and now serves as the Deputy Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales, remains the inspiration for my interest in Wales. The short three months that I spent in his office left an indelible mark on my personal and professional ambitions and I have been flattered by his continuing support of my endeavors. I consider him a friend and a mentor. Likewise, Clay Clemens and Mike

Tierney at The College of William and Mary guided me through my first thesis process one year ago, and I applied the lessons they taught me every day.

Of course, I had no bigger fans than my parents and family, who celebrated my successes with me, offered a sympathetic ear when I struggled, and reminded me to sleep when I frequently forgot. I am so grateful for each of them and all that they have given me over the past 23 years. Likewise, my friends back in the United States reminded me that I will always have a family-away-from-home, no matter which side of the Atlantic I am on.

Finally, a special word of thanks to the amazing staff of the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales. They were patient with my incessant requests and offered their help before I could even ask. They provided the foundation of this thesis, and I hope that the results will help them continue to further their invaluable mission of making the rich and colorful story of Wales available to her people.

I. Introduction

“You couldn’t have much more of a crisis in a small mining community, a village in South Wales, a mining village in 1984. We all look around the streets and see the condition of the houses and the roads, the schools, and the hospital. And that in itself is an object lesson in politics because people seem to take it for granted.”

– Penrhawceiber NUM Lodge miner in *Ceiber: The Greatest Improvisers in the World* (1984)

On the morning of November 30, 1984, taxi driver David Wilkie became the only recorded fatality of the miners’ strike of 1984-85 that shuttered coal production in the United Kingdom. While driving a strike-breaking miner to a colliery in the Merthyr Vale, two picketing workers dropped a concrete block from a bridge onto Wilkie’s taxi, killing him instantly. The incident was squarely condemned by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who said it was “not in the British character, it is not the British way,” but it did little to deter the striking miners (Wade 1985, 280). Although relatively rare, the violence illustrated the passion and intensity that characterized the miners’ strike. Over the course of the strike, nearly 1,400 policemen were injured, there were more than 2,000 arrests, and the cars of 200 working miners were damaged when a mob of striking workers from a neighboring colliery attacked their pit (Weir 1986). While these incidents served to strengthen the solidarity of the miners, likening themselves to David challenging an insurmountable Goliath, they exacted an emotional toll on both the miners and the nation (Scruton 1985).

Perhaps no other industrial action has so greatly influenced the collective memory of Great Britain, despite the nation’s long history of labor activism. For many, the strike represented the last stand of the once-powerful unions against the forces of modernization and liberalism; the future of the working class depended on its success. Entire communities were galvanized across large swaths of the UK, stretching from South Wales through northern England and Scotland, and lasted nearly a year with remarkably few defections. The ultimate failure of the strike left an emotional and economic scar on these areas, where mining had served as a livelihood for three generations of working class families. The closure of the collieries required the miners and their wives to redefine themselves and their

communities, to pick up the pieces and build an identity that both remembered the strike with pride and adapted to the inevitable social and economic changes taking place. The consequences of the closure are still evident in these regions today, expressed through renewed political activism or novel social structures.

The strike began on March 5, 1984, when collieries in northern England and Scotland walked out in protest of the planned closure of the Cottonwood mine near Barnsley, England. A week and a half later on March 14 (a delay credited to the other coalfields' failure to support action to save the Lewis Merthyr Colliery in the Rhondda Valley, Wales a year earlier), the large and powerful block of 28 coalfields in South Wales joined the strike (Leeworthy 2012).¹ The strike was several years in the making, triggered by the smaller 1974 miners' strike that had brought down the Conservative government of Ted Heath. Thatcher, who became Prime Minister in 1980, was determined to outmaneuver the National Union of Mines (NUM) and its combative leftist leader, Arthur Scargill, whom she referred to as the "enemy within" in 1984. She appointed a business ally known for turning around unprofitable manufacturing through consolidation, Ian MacGregor, to lead the National Coal Board (NCB), and began stockpiling coal reserves so that a strike would not be as disruptive to the British economy. When the NCB announced the first round of pit closures in 1984, a nationwide industrial action was inevitable. The strike finally broke on March 3, 1985, when the last colliery voted to return to work after the effects of lost wages began to take hold and the determination of the NCB to go ahead with the closures became clear (Leeworthy 2012). The NCB closed the final pit in South Wales in 1994.²

Although the strike was indeed a battle between two competing philosophies for the UK's economic future, for South Wales it marked the conclusion of a long, slow decline of

¹ Interestingly, in North Wales, where populations were more scattered and coal mines did not form the center of community life, only 35% of miners joined the strike at its peak (Leeworthy 2012).

² Convinced that the pit could remain profitable, the miners of Tower Colliery purchased the facility and continued to operate it until 2008, when the last coal was extracted from the pit.

the mining industry. In 1921, one in four Welsh males worked in a colliery, amounting to a labor force of more than 270,000 miners (Williams 1983). Although mining remained the most common occupation for the Welsh male until the strike, a decline in coal use and production led to the closure of nearly two-thirds of the mines in South Wales, and by 1970 only 40,000 miners remained (Jones 1992). “As miners and steelworkers, often followed by men in manufacturing, lost their jobs,” Gwyn Williams (1983) observes, “it was their wives and daughters who found them” (534). In 1977, the single largest group of workers in Wales was the 118,000 women who worked in social services (such as education and health care), and over the next decade women came to account for nearly 40% of the total Welsh workforce.

The strike and pit closures left not only an economic legacy in Wales, but also a political one. The Conservative Party, which held 14 parliamentary seats in Wales in 1983, saw all of those seats swing to the Labour Party by 1997.³ Fulfilling a promise made by Labour in that election, a referendum was held in Scotland and Wales on whether to establish an elected assembly for the region, known as ‘devolution’. The referendum passed in Wales with 50.1 percent of the vote, a narrow margin of victory but far exceeding the 12 percent earned in a similar vote held in 1979. The National Assembly for Wales, established in 1999, has not yet fostered a wide-reaching civic identity⁴ but has become a permanent fixture of Welsh political life. A 2011 referendum on expanding the powers of the Assembly passed with 63.5 percent (albeit with low turnout), and the traditionally unionist Welsh Conservative Party endorsed devolution in their 2011 Assembly Election Manifesto.⁵

³ The Conservative Party recouped three of those seats in 2005 and won eight seats in 2010. The Labour Party has held the most number of seats in the National Assembly for Wales since its inception.

⁴ See Carter (2010): “Clearly the qualification for [Welsh] identity ranges from a total association with language and its associated culture to one which is primarily locational.” (108)

⁵ The 2011 National Assembly Election Manifesto states, “Devolution has made Wales a political nation. The Welsh Conservative Party welcomes this development and believes it is completely compatible with a strong Union” (28).

Given the enormity of economic and political transformations taking place in Welsh society after the miners' strike, social changes were naturally both a driver and a product of these forces. On the one hand, massive shifts in employment structures and a more polarized sense of 'who is on our side' challenged traditional notions of identity in South Wales and forced people and communities to reevaluate their sense of self; on the other hand, emerging symbols and meanings associated with those identities established new rules of proper economic and political behavior. Understanding these social changes can therefore provide insight into the formation of modern Welshness and how those in South Wales understand that identity. This thesis will explore how these changes are depicted in one particularly rich and valuable set of cultural artifacts from the miners' strike era: the Chapter Arts Centre film collection housed at the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales. These films, which were produced by filmmakers living and working in the mining communities of South Wales, utilize a number of images and symbols that together form narratives about life in the Valleys and its constitutive identities. These cinematic narratives reveal how individuals saw themselves and their communities, uncovering the foundations of South Wales identity during and after the miners' strike.

The Chapter workshops emerged out of the independent film movement in Britain during the 1980s. In 1982, publicly-funded Channel 4 began broadcasting on television with a remit to provide programming with alternative and cultural value. To fulfill this mission, Channel 4's management agreed to financially support certain independent film workshops which would in turn produce programming for the channel's *Eleventh Hour* and *People to People* slots, dedicated to independent works (Hill 1999).⁶ These workshops provided a space for filmmakers "to learn and collaborate in experimenting creatively, free of commercial pressures" (Berry 1996, 344). The workshop, based in Cardiff, quickly established itself as a

⁶ There were about a dozen such 'franchised' workshops operating around the UK. Workshops qualified for funding under criteria established in a prior agreement between the Independent Filmmakers Association and the main commercial television union to ensure the financial viability of independent film.

hub for quality productions; by 1984, filmmakers were earning commissions for works shown on Channel 4 and the workshop employed eight full-time employees. In addition to hosting professional filmmakers such as Chris Monger, who found commercial success but largely shied away from explicitly commenting on Wales,⁷ the workshop provided training and equipment for amateur filmmakers whose works had a distinctly political, and in many cases regional, agenda (Lant 2006).

A second development in British film occurring at the same time provided an important outlet for these amateur filmmakers: the explosion in home videocassette players, from just 2.5% of households in 1980 to 51% in 1986. The late Dave Berry, a highly respected authority on Welsh film, argues in his seminal *Wales and Cinema: The First Hundred Years* (1996) that the video workshop (Cardiff Community Video Workshop, or CCVW) rather than the film workshop “produced the more stimulating work, casting a caustic eye on social injustice and the forces in south Wales causing rapid and often damaging community or industrial change” (344). Among the more successful contributions from the video workshop were *Rumours at the Miners’ Fortnight* (1983), an expose of vacationing miners under pressure from the impending strike, and the works of the all-women feminist group Red Flannel Productions. This six-woman outfit was able to take advantage of the developing “feminist counter-cinema” in Britain, which placed women at the center of the narrative and emphasized real rather than ideal conditions (Tudor 2006).

The National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales (NSSAW), part of the National Library of Wales, is located in the coastal community of Aberystwyth, a university town that maintains a strong Welsh flavor (possibly due to its relative isolation). The archive holds over 250,000 hours of moving images and 150,000 hours of sound records, and has been continuously recording the major terrestrial television channels in Wales since 1982.

⁷ The exception in Monger’s filmography is his most famous film, *The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill but Came Down a Mountain* (1995), which revolves around two English cartographers surveying in a Welsh village during World War I.

Although the library has embarked on an ambitious digitization and public relations campaign to make its holdings more accessible to the public, it retains the impression of a “Welsh Parthenon,” a protected enclave for elite scholars and researchers (Green 2002). It is possibly for this reason that the Chapter collection has remained largely unexplored until recently. The set of 10 films has now been catalogued in the online database and digitized onto DVDs. Unfortunately, however, due to copyright restrictions that are strictly enforced by NSSAW, access to the films is limited to the archive’s viewing room or temporary loans by post; reproduction and dissemination even for academic purposes is not permitted without the consent of the copyright holder.

As Brown and Davis-Brown (1998) argue, even these “technical activities” are latently political in nature, even though they are not contested. It is important to consider the significance of both the digitization efforts and copyright protections⁸ in approaching the collection. On the one hand, the cataloguing and digitization of the videos increases their accessibility, suggesting that NSSAW views the collection as bringing “the story of Wales and the Welsh alive in front of our eyes” (NSSAW 2012, 3). By being made part of the archive’s public collection, the curators have declared the films to have some value to the historical narrative of Wales, and insofar as NSSAW is a National Assembly for Wales-sponsored body and the only major visual and audio media archive in Wales, these categorizations are granted a certain degree of public and academic legitimacy. Therefore the collection, by the mere act of its selection for archival storage, becomes a source of meaning for Welshness. On the other hand, the strict enforcement of copyright restrictions limits the accessibility of the films even for the academy. While these films are positioned within the

⁸ It is likely that NSSAW is legally obligated to administer these protections, however this does not preclude a politicized *impact* to that protection. This is not an argument for subversive political motives of NSSAW; rather, I found the staff of NSSAW to be extremely welcoming and helpful once the boundaries of the copyright issue were delineated.

narrative of Welsh identity, that role is ambiguous. Scholars must be careful not to view the collection as bring a necessary *part* of Welsh identity so much as a reflection of Welshness.

My travel to Aberystwyth to view the films and produce this thesis has a dual purpose. On an academic level, this paper not only places the Chapter collection in the narrative of South Wales identity but also asks *why* and *how* the works contribute to that identity. The symbols and images present in the films resonate with notions of Welshness in some way, otherwise the films would not have been selected for inclusion in the archive. Our task as scholars is to discover what those meanings are and their impact on a variety of present-day political, economic, and social issues. On a public level, this thesis adds another layer of accessibility to films that might otherwise be unavailable to the people of Wales, whether due to geographic distance (Aberystwyth is 120 kilometers from the nearest major population center) or copyright restrictions that prohibit the posting of the films online. The value of cultural studies such as this is the bridging of the gap between academia and the ‘real world’ where South Wales identity is not merely an object of analysis but a component of ordinary life for thousands of people.

This thesis will be divided into four sections. In the first section, I will provide a review of Welsh cultural studies, a growing field but one that nevertheless lags behind its counterparts in sociology. Promising work by scholars such as Bella Dicks, Annette Pritchard, and Nigel Morgan, however, are paving the way towards more robust studies of Wales as a cultural unit and to which this thesis aims to contribute. In the second section, I utilize the outstanding research on culture and ethnicity to lay out the theoretical foundations of this study. Culture is a discursive, contested terrain where the meanings of symbols and images are developed, molded, and given behavioral power through their inclusion in identity narratives. Applying a semiotic framework, we can analyze symbols and images for their meanings and discover the reality that underpins cultural discourse. The third section is a

detailed discussion of six films from the Chapter film collection, each of which makes a unique contribution to narratives about community, the role of women, and territoriality that are subsequently adopted into South Wales identity. This thesis concludes with some remarks about the long-term consequences of the developing narratives depicted in the collection and suggests avenues for further research.

II. Literature Review

Welsh historian Gwyn Williams (1982) famously wrote that “Wales is an artefact which the Welsh produce... the Welsh make and remake Wales day by day and year by year” (200). This quote has been adopted as a frequent trope in the literature on Welsh identity as signifying the multiple definitions and mutability of Welshness (see, for example, Cloke and Milbourne 1992, Rawlings 1998, Johnes 2008). The critical scholar, however, will ask *why* Williams’ particular phrasing of an already well-established idea – communities are “imagined”, in the words of Benedict Anderson (1983) – holds such power in the academic discourse. Perhaps inherent in her vision (Williams’ female gender itself being of symbolic importance) of Welsh identity are more essential notions that ring as true as the perpetual conveyor belt of images that come to represent Welshness. That Wales is a country which the Welsh must “produce” speaks to the constant struggle to *be* Welsh that has been fought by nationalists for centuries. Compare with Catalonia, where the pervasiveness of Catalan identity in the region’s political and culture life led Montserrat Guibernau (1996) to propose that those born within a set of identity meanings and symbols are destined to structure their lives within that framework. And the earliest defining moment of Catalan nationalism came more than 50 years after the Welsh equivalent (Wright 1999)!⁹

Welshness, defined in part by its linguistic, economic, and geographic diversity, does not lend itself to a clear set of symbols that can be instilled in the next generation. Maintaining Welshness is therefore more than a construction; it is a “performance” which must be cognitively enacted for the identity to persist (Trosset 1993). Indeed, a recent publication from the Institute of Welsh Affairs bore the title *Against the Odds: The Survival of Welsh Identity* (Carter 2010). The latter part of Williams’ quote speaks to the inherent temporality of Welsh identity in this performance. Welsh identity is not static across time;

⁹ The 1847 “Treason of the Blue Books,” in which three English commissioners published a report on education in Wales that coupled attacks on the Welsh language with criticisms of the Welsh character, is widely seen as the earliest modern symbol of oppression in the collective Welsh memory (Watkins 2007).

each era defines Welsh identity according to its own sociopolitical context, “day by day and year by year.” Non-conformism (Chambers and Thompson 2005), *gwerin*¹⁰ (Morgan 1986), language (Lewis 1962), mines (Francis 2009), and civic nationalism (Osmond 2012) have all had their day. That Welsh identity is constructed in this way is a historical fact that has become embedded in notions of Welshness (cf. Haesly 2005).

Given that Williams’ quote has achieved such resonance, it should come as no surprise that scholarly work on Welsh identity over the past 60 years has nearly unanimously reaffirmed the nebulous definition of Welshness for those who carry the identity. As Tonkin, et al. (1989) write, “It is notorious that minority groups are seen both to have particularly coherent identities, and to find that their real identities are nevertheless curiously threatened and elusive” (17-18). This has proven the case across academic disciplines. Carol Trosset (1993) produced one of the most comprehensive ethnologies of the Welsh after living in the country for two years and learning to speak the language; she identifies seven concepts of Welsh identity ranging from speaking Welsh to going to a Non-conformist chapel to singing well. She concludes, “There are few dimensions of Welsh society which can be considered distinctive” (7). Sociologist Brian Roberts (1999) conducted a study of the South Wales communities of Blaina and Nantyglo from 1990-91 and finds images of Welsh roots, cultural activities, character, and language that coexist in notions of Welshness. He adds that “the general reason for a new phase of identity within the locality has to be found in recent socio-economic change: the loss of the mines, the return of high unemployment and new social divisions” (82; cf. Jones 1992).

Housley (2009) argues that despite the growing canon of anthropological and sociological literature on Welsh identity, “little focus has been directed towards the cultural

¹⁰ According to Morgan, the stereotypical *gwerin*, or common folk, were “strongly rural in background and steadfast in the face of conquerors, stoic under their long oppression, but they were also faithful to Welsh culture... and the scorn of the English.”

sphere and its relationship between different forms of identity construction and representation” (148). To some degree, Housley is correct. There are no research institutes or journals dedicated specifically to Welsh cultural studies, and the most insightful analyses of Welsh cultural artifacts have come from a small group of scholars who write exclusively in their narrower specialty. These works, however, offer valuable and credible insights into Welsh identity that other disciplines have not found as readily accessible. What Welsh cultural studies lacks in breadth is most certainly made up for in depth, the key works of which will be explored in this section.

A. Elite Definitions of Welsh Identity

Historically, Welsh identity can be considered a Celtic identity (Koch 2006). As with each of the other Celtic nations,¹¹ subjugation and ‘othering’ by the dominant state forms a key part of the heritage of Wales. Malcolm Chapman (1992) has written eloquently of the way that Celtic communities are viewed by their subjugators in an ahistorical way, which sustains an image of the Celtic fringe as ‘primitive’. However, it is Murray Pittock (1999) who examines the effect of this othering on the Celtic nations’ images of themselves. Like Edward Said, Pittock is a professor of English who analyzes ‘British’ texts for images that act to essentialize and de-historicize the people and places of the Celtic world. Despite sharing its form with Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), Pittock notes that the Celtic nations have “a long dialogue with ideas of ‘Britain’ and ‘Britishness’ in a manner markedly different from the overseas colonies” (4). By sharing the same geographic space, government, economy, and (in some cases) language, the Celtic nations played an active role in the discourse that ultimately served to otherize them. In the case of Wales, for example, the popularization of druidism and bardism that emerged out of British Gothic ideology in the 18th century, while instilling long-held English images of the Welsh as strange and ‘not like us’, had a lasting impact on Welsh

¹¹ Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall, the Isle of Man, and Brittany.

identity by restoring heroes such as Owain Glyn Dŵr¹² to prominence. Peter Lord (2000) makes a similar point about the image of the Welsh preacher, arguing that it “fed the myth of the moral superiority of the nation, and set in the context of imperial imagery it succeeded in giving the vague impression of Wales as the moral conscience of the Empire.” Ironically, ideas about the unique Welsh ‘character’ may derive in part from stereotyped English images of the Welsh. The re-appropriation of these othering symbols into Welsh identity meant that British (and English) perceptions of Wales did not merely serve to subjugate the Welsh, but also acted as a basis for early definitions of Welshness.

Welsh identity, of course, is not merely shaped by those looking at Wales from outside; those within, particularly elites who have access to public fora, also define it. Artists and historians are two of these elite groups who have garnered the attention of scholars. Housley (2009) analyzes interviews with well-known artists working in Wales (though not necessarily Welsh artists) to understand their view of Welsh cultural policy. He finds that the artists not only have a voice (through their work) but also a vision for the future of arts in Wales. These include narratives of Wales as a spiritual unit seeking expression and as a cosmopolitan center for production, display, and consumption. Unfortunately, Housley (as a sociologist) does not examine the artistic productions themselves to see how these narratives are presented in their public form. Gramich (2011) examines the way that popular Welsh historians of the late 19th century to World War II offered a narrative of the Welsh nation, and finds images such as industrial experience and modernity, rural society, stories of past heroes, myths and fables, and hospitality to be recurring in the works. Interestingly, many of these images reappear in analyses of later expressions of Welsh identity, including Henderson’s (2007) examination of six Welsh histories published between 1970 and 1997. However, Henderson also finds that the Welsh-English relationship plays the most important role in

¹² Owain Glyn Dŵr was a 15th century Welsh rebel who seized control of the northern half of the country from Henry IV and established a parliament at Machynlleth, considered to be the last period of Welsh self-rule.

Welsh historiographies of this era. This finding is particularly relevant for the accelerating political mobilization of Wales during the era of her study, since Welsh identity has been found to be a primary causal factor in support for self-rule from England (e.g. Anderson 2001).

B. Performance and Welsh Identity

One of the most recognizable symbols of Welsh identity is rugby. One need only walk through downtown Cardiff on an international match day to sense the fervor and passion with which the Welsh follow rugby.¹³ Martin Johnes (2000, 2004, 2008) has explored this dedication to the sport at length and concludes that playing or supporting rugby is an expression of Welsh masculinity through characteristics such as mental toughness, pride, and determination. Moreover, the rugby club has outlived and perhaps even replaced the mine as the center of community life, giving the game even greater emotional appeal. Rugby has “a historical mythology associated with proud, working-class men playing for their village or town – or cheering from the side-lines – men united by their skilled labour down the pit or in the factory” (Spracklen and Spracklen 2012). As support for a rugby club comes to be perceived and enacted as a shared symbol – through attendance at games, social discussions about the team, reading about the club in the newspaper – an “imagined community” emerges which can be easily subsumed into a broader Welsh identity because the groups are concomitant (Harris 2007).

While there are few symbols of national identity as banal as sports (Billig 1995), it is also a decidedly apolitical arena for the expression of identity. It is politicized fora of Welshness that have most captured the attention of cultural scholars, one of which is television. Unlike a rugby match, which is played for the enjoyment of the spectators but with

¹³ I recall overhearing a Welsh woman on the bus in Pembrokeshire relating to a friend that she had delayed inducing the delivery of her baby because there was a Wales national team rugby match that day.

very little purposeful ‘expression’ in the course of the game itself,¹⁴ television is by its very nature a form of expression. The individuals on-camera as well as those taking part in the production must construct a narrative to present to the viewer, and elements of culture and identity will naturally influence this process (cf. Swingewood 1998). In a fascinating analysis of “property TV,” Ruth McElroy (2008) analyzes ‘do-it-yourself’ home construction shows, including S4C’s¹⁵ *Pedair Wal* (Four Walls), for the manner in which they navigate issues of place and belonging. According to McElroy, “Property TV, in making the domestic national, sutures the making of home to the making of the nation, and more broadly to the making and negotiation of national belonging” (45). In this Welsh-language program, the focus is on personal and family histories as much as the design of the home; the show is primarily a question-and-answer interview with the homeowner, who guides a non-expert presenter through the home. Other than ‘before’ and ‘after’ shots, there is very little attention paid to the actual process of the renovation, which is unusual for do-it-yourself programs. These sequences reveal that the home holds meaning for the owner because of the familial or community narratives of which it is a part, not just the design of the structure. This mimics the creation of group identity, in which a particular event takes on meaning not simply because it is a common experience but because it is viewed relationally with other events in a group narrative (Carr 1986). Therefore, in emphasizing certain experiences of the homeowner, *Pedair Wal* argues for a particular conception of what a proper “Welsh narrative” looks like. This is even more evident when one of the participants is a migrant returnee, and the discussion of the physical house “carries with it a wider understanding of home as a site of belonging” (53).

Another television series that has garnered the attention of scholars is the Welsh-language soap opera *Pobol y Cwm* (People of the Valley), which has aired continuously since

¹⁴ The same cannot be said for aspects like the singing of the national anthem, of course.

¹⁵ Sianel 4 Cymru (Channel 4 Wales) is the Welsh-language channel in Wales.

1974, making it the longest-running soap opera produced by the BBC. The show is set in south-west Wales and focuses on the life of people living in the fictional town of Cwmderi. Alison Griffiths (1993) explores how the show constructs images of the ‘other’ in order to accentuate the Welsh identity of its characters, such as an English-born pub owner who struggles to be accepted as part of the community. In the same way, the show creates a dichotomy between Welsh speakers from the north and those from the south, further establishing South Wales as a unique linguistic and cultural community. Symbols of identity such as climate, rural landscapes, and rugby are also employed in the series. Lewis (1995) examines a three-month run of *Pobol y Cwm* on BBC England in 1994 to understand how the Welsh present themselves to outsiders. She finds that the episodes “refused to pander to outmoded versions of Welshness” and instead explored the “multiplicity of Welsh life” (157). She notes in particular the positions of economic and social power which the women in *Pobol y Cwm* hold, as well as the diversity of economic spaces that are depicted.

Unlike television, which is released from some of the constraints of narrative development due to the longevity of the plot (across episodes or seasons, for example), theatre often offers a distilled and concentrated narrative of national identity. As Jen Harvie (2005) writes,

Theatre and other forms of performance contribute importantly to the memory work of specific communities... they provide versions or stagings of memory through, for example, narrative, scenography, and casting. And they perform those stagings often specifically for an audience that makes up at least part of the community that is remembered. (41)

She uses the case study of *Gododdin*, produced by the Welsh cultural performance company Brith Gof from 1988-90. The work was based on a 12th century text describing the defeat of 300 Celts by an army of 100,000 Anglo-Saxons, and was staged in a former automobile

factory building. The opposing Anglo-Saxons are never shown, but rather the Celtic warriors move among a number of industrial obstacles such as oil drums and are accompanied by loud, industrial noises. The stage was illuminated by the headlights of eight cars, and the audience could move around the circular stage to view the ‘battle field’ from various angles. Harvie argues that the performance of *Gododdin* “was as much against an historic Anglo-Saxon enemy as it was against the contemporary stripping away of Wales’ industrial economy” (49) and that the physical activity of the actors stood in for the industrial labor that had previously animated the building. Although the performance presents the image of a Welsh identity that stands up to domination and oppression, the lack of linearity in the movements of the actors also suggests that Welsh identity is layered and hybrid.

C. Exhibiting Welsh Identity

However, there is no more politicized forum for identity discourse than the museum, where the curator makes a deliberate attempt to construct a narrative of the nation (McLean 1998). An exhibit is fundamentally about relationality, informing the viewer as to how the artifacts or events presented are connected to form a coherent whole. The creation of a narrative is thus fundamental to the task of the curator. Perhaps for this reason scholars have placed great attention on ‘heritage sites,’ which commemorate a particular place and the people who have lived there. They are unique in that they address the past in the context of the present – heritage sites are part of the place that they depict, so the narratives they construct reflect those that constitute the community identity. Bella Dicks (1999, 1997; Dicks and van Loon 1999) has been the leader of this research in Wales with her comprehensive study of the Rhondda Heritage Park in South Wales. She describes heritage parks using the metaphor of the “view from the hill,” a common feature of 1950s and 60s British working-class film in which a returning worker surveys his community from above before descending into the town. She suggests that heritage parks provide a similar view of the community as a

cohesive unit in order to build a narrative of the whole community. Among the themes that emerge in this community narrative is ethnicization, or a vision of the people of the Rhondda as having a character that persisted beyond the closure of the mines and is therefore inherent to them. By emphasizing the “resilience, communality, cosmopolitanism, energy, self-reliance and orderliness” of the people in the Rhondda, the park “implicitly takes issue with a conventional viewpoint that sees miners as an unskilled mass, and mining communities as dead-end, defeated or dependent” (1999, 358). Gruffudd, et al. (1999) extend the question of heritage parks to whether the constructed narratives have any effect on visitors’ perceptions of the community identity by interviewing guests at two heritage sites, Castell Henllys Iron Age Hill Fort in northern Pembrokeshire and Celtica in Machynlleth. They find that “representations of Welsh heritage are fundamental to the ways in which visitors reproduce their own identities in relation to the images they construct of Welshness,” confirming the politicization of the heritage site in identity discourses (716).

Although rarely directed at a domestic audience, and therefore not having the same potential effect on group members’ construction of their own identity, tourism marketing materials and postcards nevertheless employ the same methods of narrative construction as heritage sites. Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan have published extensively on Welsh tourism marketing both from a business viewpoint and a cultural studies perspective. These include the study of materials marketed towards specific groups, such as the diaspora community in the Welsh Tourist Board video “It’s Time to Come Home” (2003 [with R. Pride]). One study finds that investment brochures for the US market emphasize the cultural distinctiveness of Wales while those for the British market highlight Wales’ natural scenery (2001; see also Prieto Arranz 2004). In these cases, the flexibility and mutability of Welsh identity is a particularly valuable asset in that it allows Wales to market itself in different ways to specific audiences. However, their study of 12 Welsh-produced postcards is more

relevant to this thesis (2003). In analyzing this “auto-ethnographic visual text” (Dorst 1989, 4), Pritchard and Morgan “explore how a particular version of an ethnic identity is being marked out and (re)defined through the photographic lens of the picture postcard” (112). In their discussion of images of South Wales, which appear less frequently than images of cosmopolitan Cardiff or wild and rustic rural Wales, they find that images of the Rhondda Heritage Park stand in place of pictures of actual coal mining. This suggests that there is a ‘performance’ element to South Wales identity, insofar as communities charade as living, industrial areas even though that reality has almost entirely disappeared. This ‘performance’ may be a reinforcement of images of resilience, perseverance, and community strength that have been found to make up South Wales identity in other studies.

All of these studies have examined cultural artifacts that are mediated through institutions, whether they are television channels, heritage commissions, or government agencies. To some degree, this mediation has the potential to misrepresent community narratives, since anytime there is mediation the narrative may be altered from its original state. This is particularly true of mediation through institutions, which can be biased towards the dominant discourse. It is the elimination of this mediation that makes the Chapter film collection such a valuable resource for study, and likewise other scholars have examined minimal-mediation artifacts to get a clearer picture of identity narratives. Thumim (2009) examines the self-produced stories submitted as part of the *Capture Wales* project, an initiative of the New Media Department of BBC Wales. She argues that such projects provide “access to the *real*, and that this is a more authentic reality than that delivered by professionals, precisely because people represent themselves” (623). She also finds that there is an inherent tension to the images of community that emerge in these projects, since the community is seen as both predating the project (the solicited public) but also in need of rehabilitation (through the collection of stories). Thus, self-representation projects expose a

narrative of community that, unlike the “view from the hill,” is not as certain about its own existence. This also resonates with our understanding of Welshness if we recall the first half of Gwyn Williams’ quote about the “production” of Wales. Other projects of a similar nature include audio walks through Ebbw Vale in preparation for the 2010 Eisteddfod, the annual national festival of Welsh language and culture (Saunders and Moles 2013). Although somewhat more constrained than *Capture Wales* by institutional requirements such as accessibility and diversity, the authors still find that “the routes we [the authors] create[d] in the landscape, therefore, are meaningful not to the walker, per se, but to ourselves; they reflect, and perpetuate, our particular engagements with place” (29).

D. Film and Welsh Identity

Turning now to the particular artifact at hand in this thesis, the oral history film, there are a few studies of relevance. Steve Blandford’s *Film, Drama and the Break-Up of Britain* (2007) conducts an in-depth examination of Welsh film and its implications for identity images. However, the book is largely focused on commercial production and S4C, arguing that “English-language Welsh film-makers were largely ignored during this period” (88). As a result, the relationship between film and identity in predominantly English-speaking South Wales receives little attention. Jeffrey Richards (2007) primarily looks at identity images in the classic 1941 Welsh film *How Green Was My Valley*, but also argues that post-World War II Welsh productions have increasingly focused on glorification of the working-class hero. For Richards, “The Welsh image, then, is industrial, communal, masculine but family based. Cinematically, it has been consensual rather than conflictual” (229). On the oral history side, Daryl Leeworthy (2012) conducts a detailed examination of South Wales identity images in oral history recordings from the strike and finds that “respondents saw themselves as part of the collective story of both their own family and the community in which they lived” (828). Images included the unity of the community, the importance of

securing a future for the next generation, and the changing role of women. This thesis combines the film and oral history perspectives to further build our understanding of the narratives that have become a part of South Wales identity. As Sipe (1991) writes, “moving images can more fully express oral history’s reflexive dimension, which makes more explicit the human role in the creation of history” (379). It is these human influences on the reproduction of identity that this study seeks to uncover.

III. Theory

For the first time in the two centuries-long history of the UK Census, the 2011 survey included Welsh as an ethnicity available to respondents, reflecting appeals from Welsh language groups and increasing awareness of Wales as a unique political and cultural entity.¹⁶ Yet, the question of whether Welshness constitutes an ethnicity remains an open question. A widely-read book by Welsh journalist and broadcaster Patrick Hannan titled *The Welsh Illusion* (1999) challenged persistent “myths” of Wales despite changing social conditions, continuing the tradition of early Welsh historians to emphasize the diversity of Wales through provocative titles such as *Wales! Wales?* (Smith 1984), *When Was Wales?* (Williams 1985), and *Wales: The Imagined Nation* (Curtis 1986). However, later historians such as John Davies (2007) and nationalists like Gwynfor Evans (1992) have argued for the prehistoric origins of the Welsh nation, endowing Welshness with a sense of primordiality.¹⁷ The debate continues, but popular and scholarly opinion appears to agree that Welshness (and its corollary subsets, such as Valleys identity¹⁸) represent some form of group identification.

Identities are at their core a social phenomenon because they derive their meaning from the belief that others share the same self-categorization (Kidd 2002). Moreover, because social experiences change in form and content over time, identities are not merely transmitted from a culture to those who are born into it (Guibernau 1996); rather, as Stuart Hall (1990)

¹⁶ For the question, “What is your ethnic group?” respondents in England and Wales were able to select “Welsh/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/British.” A distinct “Welsh” category was provided under national identities. The Scottish version of the survey offered the choices of “Scottish” or “Other British” for ethnicity. Ironically, the headquarters of the Office of National Statistics (which administers the census for Wales and England) is located in Newport, South Wales.

¹⁷ This is not to suggest that Davies and Evans view Welsh ethnicity as primordial, but they do invoke the view of Geertz (1973) that although ethnic ties are not biological, they rival familial relationships in strength.

¹⁸ There is a long tradition of viewing Welshness in geographically-defined subgroups. Balsom (1985) developed the “three Wales model,” which divides Wales into Y Fro Gymraeg (Welsh-speaking and Welsh-identified north Wales), Welsh Wales (non-Welsh speaking, Welsh-identified areas of the Southern industrial valleys), and British Wales (non-Welsh speaking, non-Welsh identified areas along the border with England and southwest). This model has been criticized in recent years as being too simplistic (Coupland, et al. 2006) and having little empirical relationship to voting behavior in Wales, either for the period in which it was formulated or more recent patterns (Scully and Wyn Jones 2012).

writes, identity is a “production” which is never complete.¹⁹ Culture can be viewed as the nexus of this production, or “maps of meaning” through which symbols and markers of identity are mediated (Jackson 1989). Mark Smith (2000) likewise describes culture as a “suture” where “competing visions of the role of human existence can be played out,” and social identities are the outcome of this struggle (20). Following the Saussurian (1977) tradition of semiotics, identity theorists have focused on the role of symbols and images that emerge from culture and shape people’s view of themselves and their group. Berger (1995) defines a symbol as “a subcategory of a sign. It is a sign whose meaning is not completely arbitrary or conventional,” and an image as “a visible representation of something, though it can also be a mental picture of something” (77, 79).

A. The Ethnicity Toolbox

The ethnicity literature provides a particularly useful toolbox for understanding the role of symbols and images in building group identity. This does not mean that shared culture is equivalent to ethnicity, though cultural similarities and differences can be made relevant to ethnic identity (Eriksen 2002). Many definitions of ethnicity include kinship (or the perception of kinship) as a necessary component of ethnic identity. Max Weber (1978), considered a father of ethnic studies, defines ethnic groups as “those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both” (20). Although some scholars have removed kinship from their definitions (for example, Farley 1995; Aguirre and Turner 1995; Conversi 2000), Fenton (2003) notes that the confusion of shared cultural characteristics and ethnic identity is a form of modern mental convergence. Cornell (1996) makes the distinction as such:

Depending on how broadly one conceives culture, this potentially turns a vast assortment of social groups – religious groups, language groups, sects,

¹⁹ See also Smith (2000): “The production of meaning can then be seen as a continual process of reinvention rather than the recognition and endorsement of messages inscribed in authoritative texts” (20).

occupations, 'the working class', the faculty of a university department, etc. – into ethnic groups, depriving the term of analytical utility. Collectivities of all sorts are continually generating distinctive and shared cultures of one kind or another. (268)

In any case, ethnicity provides ample room for the exploration of symbols and images because “by its own nature, it offers a broad field for the use and manipulation of symbols” (Roosens 1989, 160). A prominent school within ethnicity studies is ethno-symbolism, popularized by John Armstrong (1982) and Anthony Smith (1986), which explores the way that symbols, myths, memories, and values function as ethnic identifiers. As Smith writes in a 2009 summary of the field, “for ethno-symbolists, that means analyzing communities, ideologies and sense of identity in terms of their constituent symbolic resources, that is, the traditions, memories, values, myths and symbols that compose the accumulated heritage of cultural units of population” (15). In this view, group identity is defined by the meanings which are assigned to symbols in the course of cultural mediation. Cohen (1985) responds that it is the form, not the substance, of symbols that is the proper unit of analysis. He argues that because social groups are so diverse, there will be many different interpretations of common symbols. As long as “community” is held as a common symbol (even without a shared meaning), it will function as a “boundary-expressing symbol” which establishes an ethnic group.

Cohen and others who emphasize borders as the essential characteristic of ethnic groups base their work on Fredrik Barth's influential 1969 introduction to an edited collection on ethnic borders, in which he writes that it is “the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff which it encloses” (15). However, Barth himself seems to acknowledge the need to understand both the substance and form of symbols when he wrote in 2000 that “for a cultural analysis of the concept of boundaries, we would need somehow to

demonstrate that the particular conceptual construct of a boundary is indeed being employed by a group of people” (20). If boundary emerges as a function of giving symbols definition and meaning, as Bourdieu (1991) persuasively argues, then to understand ethnic group formation one must examine both the symbols that are shared by a community and the meanings that individuals in the group assign to those symbols.

Understanding the symbols and meanings which constitute the ‘inside’ of an ethnicity is also important to outlining the diversity of ways that ethnic groups can constitute themselves. As Stephen Cornell (1996) writes,

Circumstance creates ethnic groups; this much is clear. But equally important are the various kinds of ethnic groups, distinguished by the nature of intragroup attachments, that circumstances create and the effect that this variable content has in subsequent group encounters with circumstance. (283)

Ethnicities may form not just around bounded groups but also categories, encounters, stories, institutions, and networks; the strength of group identity may be variable and event-centered rather than constant and enduring (Brubaker 2004). Ethnicities may also be activated situationally, depending on whether the actor views it as relevant to the social context (Okamura 1981; Nagata 1974), and at varying levels of importance or strength (Vincent 1974). Moreover, the symbols and meanings that underpin ethnic identity are not only constructed, but are extremely malleable as well (Glazer and Moynihan 1963). The destructive pressure of assimilation on ethnicities in the United States provided fertile ground for exploring this phenomenon, such as Herbert Gans’ (1979) theory of “symbolic ethnicity,” in which ethnicity becomes “a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior” (9). Despite their flexibility, however, the power of these symbols and meanings cannot be discounted. Identity markers can become embedded in everyday social and economic activities, endowing them with extraordinary

emotional power (Billig 1995). As Anthony Smith (2009) writes, scholars of ethnicity “must be able to address the powerful emotion, will and imagination that are the hallmark of nations – in other words, the content and not just the form, the empty shell, of nations. For the members, nations are real communities of cognition, sentiment and belonging” (42).

B. Imagology

Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (2007) have developed “imagology” as a way of understanding the meaning that individuals assign to particular symbols. An image, according to Leerssen, is “the mental or discursive representation or reputation of a person, group, ethnicity or nation” (342). Since members of a group “can only experience empirical reality in part,” they rely on images to fill in the gaps, thus building a complete picture of their own identity and alterity (5). Leerssen and Beller are particularly focused on the role of literature and poetry in this process, since “the literary record demonstrates unambiguously that national characters are a matter of commonplace and hearsay rather than empirical observation or statements of objective fact” (26). However, further research has applied their methodology to other discursive fora such as film (Chew 2006) and journalistic texts (van Doorslaer 2010). It is apparent that any discursive forum in which one group imagines itself or another group can be analyzed for the use of images.

If the meanings of symbols are expressed through discursive fora, then exploring how individuals interpret the canon of symbols and images to understand group identity is primarily a question for cultural studies. Roland Barthes, in his influential work *Mythologies* (1957), argues that culture is a massive set of signs that together form “myths” with which we interact daily. These “myths” are eventually appropriated as constituent elements in group identity; in other words, “culture is sense-making, and collective identities are products of

that process” (Cornell and Hartman 1998, 174).²⁰ In the study of a culture’s discursive texts, “scholars work toward coming to understand patterns of messages and signs because they represent cognitive orientations and affective states that respondents hold with regard to their own groups or toward other members of cultural groups” (Collier 2001, 5). This is possible because of intertextuality between culture and texts, language, arts, and other expressions that encompass it. Mikhail Bakhtin (1937) is frequently credited with outlining the foundations of intertextuality, examining how social forces exert themselves on literary works, or as Swingewood (1998) describes it, “the fundamental problem of how the background becomes the foreground” (113). The study of cultural artifacts is therefore an exploration of the social reality that is expressed through the symbols and images presented by the object.

C. Narrativity

To access these intertextual accounts of identity, Margaret Somers (1994) suggests that scholars look at “narrativity,” or how group members locate their experiences within a social reality. She writes,

People make sense of what has happened and what is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of their projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, political, and cultural narratives. (614)

Narrative is fundamentally about “emplotment,” or how individual events are integrated and connected in order to give them significance. An event derives meaning not only from its chronological position in the totality of experiences, but also how it is revealed as having meaning in the order of events (White 1981). Or, as Paul Ricoeur (1981) describes it, “To be

²⁰ Cf. Balibar and Wallerstein (1991, 10): “constitution of fictive ethnicities”; Anderson (1983, *inter alia*): “imagined communities.”

historical, an event must be more than a singular occurrence, a unique happening. It receives its definition from its contribution to the development of a plot” (167).

David Carr (1986) applies narrativity to the group experience to explain how individuals in a group come to share meanings of particular images and symbols and thereby build a group identity. It is not sufficient to simply share a common experience, he argues, but rather an experience must somehow become ‘emplotted’ in each person’s individual narrative. He gives the following example:

The pedestrians on a crowded street hardly consider themselves a group. But a traffic accident, which suddenly forces their attention to a single focus, makes them into a group which the members recognize as such. Even if they do not rush to offer assistance, individuals begin speaking to one another, comparing their impressions and speculating about the origins and further effects of the accident. (132)

Carr considers groups in which the members share certain emplotted events and meanings as a *community*. The defining event is no longer simply part of the group members’ individual narratives, but also forms a *sui generis* community narrative to which all members are connected. Community narratives can persist beyond the individual event if other events are seen as sharing some relation to it; for instance, if a large-scale political movement for better traffic regulations emerges from the accident in the above example. In that case, the group expands to include all those who may not have been involved in the initial accident, but are nonetheless connected to it through their participation in other events in the community narrative. Our ability to feel part of a community narrative of which we played only a partial or minimal part is based on the idea that those events taking place presently are in some way connected to other events in the narrative.

In the context of oral history films, narrativity can make an important contribution to our understanding of how group identities are constructed. Unlike traditional oral history, the oral history film is a cultural rather than an historical artifact. The words of the interviewee certainly offer insights into how she constructs her identity, but the unit of analysis is the film itself. The process of selecting which portions of the interview to include in the film and in what order – a sort of framing similar to photography (Butler 2009) – mediates the statements of the interviewee. As Sipe (1991) writes, “When images are edited into constructed presentations, [oral] historians must also engage the logic of the filmed word” (384). The filmmaker is building a plot around the oral history, and narrativity gives us insight into how the film locates itself within the community narrative. Moreover, because film is a cultural production, the filmmaker may insert elements that are not present in traditional oral histories. Interviews may be interrupted or interspersed with images, sounds, music, and other interviews. Even the setting of the interview is important, since the surroundings of the interview can evoke certain images (or what Neuschafer [2008] calls “mood”). Imagology allows us to identify and interpret these aspects of the film and their meaning for the filmmaker and the audience. The film becomes the virtual equivalent of the literature around which Leerssen and Beller outlined imagology, but with the added value of incorporating the images evoked by the interviewees themselves. Narrativity then asks to which events in the community narrative the images are connected and how the filmmaker constructs his or her notion of the group identity.

IV. The Chapter Arts Centre Film Collection

In exploring oral history films, Abrams (2010) argues that “when a respondent tells us a story about an event or an experience, they are likely telling us something about themselves and about how they position themselves in the social world. It is for us to work out how that story fits into the larger schema” (53). There are many advantages to examining amateur films in lieu of their commercial equivalents for discovering this “larger schema,” primarily their position on the outside or ‘fringes’ of the dominant discourse. First, as Vitali and Willemen (2006) write, because film is a “discursive terrain” in a struggle between dominant and non-dominant narratives, films do not simply reflect but actually shape what constitutes contentious areas such as identity. As films “whose culture and/or language take their distance from the nation-states which enclose them,” or in other words, are outside “of the agenda set by Hollywood” (Crofts 2006, 45), amateur films of the local and regional genre present a unique interpretation of the formation of the nation. The mere act of challenging the dominant discourse suggests that there are additional subtleties, layers, or distortions in that discourse, and therefore the analysis of amateur film can provide novel insights beyond conventional wisdom.

Second, perhaps not unique to amateur films but at least more prominent than in commercial productions, the intersubjectivity of the filmmaker and her subject can illuminate more about narrative construction than the content of the film itself. As Somers (1994) writes, “Ontological narratives are, above all, social and interpersonal... agents adjust stories to fit their own identities, and, conversely, they will tailor ‘reality’ to fit their stories. The intersubjective webs of relationality sustain and transform narratives over time” (618). The filmmaker has her own opinions, emotions, and identities concerning the events in the film, and these emerge in the way that the narrative is constructed. What the filmmaker chooses to include (and in what order), exclude, emphasize, challenge, and criticize is an expression of

the filmmakers own perspective. In amateur films, this intersubjectivity is a necessary feature of the production. Simply imagine the counterfactual; if the filmmaker's narrative fit in the dominant discourse, would there be any reason to produce the film? *Why* the filmmaker has chosen to challenge traditional views of the nation can be discovered by analyzing *how* the filmmaker has chosen to do so.

A. Losing the Coal-Based Community

Through the above discussion, it becomes clear that independent films and the narratives they construct cannot be separated from the socio-political events taking place around the filmmakers. Anytime that a film engages with the dominant discourse, it is commenting on that discourse and therefore making a statement about contemporary socio-political conditions. In the case of the Chapter collection, the miners' strike of 1984-85 provides the obvious context under which the films were produced. The work stoppage and subsequent closure of all but a handful of mining pits in South Wales suddenly and dramatically altered the economic and social landscape of the region. As traditional social structures weakened under the pressure of these changes, identity symbols which had held steady since World War I began to lose salience. Jones (1992) writes,

The abrupt creation of a Wales without miners devastated far more than the mining communities themselves. It also punctured the whole nexus of images and self-images of the Welsh, clichés as well as genuine human achievements, which seemed to have been inextricably bound up with coal mining and a small number of other industries. (349)

Vivid images of the collapse of the coal-based community as the center of economic and social life were particularly prominent in those films which focused on the experience of the colliery workers during the miner's strike, such as *Rumours at the Miners Fortnight* (1983) and *Ceiber: The Greatest Improvisers in the World* (1986). *Rumours* was filmed just

before the start of the miners' strike during the traditional two-week summer holiday for miners in Trecco Bay, Porthcawl, South Wales, a seaside holiday destination. Current and former miners and their wives discuss the brewing conflict over the mines and other political events taking place in Britain, interviews which have "a raciness and candour often missing in conventional news and magazine programmes featuring industrial disputes" (Berry 1996, 350). The most prominent feature of *Rumours* is the juxtaposition of images of leisure (miners' families on holiday) and the events and feelings expressed by interviewees. The seamless mixing of these contrasting notions is disorienting for the viewer, evoking feelings of frustration and distrust at the same time as pleasure, mimicking the turmoil caused by the pending socioeconomic upheaval of South Wales.²¹ This technique is present from the very beginning of the film. In the opening scene, which consists of images of children playing on a beach (Figure 1-1), an interviewed woman states in a voice-over, "How much longer can it go on? I mean, those who are working, they're not going to be able to keep the one who are out of work before long, are they? I mean, this can't go on and on and on indefinitely." The voice-over technique creates the impression of simultaneity between the interview and the images, which is further reinforced by subsequent footage of the interviewee lounging on the beach with sunglasses (Figure 1-2).

²¹ Although the miner's strike had not yet begun, by the time the film was produced in 1983 it was clear to most observers that a conflict between the NUM and the NCB was inevitable.



Figure 1-1



Figure 1-2

The suggestion that the children are playing *at the same time* that the woman is interviewed emphasizes the contrast between her statement and the setting. Her pessimism and realism compete against images of possibility and invincibility presented by the children playing; the filmmakers impress upon the viewer that mining issues have overturned the normal order. This technique reappears throughout the film as interviews are conducted in beach houses, in lounge chairs, and during outdoor parties (Figures 1-3 and 1-4). The viewer is unable to escape the sense that the words do not fit the location – literally. The title of the film is presented as if written on a postcard from Porthcawl (Figure 1-5).



Figure 1-3



Figure 1-4



Figure 1-5

Children are a frequent foil to the discontent of the miners, possibly due to the power of the image of youth. Unlike the interviewees, the children's joy is untarnished by concerns about jobs, money, and politics; 'childlike innocence' is accentuated through the contrast with adults. In one example, three miners speak in frank terms about the difficulty of finding

new employment if the pits close (Figure 1-6), which is immediately followed by images of children riding ponies on the beach (Figure 1-7).



Figure 1-6



Figure 1-7

The contrast is stark, and yet both appear in the same narrative structure. It is the placement of these contrasting images within the same narrative that violates the expectations of the viewer. In this sense, the film serves as a metaphor for South Wales identity, a narrative which has been infiltrated by events that threaten its unified structure around the symbol of community. Indeed, throughout *Rumours* the possibility of a breakdown in community social structures is alluded to by the interviewees. “The Tory Party is determined to beat the miner... they’ve never forgotten [the defeat of Tory MPs],” says one retired miner. As if living within this conflicted narrative himself, his serious and sober words are momentarily interrupted when he looks away from the interview to smile at someone off-camera (Figure 1-8). Those moments, however, are merely the “dreams, dreams, dreams” suggested by the film’s theme song.



Figure 1-8

The loss of community in the South Wales mining town of Penrhiwceiber is the predominant theme of *Ceiber*, which was filmed by “a group of miners from the pit who were trained in video production skills.” Although ostensibly the story of the miners’ strike at the local colliery, the film ultimately reveals a portrait of a town and a community in distress. It examines the way that the members of a close-knit society cope with economic loss and the breakdown of social structures. It is perhaps for this reason that *Ceiber* is the only film in which the crew enters the frame, occasionally shown talking with other residents or heard conversing with interviewees (Figures 1-9 and 1-10).



Figure 1-9



Figure 1-10

These moments emphasize the intersubjectivity of the filmmakers and the story and close the distance between what is taking place on screen and the viewer. The events are no longer filtered through the lens of an objective observer; the filmmaker is also the subject, meaning that the film itself is part of the story (in one scene, an elderly woman says to the crew, “Filming again?” suggesting that the making of the film was part of the community’s common experience). If the film is internal to the story, then the viewer is not watching an interpretation of the events but the events *themselves*. This perception that the film is unmediated by the filmmaker adds a sense of rawness, giving power and validity to the emotions of the interviewees. Their expressions of community identity are strengthened and their struggle becomes more meaningful. The film becomes not so much about the strike but about the people of Penrhiwceiber.

Interestingly, the film begins with the conclusion of the strike on March 5, 1985 when the miners return to work. This non-chronological approach endows the film with a sense of retrospection which would not be possible if the events were depicted in ‘real-time’. By discarding the traditional temporal development of the strike and highlighting its ultimate failure, the film redirects the attention of the viewer away from the history of the strike and towards an understanding of post-strike Penrhiwceiber. Framed in this manner, the film encourages the viewer to ask not *how* the strike ends but rather *why* the strike matters in the identity of South Wales miners. For example, during this opening scene, miner and activist Dai Davies states with pride that Penrhiwceiber was “one of four lodges left in the British coalfield without anyone going into work and scabbing.”²² Davies is not recapping an as-yet unseen plot for the viewer. Instead, he is identifying what elements from the strike have been adopted into the new community narrative, the emerging identity of South Wales. The many quotes about community that follow throughout the film are likewise not trapped by their

²² “Scabbing” referred to those who had returned to work before the formal conclusion of the strike, known as ‘scabs’. Discussion of scabbing appears frequently in *Ceiber*, perhaps because it is oppositional to the image of community.

temporality; the film is about the symbols and images that remained important after the strike had ended, not just while the strike was on.

If the film is framed as an exploration of the new community narrative of South Wales, then the images and symbols used to represent that narrative are of particular importance. The most recurring symbol is the colliery wheel, which towers above the pit and the town, appearing at least twelve times during the 45 minute program. Often, the wheel is shown as a backdrop to an image of the town, as if it reigns supreme over life in Penrhiwceiber, signifying the importance of the colliery to the community (Figure 1-11).



Figure 1-11

Unsurprisingly, then, the movement of the wheel seems to symbolize the vitality of the community at various points in the film. One interviewed woman states, “When that wheel is turning, it’s the heart of this Valley. And when it stops, the Valley stops,” as the camera zooms in on the spinning wheel. Likewise, the penultimate image of the film is a nearly identical framing of the wheel on screen, but this time it is stopped. A miner is heard saying, “Obviously the [sp] Penrhiwceiber has been a thorn in their flesh for many years, and they are quite pleased to see the end of it.” It is important that the interviewee does not qualify “Penrhiwceiber” as referring to the colliery, for the ambiguity allows the stopped wheel to

retain its symbolic meaning in relation to the community, not simply work at the pit. The use of the colliery wheel in this way suggests that the new narrative of South Wales identity includes notions of the loss of community along with the mines.

Another common set of images in *Ceiber* are those of Penrhiwceiber's physical degeneration. J. Nicholas Entrikin (1991) has persuasively argued that people are always situated within a "place," which is itself narrated and charged with meaning and therefore "contribute[s] to our sense of identity" (4). Common experience of place can be important in establishing community narratives. Images of the physical degeneration of buildings, homes, and roads in Penrhiwceiber thus represent the loss of those ordinary, everyday experiences which were shared by individuals in the community narrative. In one example, a miner refers to the "pulse of the village" as being under threat while the camera focuses on a shuttered storefront (Figure 1-12). Another poignant image begins with a close-up of a factory with broken and dirty windows; the frame then widens to include the homes which sit behind it (Figure 1-13).



Figure 1-12



Figure 1-13

These images suggest that not only are jobs and the sense of community at risk, but so is the all-important sense of place that helps bind individuals within a particular geographic space into the same community narrative. The extended scenes showing the salvaging (dismantling) of the colliery following its closure - filled with images of industrial degeneration such as

scrap metal heaps, collapsed roofs, derailed coal trains, and severed pipes (Figures 1-14 to 1-16) - serve to underscore the loss of those things which constituted the miner's sense of place. The desire of the miners and their families to defend their sense of place plays into efforts to reestablish the territoriality of South Wales, which will be discussed later in this paper.



Figure 1-14



Figure 1-15



Figure 1-16

In addition to rehabilitating place, the miners also connect the experience of the strike to both the past and the future in attempt to retain the meaning of community as an identity image (see White 1981). A traumatic event such as major industrial action can serve to define a generation and “uniquely cuts off a generation from its past and separates it from the future,” thus removing that generation from the community narrative (Edmunds and Turner 2002, 12). For this reason, the miners must maintain their connection to other generations in Penrhiwceiber in order to preserve their access to the South Wales identity that the community narrative provides. In one of the last scenes of the film, the miners are interviewed about the decision to return to work despite the imminent closure of the colliery. One miner connects the experience with previous generations, stating, “It’s not only this generation, you know, you can go back to, more than likely, when the pit was sunk in 1879 – I think that’s when the first ton of coal came up the pit then – from then on every generation have had to fight for the pit.” Another relates the strike to the future, saying, “At least we can say now, then, to my children and my grandchildren, at least we fought for it. We didn’t give it to them on a plate.” These references to past and future are important because they give temporal meaning to the image of community, ensuring its place in the community narrative.

Moreover, the accentuation of notions of kinship would play an important role in the development of a more clearly defined Welsh ethnicity over the following two decades.

B. Establishing a New Women's Identity

The miners' strike also accelerated changes in gender roles in South Wales that had been developing since World War II, when women were first welcomed into the economic and social world outside of the home. These changes threatened long-standing gendered symbols of Welshness, particularly that of the 'Welsh Mam'. As Williams (1983) writes, "Two archetypal and quasi-mythical figures loom through the mist of our memory in Wales: the Welsh Miner and the Welsh Mam... the twentieth century has eliminated one and is transforming the other out of all recognition" (530). The traditional image of the Welsh Mam developed in the late 19th century as part of an effort by Welsh Nonconformists to regulate women's behavior and defend the movement from criticism that it was complicit in supposed sexual immorality (Aaron 1997). This image of the acceptable Welsh woman persisted throughout the first half of the 20th century, which Debbie Beddoe (1986) describes accordingly: "She is hardworking. She is as clean as she is pious: she scrubs her floors and her husband's coal-black back. She is, of course, a mother, mainly the mother of sons who like her husband are also coalminers" (229). The miners' strike, however, overturned this image by encouraging women to take an active role outside of the home. Women's Support Groups, which were involved in all aspects of the strike from fund-raising to delivering food to joining protests, became a critical part of the social fabric of mining communities.²³ When the mines eventually closed, many women felt empowered (or economically compelled) to seek employment. Critically, however, while the strike struck the final blow to traditional social roles, it was not merely economic forces that drove this new image of the Welsh women. As Gareth Rees (1985) argues, "women's experience of and activity in the strike was

²³ See Davies (2010) and Gier-Viskovatoff and Porter (1998) for a more thorough discussion of women's roles during the miners' strike.

determined not simply by the nature of their spouses' role, but also by their own previous life histories" (403). Changing women's roles reflected not only instrumental concerns but also a new manner in which women viewed their relationship with, and role in, society.

These themes were explored in depth by a six-woman outfit called Red Flannel Productions, which was an independent franchised film workshop that utilized the facilities at Chapter Arts Centre for much of its existence.²⁴ Red Flannel had a particularly strong relationship with Channel 4, which contracted the group to produce a film on women in politics around the world in 1991 (Berry 1996).²⁵ The films are explicit in their agenda, promoting empowerment for women in South Wales through economic and political opportunity. As Gluck (2008) notes, there is "no doubt" that such early women's oral history projects "were operating on the assumption that women's experiences and, consequently, their narratives, were gendered... the very process implied advocacy" (359). Because of the activist nature of women's oral history, we should expect symbols and images of the new female identity in South Wales to be both frequent and prominent in these films. As is often the case, a group which has been marginalized - both in society and in film - accentuates its identity in ways that the dominant group does not (cf. Hebdige 1979).

The use of these symbols and images is never more pronounced than in *Mam* (1988), the workshop's first major feature-length film. Like most of the group's work, the film consists primarily of interviews with women in South Wales, although *Mam* is unique in its use of scripted dramatic reenactments along with archival footage. As an artistic creation, these sequences rely heavily on symbols to present their message to the audience, and these symbols additionally figure into the larger narrative of the film. The film opens with one of these scripted scenes (although the audience is not made aware of this until the conclusion), which features a typical Welsh Mam looking nostalgically through a box of old items,

²⁴ From 1981 to 1984, the group was known as the South Wales Women's Film Group.

²⁵ Berry notes that there were other feminist film groups hosted by Chapter Arts Centre, but none were as prominent as Red Flannel.

including pictures and a lace headband (Figure 2-1). Although she slowly and carefully examines each item, there is no joy or fondness in her facial expression until she approaches a plate displayed on the shelf with the word “Mother” written on it (Figure 2-2). Taking it down to wipe it with a cloth, a smile appears on her face, and a woman says in the voice-over, “Everything stopped for the boys. Mom’s boys were everything.” The last items the Welsh Mam examines are a picture of a bride and groom standing together and a mining lantern, which she holds close to herself as a look of distress crosses her face (Figure 2-3).



Figure 2-1



Figure 2-2



Figure 2-3

Although this Welsh Mam is presented in the present day, her activity is one of retrospection and evaluation of the past; her approach to each item indicates to the viewer whether the meanings associated with that symbol are to be ‘placed back in the box’ as mere nostalgia or are still cherished as part of the modern South Wales female identity. The lace headband, a symbol of domestic work, is an object of the past which no longer reflects reality for Welsh women, whereas the plate, which represents mothering, is still a part of female identity. Most importantly, the role of mining, signified through the lantern, plays a conflictual role for the modern Welsh woman (discussed below). The separation of nostalgia from reality is reaffirmed in the final scene of *Mam*, in which she is visited by a younger woman who played a modern, working Welsh mother in an earlier reenactment. The words of the music are instructive: “You see the passage of your memories as your daughters changed their lives, seeing more to their existence than just mothers, daughters, wives.” The use of the items in the opening scene, like the lyrics of the song, do not reject women’s roles as mothers and

wives, but it chooses to accentuate certain aspects of those roles at the expense of others. The scene thus builds a narrative about changes taking place in the identity of Welsh women.

i. Negotiating the Miners' Strike

The particular symbol of the lantern is reflective of a more general trope in the feminist films. Unlike *Rumours* and *Ceiber*, which could paint an unequivocally negative picture of the miners' strike, feminist productions had to negotiate showing support for new gender roles without praising the closure of the mines that ultimately allowed for women's empowerment.²⁶ In *Mam*, this is done in two ways. The first is analogizing the experience of women during World War II, when many took up jobs in factories while men were fighting. One interviewee states, "Although we were making these things for the war, it was a very happy time. It was one of the happiest times of my life," while another observes, "Once they'd had a taste of going out from the home, I think that altered the whole Valleys entirely." These statements build a narrative of female identity which includes the experiences of both World War II and the miners' strike, and discussing the impacts of the strike in a positive light becomes acceptable since it has already been done in relation to the war. The second manner is emphasizing the role of women in the miners' strike and crediting that experience, rather than the closure of the mines themselves, as the source of women's empowerment. For example, eerie images of empty shower stalls for the miners to wash off the soot from the pit (Figure 2-4), representative of the closure of the mines, are followed a few minutes later by images of women picketing (Figure 2-5) and standing behind police barricades (Figure 2-6).

²⁶ Cf. Davies (1999): "Women who are committed to both of these social movements, feminism and nationalism, face conflicts between the two... each movement makes universalizing claims which appear to devalue the aims and reverse the priorities of the other" (105).



Figure 2-4



Figure 2-5



Figure 2-6

“I think it gave me confidence,” says an interviewee after the latter images, “confidence in my own ability, in my own word, to trust my own judgment.” Although the “it” in this statement is never explicitly specified, by associating the interviewee’s words with images of protest, the film implies that the strike, rather than the pit closures, provided the aforementioned benefits. Feminism is portrayed as a natural outgrowth of industrial action. This method negotiates the apparent conflict between the positive change in women’s roles and the negative socio-economic impact of the mine closures by reassigning the origin of these changes to the miners’ strike itself.

Other films emerging from Red Flannel also employ this latter method. *If We Were Asked* (1989) was produced four years after the conclusion of the miner’s strike and explores the working environment for women in South Wales. The film’s opening features images of the local NUM Workman’s Institute (Figure 2-7), which has several broken windows, and the Rhondda Heritage Park (Figure 2-8), invoking the miners’ strike as a decisive moment in the narrative and as a destructive and painful force on South Wales.



Figure 2-7



Figure 2-8

A few moments later, the focus shifts to the miners' strike with archival footage of protests and rallies, including a close-up of a banner which reads "Your fight is our fight!" (Figure 2-9). The interviewee is heard saying, "It wasn't until the strike come [sp] along that I found out that women could do something different."



Figure 2-9

The first images in a sense permit the latter by positioning the film squarely on one side of the discourse about the miners' strike; the women did benefit from the miners' strike, but they share the grief of the miners who have lost both their community (symbolized by the damaged Workmen's Institute) and their jobs (replaced by the Rhondda Heritage Park). This technique also frames the film's discussion about the insufficient support for women's

employment in South Wales by establishing the women as being equally as wounded by the pit closures as the men. Even though the women have claimed some benefit from the miners' strike, they are still presented as the underdog, the tragic hero, in the film's narrative, which makes other tropes such as distrust of the political system more likely to be positively received by the audience.

ii. Political Disenfranchisement

The image of a political system that is gendered and male-dominated is prominent in both *Mam* and *If We Were Asked*. As Deborah Tudor (2006) argues, there was a popular view among women, rightly or wrongly, that Thatcherism was “inherently hostile to women, with economic policies and ‘values’ rhetoric specifically aimed at pushing women back into the home” (139). Early in the film, *Mam* utilizes a scripted reenactment of the 1847 “Treason of the Blue Books” to imply that discrimination against Welsh women in politics has a long and deeply-ingrained history. In the scene, an English commissioner defends the report to a Welsh minister (Figure 2-10) who claims that the commission has “diligently labored to make us appear to be the most immoral people in Her Majesty’s domain!” (Figure 2-11). The commissioner responds by noting the practice of Welsh women to take tea in each other’s homes, which “is the occasion for much gossip and tattling.”



Figure 2-10



Figure 2-11

Mam adopts an historical approach to the role of women in Welsh society, and by beginning with an example of persecution by the elite political class, the film frames the narrative as one of a struggle to overcome the political forces working against women. Although political discrimination is not explicitly mentioned in the remainder of the film, it serves as a backdrop to discussions such as those about the exploitation of women workers.²⁷ Furthermore, the reenactment is interspersed and followed by interviews with historians, who discuss the impact of the Blue Books on the position of women in Welsh society. These interviews provide legitimacy to the scene by offering expert confirmation of the depiction and also affirm the importance of the event in the narrative of South Wales female identity.

If We Were Asked explicitly explores political disenfranchisement as a theme in contemporary South Wales, and does so in one of the cleverest scenes in the collection. The scene is framed by an interview with Janet Davies, a Plaid Cymru (The Party of Wales) county councillor, who notes the difficulties women face in Welsh politics by saying, “It’s all part of the power structure, isn’t it, that men have held power in the Valleys, Labour Party men have held power in the Valleys for so many years, and they don’t want to lose it. And the easy way to keep it is to intimidate other people.” A group discussion among four women follows, where the discussion turns to the challenges women face breaking into traditional power structures. A montage of images of male-dominated activities then follows: men playing cricket on a field (Figure 2-12), men with Wales national team rugby hats, a young boy playing billiards, a group of shirtless men sitting at an outdoor pub drinking (Figure 2-13), and boys walking down the street waving Welsh flags (Figure 2-14).

²⁷ One interviewee states, “Women go to work because they gotta go, you know. They’re exploited to death by the system, I feel, because... they can easily employ women and then get rid of them when they don’t need them, you know.”



Figure 2-12



Figure 2-13



Figure 2-14

These images are clearly gendered. Sport and drinking in particular are traditionally seen as ‘masculine’ activities, and the previous discussion about the power structures inherent to Welsh society are accentuated in these terrains. Moreover, it is not merely male domination that is present in this montage, but female exclusion – both implicitly and explicitly. The image of the cricket match begins with the camera following a pair of women pushing baby carriages (Figure 2-15), and is followed by a woman sitting with a child (Figure 2-16).

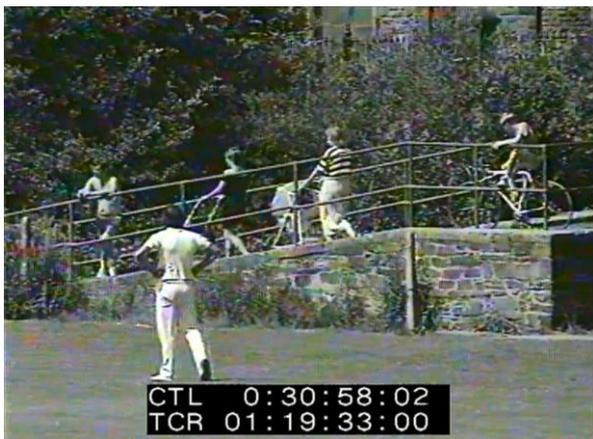


Figure 2-15



Figure 2-16

That these women are engaged in the caring of children while the men partake in leisure activities accentuates the division of gender in South Wales, suggesting that male domination in society has *ipso facto* forced women into traditional (and inferior) roles. The connection to politics is made through crafty film editing. The final image of the montage is of a Wales national team rugby player successfully converting a drop goal over the sound of the national anthem and clapping. The viewer is led to believe that the congratulatory clapping is for the rugby player, a fairly innocuous act. However, the scene quickly cuts to a Labour Party

convention (Figure 2-17), where the clapping continues; the viewer comes to realize that the sounds originated in this latter clip, not during the rugby match. The convention attendees are mostly male, reinforced by an image of a Trade Union Congress panel made up entirely of men (Figure 2-18).



Figure 2-17



Figure 2-18

It is important that the clapping originates in a congratulatory context, because when framed in this manner the conference seems to be congratulating itself on its male-dominated status. This adds an active component to the discrimination women face in politics, suggesting that women are forcibly and purposefully kept out of these fora. It is perhaps for this reason that an interviewee a couple of minutes after this scene says, “If ever anything’s gonna change in society, then we do need women to sort of *force their way into the institutions*, to make the changes that we need” (italics mine).

iii. The Importance of Employment

Despite the severe consequences of political exclusion, the films in the Chapter collection dedicate more attention to female employment than political power. *Political Annie’s Off Again* (1984), produced by the CCVW, documents layoffs at Hoover’s Merthyr Tydfil plant and women’s protests against alleged discrimination and is a prime example of the privileging of work over politics in the new narrative of South Wales female identity. In addition to the recurring sound of an assembly line machine – a mechanical, repetitive,

industrial noise – over chapter titles, indicating the importance of factory employment for the film’s narrative, comparison images are presented of men and women working in the Hoover factory. The women are shown working silently and diligently on their tasks (Figures 2-19 and 2-20) while the men are shown chatting with each other, laughing, and slowly performing their jobs or otherwise looking less engaged than the women (Figures 2-21 and 2-22).



Figure 2-19



Figure 2-20



Figure 2-21



Figure 2-22

These contrasting images serve the dual purposes of defending the value of the female employees of the factory and suggesting an ulterior motive for segregated layoffs at the plant. Indeed, one woman interviewee states over the image in Figure 2-21 that trade union support for equal pay “seems to have been done as a means to their own ends, to get that factory a totally male dominated factory,” and over Figure 2-22 she discusses the number of semi-

skilled female workers who are being laid off. These images frame the discussion of women's identity not as one of equality or decision-making power but as one of recognition of their worth as employees; the *working* woman is an important symbol of empowerment in the narrative of South Wales female identity. Defending woman employment is therefore not only an economic interest but also exercises a new identity which the women have embraced and is under threat from male forces.

iv. Emasculation as Power

The images of idle men compared to the productivity of the women advance not only the image of female empowerment but also the image of emasculation. For Welsh miners during the strike, the ability to work in the collieries were not only a paycheck but also a source of dignity.²⁸ The failure of the strike and the closure of the mines was therefore both an economic and psychological loss to the miners, including the end of the stereotypical idea of the Welsh Miner. As R. Merfyn Jones (1992) writes, "Paid work in industrial Wales had been men's work, and the Welsh identity... resonated with masculinity... a Welsh women's identity had now to be allowed for, an identity deeply disruptive of traditional male assumptions" (349). This emasculation is recognized and at times celebrated in *Political Annie*. During a scene titled "The Women", one female factory worker says,

Men want you to go out to work because they need the money... what they still can't accept is the financial independence it gives you... it must be a deep-seated factor that the male is supreme and the only reason that's evolved is that women have babies and men don't. They need to feel that that dominance over you is there. So yeah, bring home the money, but don't reassert yourself, don't get that independence.

²⁸ In *Ceiber*, one miner says, "We want a livelihood. We want our own livelihoods. We want to bring up our families in the same way that we were: with dignity."

Embedded in this quote is the idea that men's identities have been emasculated by way of losing their traditional role in society. It is not merely that men no longer feel that they cannot be the masculine provider for the household; they are seen as being *incapable* of doing so. That men "need the money" suggests that they cannot earn a sufficient income for the family alone, and the desire to "feel" authority implies that the power is illusory rather than real. *If We Were Asked* also celebrates this emasculation by showing male childcare workers, which is traditionally a female-dominated field, playing with children (Figure 2-23).



Figure 2-23

One worker says, "I find it boring working in factories... with kids, it's a lot more interesting. You get a lot more out of it." However, contained within this scene is still the message that the traditional masculine identity of the Welsh man has been replaced by an emasculated identity.

The image of emasculation appears most clearly in the animated short *Girls' Night Out* (1987), the first film by award-winning animator Joanna Quinn, which she completed as part of the animation workshop at Chapter Arts Centre. The film centers on Beryl, who

represents the new ‘typical’ South Wales housewife, working on a factory assembly line during the day (Figure 2-24) and returning home to wash the dishes (Figure 2-25).²⁹



Figure 2-24



Figure 2-25

On her birthday, she receives a call from some female co-workers who convince her to go out with them and celebrate. Leaving her silent, unmoving husband at home watching television (Figure 2-26), Beryl joins her friends at “The Bull,” which features a male stripper. Noticing Beryl, the stripper approaches her and begins dancing suggestively; in the next scene, he blushes and covers himself after Beryl removes his underwear. She returns home, with the underwear still with her. Several symbols of emasculation emerge. The first is Beryl’s husband, who is shown as lazy and unattractive such that Beryl daydreams about being carried to a desert island by a well-built lover (Figure 2-27).

²⁹ One interviewee in *Political Annie’s Off Again* says, “When I come home, I’m working again... I’ve got to make the food, do the washing up.”



Figure 2-26



Figure 2-27

Although her husband engages in behavior that fits into the traditional role of the Welsh miner, by having both his sexuality and physical strength questioned, he has become an emasculated personification of that identity. He represents the illusion of masculinity held by the Welsh male.

The second symbol of emasculation is the behavior of Beryl and her friends while at “The Bull.” Unlike Beryl, her friends have discarded traditionally feminine clothing in favor of unisex sweaters (Figure 2-28), and Beryl hands them large, frothy beers that are traditionally associated with male drinking behavior. Until this point, Beryl has not exhibited the empowered female identity of her friends - even admitting some dominance on the part of her husband, saying, “I hate to leave him when he’s in one of his moods,” as she leaves the apartment – but shortly after the stripper begins his performance she begins catcalling him loudly (Figure 2-29).



Figure 2-28



Figure 2-29

Beryl and the stripper have exchanged gender roles, each taking on the expected behavior of the other. For Beryl, this means she has now adopted the empowered female identity; for the stripper, even with the strongest possible accentuation of his male sexuality, he has taken on an emasculated role as a mere object for the pleasure of Beryl and her friends. Finally, Beryl's removal of his underwear is the ultimate act of emasculation for the stripper (Figure 2-31). Although he approaches her in what he believes is a position of (sexual) power (Figure 2-30), Beryl dominates their interaction. The stripper's façade of masculinity is removed and Beryl's keeping of the underwear (Figure 2-32) signifies that the new female identity does not envision returning any authority to the male identity.



Figure 2-30



Figure 2-31



Figure 2-32

v. The 'Any-Woman'

Of course, for the new South Wales female identity to persist beyond the present generation and extend to others who did not directly experience the miners' strike, a *community* narrative must develop to connect the individuals holding that identity. The

feminist films in this collection foster this community narrative by highlighting the ‘group-ness’ of women’s experiences in South Wales during the 1980s, particularly through the style of the interviews. Gluck (2008) argues that women’s oral history during this era began to shift from a focus on the individual to exploring the group as a whole, and interviews were used to empower both the interviewer and the interviewee; “women’s oral history was not merely *about* women. It was *by* and *for* women, as well,” she writes (360). Indeed, whereas the voice of the interviewer is heard only sparsely in *Ceiber* and not at all in *Rumours*, *Political Annie* frequently features the voice of the interviewer (also female) as part of the interview.³⁰ This technique closes the distance between the interviewer and interviewee and establishes them as being part of the same community. The interviewer is no longer an objective observer reporting to the audience but has instead taken on a role within the film (like the crew in *Ceiber*) and become part of the narrative. The audience does not know the identity of the interviewer but comes to see her as connected and invested in the events at the Hoover Factory – the kind of indirect connection that forms the basis of community narratives (Carr 1986). The interviewer does not need to have experienced the events to associate with them. The ambiguous identity of the interviewer further leaves open the possibility that *any* woman could feel connected to the events in the film and join the community narrative. In this way, the film adds the segregated layoffs as a common reference point in South Wales women’s identity, a new symbol in the community narrative.³¹

The idea of the ‘any-woman’ is one which emerges in both *Mam* and *If We Were Asked*. In one of the early reenactments in *Mam*, a traditional Welsh Mam is shown completing her daily routine – washing the clothes and linens, scrubbing the floor, kneading bread, and cleaning the stove (Figures 2-33 to 2-35) – but the camera is focused on her hands

³⁰ Suitably, the interviewer is the first individual heard in the chapter called “The Women”.

³¹ *If We Were Asked* also emphasizes the ‘group-ness’ of women through the use of the group discussion interview, in which four women engage in an (at least seemingly) undirected conversation on a particular subject. The intra-group exchanges of the participants symbolize their connectedness within a single community narrative.

and her face is never directly shown. Even the concluding image of the Mam's exhaustion after completing her tasks, an emotion that is normally conveyed through facial expressions, uses the movement of her hands to communicate this feeling to the audience (Figure 2-36).



Figure 2-33



Figure 2-34



Figure 2-35



Figure 2-36

By focusing on the activities of the Mam rather than the Mam herself, the scene suggests that she could be *any* woman's mother, and that this experience was not unique to any particular Mam. All South Wales women who are adopting the new female identity share this common historical image in the community narrative. The generational connection to the past is complemented by women looking towards the future in *If We Were Asked*. In the final interview of the film, a woman interviewee says, "This is what life should be about, is us all feeling a part of the struggle to better, you know, to improve things for the next generation, you know, and not just for ourselves." A montage of images of youth follows: a child's eyes

(Figure 2-37), two girls playing, two boys riding bikes down the street, and teenagers conducting band practice (Figure 2-38).



Figure 2-37



Figure 2-38

These are followed by images of a smokestack blowing (Figure 2-39), a delivery truck driving down the street, and women marching in a protest (Figure 2-40).



Figure 2-39



Figure 2-40

The combination of images of youth with symbols of manufacturing and women's empowerment creates a visual association between the future of South Wales and the work that has been put in by contemporary women to pave the way for a new female identity. The film suggests that the impact of the women's movement will resonate through to the next generation since both are part of the same community narrative. Moreover, this community narrative is not limited to women, but extends across genders and age groups; everyone is

part of the community. In this way, the identity expressed by the interviewees is preserved beyond those who were immediately impacted by the miners' strike.

C. Territoriality

As discussed earlier, the physical effects of the mine closures – boarded up shops, mining buildings in disrepair, and the dismantling of the collieries – threatened the sense of place that was critical to the coal-based community narrative. The closure of the pits, a verdict handed down from London and opposed by the miners, signaled a loss of control over the space in which the miners lived. Narrative is in part about deciding which symbols and images are emplotted and assigning them meaning, a task which is more difficult when the individual or group no longer commands what makes up their space. Accordingly, several films in the Chapter collection attempt to reestablish the territoriality of South Wales and regain control over the region's narrative. Michel de Certeau (1984) argues that space (non-politicized terrain) must be traversed in a meaningful way to become place, and the way that the films present South Wales as a geographic and political terrain can be viewed as a 'virtual traversing' of the post-miners' strike space, turning it into place. This new formulation of place is an important component of South Wales identity narrative to the present day.

Territoriality emerges prominently in *Ceiber*, perhaps because the film's narrative engages primarily with the image of community, of which place is a component. The film is rife with images of the loss of place – the desolation of a post-mining community – but these images are contrasted with statements from interviewees which claim ownership over space in new ways. For example, in an early scene, the camera pans over a row of houses to reveal an empty post-industrial area of Penrhiwceiber (Figure 3-1).



Figure 3-1

The two quotes which follow the image are instructive. The first is a miner, who says, “The fight, or the battle, is about communities and people’s lives. Nothing else in South Wales.” By framing this quote with an image of space, the film attempts to give that space meaning by associating it with community; implicit is the idea that to maintain community, ownership over space such as this must be regained. Territoriality and place thus become images in the developing narrative of South Wales identity. The second quote features a miner’s wife who states, “I know more people in Penrhiwceiber now than in all the years I’ve lived here,” over an image of a Ceiber Women’s Support Group fundraising picnic (Figure 3-2). Importantly, there are elements of this second image which allude to the post-industrial space from moments before – the three empty tires in the foreground and the gravel road.



Figure 3-2

Both the image of people cooking and the suggestion that the space has been a nexus for community connections give the space meaning. It has been re-appropriated into the community narrative by assigning it status as a social place, whereas before the strike it was a working place with different meanings attached to it. This re-appropriation is also a declaration of ownership over the space, reasserting control over the meaning of place and its role for the community. Indeed, the very act of showing the film crew in the frame (as discussed earlier) indicates that Penrhiwceiber has meaning as place, since the village is a signified image for the filmmakers.

Girls' Night Out takes an interesting approach to territoriality by emphasizing the characters' familiarity with space. In a short sequence following Beryl's decision to join her friends at the pub, their car is shown driving chaotically through streets marked with names as though it were a map (Figures 3-3 and 3-4).

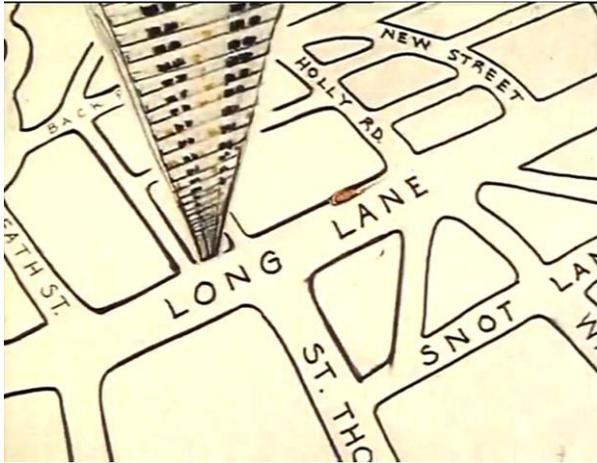


Figure 3-3

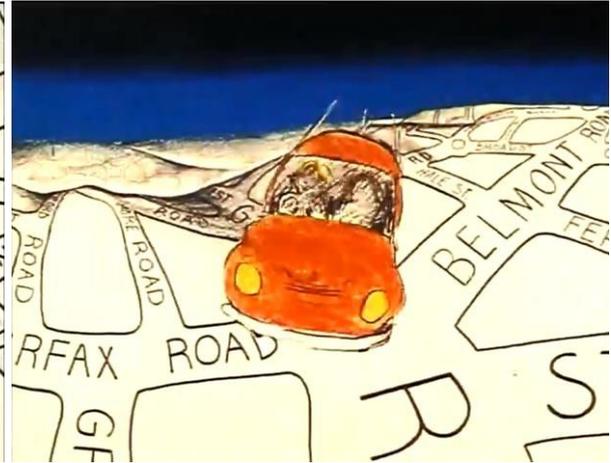


Figure 3-4

Maps are traditionally associated with unfamiliarity, outsiders, and uncertainty. The car containing Beryl and her friends, however, exhibits behavior that is very much the opposite of someone who would need a map – the car jumps over streets, takes quick turns, and screeches as it stops. The image of familiarity overlaid on a map thus implies two things: that Beryl and her friends are operating on a new and unfamiliar terrain, symbolizing the new female and community identities being adopted in South Wales, but at the same time they assert their ownership of this new space, symbolizing the re-appropriation of place. Their comfort with the geography of their town is itself an image of their identity, positioning place into their community narrative.

Finally, *If We Were Asked* utilizes perhaps the simplest and most direct image of territoriality: the panoramic view. In these images, the camera slowly pans over the town from a distance, capturing the entirety of the geographical space in which the community operates (Figures 3-5 and 3-6).



Figure 3-5



Figure 3-6

These images, through their inclusion in the film, are made part of the narrative about the new South Wales women's identity; in other words, they are assigned meaning, transforming from space into place. By capturing the entire town in the shot, these images further suggest that community and place are interlinked, for the entire community of *people* exists within the *geographic* area in the frame. The hills which define the valley even serve as symbols of the boundaries that separate groups of people (Barth 1969). Territoriality of this nature – wide, vague, and all-encompassing – is particularly important for the establishment of a regional identity which must include the varied experiences of many people. As Fevre and Thompson (1999) argue, the relationship between “community” and “locality” emerges as a way to understand the diversity of Welsh identity. The panoramic shot is the ultimate expression of this diverse experience captured within a singular image of identity – place.

V. Conclusion

“With the mountains around you, you feel like you’re an enclosed unit, and you care for the people within that enclosed unit... there is a very big community spirit. Because you tend to be interlinked, people within the Valleys knew your grandmother, knew your auntie... people say to me, I knew your gran and how’s your mother. I’m always thought of as Bill Pull’s daughter or Maud Peaks granddaughter. You’re never thought of in your own right because they were long-standing members of the community.”

- Interviewee in *If We Were Asked*

The miners’ strike and pit closures produced enormous and far-reaching changes in South Wales identity narratives that continue to reverberate through the present era. Such fundamental shifts as redefining images of community and place, as well as making space for new gender roles, resulted in a wholesale reassessment of Wales’ view of itself and its position within the United Kingdom. Following Margaret Thatcher’s re-election in 1987, a “‘crisis of representation’ – as Ron Davies³² put it – was on the agenda, [and] it was but a short step to start thinking about how a Welsh perspective could be mobilized and channeled.” (Osmond 2011, 9). Thus, for scholars of nations and nationalism, the identity narratives developing in South Wales during the 1980s are critical to understanding the modern political development of Wales. Pitchford (2001) emphasizes how nationalist movements are “image makers” who selectively interpret a group’s history and culture to advance a political agenda. Defining identity narratives – for example, as civic, cultural, or ethnic – is therefore an important component of assessing the resources which are available to nationalist image makers.

John Osmond (2012), an influential and widely-respected scholar of Wales and director of the Institute of Welsh Affairs, has claimed the existence of a Welsh civic identity following the 2011 Assembly powers referendum because “yes” voters came from across the economic and social spectrum – a “unity in a common sense of citizenship.” He argues that the Welsh have become increasingly attached to the idea of devolution, and indeed civic

³² Ron Davies was Secretary of State for Wales from 1997-1998 and is considered by many to be the chief architect of devolution in Wales.

identity may be one of the “multiple layers of imagined community” held by the Welsh (Phillips 2002, 598). However, there is little to suggest that this narrative is a strong one for many people in Wales. Plaid Cymru (The Party of Wales) has struggled since the 1997 devolution referendum to articulate a civic nationalism that works; the vagueness of the concept of a civic community “has made it more a hindrance than an asset to Plaid Cymru’s political and electoral progress” (McAllister 1998, 497). Civic identity requires civic institutions which can serve as symbols of that identity, and adopting these institutions into a narrative of civic nationalism is a process that can require at least a generation. The National Assembly for Wales and its associated executive bodies are less than two decades old, and ‘carry-over’ institutions from the pre-devolution era such as the NHS and the Welsh Office (later called the Wales Office) came to be seen as symbols of British rather than Welsh identity (Bradbury and Andrews 2010).³³ While civic identity has undoubtedly been growing stronger as Welsh institutions are adopted into Welsh identity narratives, Plaid Cymru’s electoral record suggests their appeals to civic identity have fallen on deaf (or unknowing) ears. In 1999, Plaid won 28.4% of the vote in Assembly elections and secured 17 of 60 seats; they have since fallen behind even the Conservative Party with just 11 seats and 19.3% of the vote in the 2011 election.³⁴ Moreover, turnout in the 2011 referendum was so low – less than 36% - that drawing any conclusions about the nature of Welsh identity from the result seems premature.

While the miners’ strike does not seem to have caused the emergence of a civic identity in South Wales, the films in this study do support the development of a cultural identity. Although there remains great diversity in the symbols and images in South Wales identity narratives - even the concept of community appears in complex and varied manifestations (Cloke and Milbourne 1992) – certain images emerge uniformly throughout

³³ Emphasizing this point are recent calls to abolish the Wales Office entirely (BBC 2011).

³⁴ The 2011 popular vote percentage is based on constituency votes, not regional list votes.

the films. The most important of these is inclusivity (which is also characteristic of civic identity and may account for the confusion). This image suggests that a particular narrative applies to all people in South Wales regardless of its actual appropriateness. For example, while some women may have remained stuck (or chosen to remain) in traditional gender roles, the films present symbols of the new female identity as universal. No one is explicitly excluded from notions of community and territoriality; the 'other' is merely something or someone outside of the particular group or place. Inclusivity provides a kind of 'glue' which holds these narratives together, allowing them together to form a greater narrative of South Wales cultural identity; a person need only position themselves within one of the available narratives to be adopted into the identity. Cohen's (1985) work on "symbolic ethnicity" is applicable here, which shows how commonly-held images can help delineate the borders of the group. Unlike Cohen, however, this study has shown that it is not merely the form, but the substance of the image that allows it to function as it does; inclusivity is important for allowing narratives to co-exist in the same identity construction rather than establishing them as mutually-exclusive (for example, a non-inclusive narrative of community may exclude those whom the narrative of place does not, holding place-based identity holders in conflict with community-based holders).

The question, then, is whether this cultural identity is elevated to an ethnic identity. As discussed in the theory section of this paper, narratives of kinship appear to be a defining characteristic of ethnic groups (Cornell 1996). Kinship provides a defining border of the group that the inclusivity of cultural identity does not, and it is perhaps for this reason that ethnic ties garner such strong feelings of attachment when compared to cultural groups (Geertz 1973). While narratives of kinship are not prominent in the Chapter film collection, quotes such as the one that begins this section suggests a growing *belief* in Wales' kin-based heritage. Some historical background is useful here. Around 1900, English in-migration into

South Wales accelerated rapidly, and in the first decade of the 20th century more than 100,000 people from England made the move to Wales (Morgan 1982).³⁵ Since ethnic identities often persist beyond first generation immigrants onto their children and grandchildren (Glazer and Moynihan 1963), developing a coherent Welsh ethnic identity would have been nearly impossible for the first two or three generations following 1900 - about 80 years. It was around the time of the miners' strike that narratives of kinship could first start to develop in South Wales, as individuals began to view their heritage as primarily Welsh rather than English. Moreover, the uniquely *Welsh* (indeed South Wales) experience of the miners' strike – far more pits were closed there than in England or even Scotland, and in no other region were so many communities reliant on coal mining – made ethnicization more pronounced by setting the miners' strike generation apart from its ancestors, in this case as holding a deeply Welsh identity (cf. Edmunds and Turner 2002).³⁶ As kinship became part of the narrative of Welsh identity, political mobilization around vague goals such as the protection of Welsh identity symbols (language, community, etc.) became possible, perhaps explaining the dramatic increase in support for devolution between 1979 and 1997, a gap of just twenty years (cf. Horowitz 1985).

It is plausible, then, to suggest that the South Wales identity that is depicted in the Chapter film collection is not merely a cultural identity but rather a developing ethnic identity. This conception of identity narratives emerging from the 1980s will help scholars understand political and social developments in the period following the miners' strike, including the ways that political parties have framed their Welshness. Michael Keating (1998), for example, argues that a “new regionalism” has emerged from modern mass politics and caused political parties to adopt regionalist platforms to achieve electoral success. These

³⁵ Migration patterns during the first 150 years of the industrial revolution in Wales primarily consisted of movement from North and Mid-Wales to South Wales to work in English-owned pits and factories.

³⁶ Many interviewees in the Chapter collection referenced the miners' strike of 1921, viewing their own strike as a historical extension of earlier industrial action. However, these connections were often couched in images of Welshness, accentuating notions of kinship by ignoring the ethnic diversity of the pits in that era.

electoral motivations in turn allow nationalist policies to advance even when state-level parties may be opposed to devolution. However, while Keating and others (e.g. Sorens 2009; Hopkin 2003) credit electoral motivations for the advancement of regional autonomy, these studies beg the question: under what conditions do electoral motivations shift towards supporting regionalist demands? Why do voters of a region such as Wales come to “regard the statewide *demos* as inappropriate for deciding over a policy area that affects the region, [and] will want to redefine the *demos* in order to make it congruent with the regional public” (Fitjar 2010, 40)? In other words, this thesis helps explain what happened in Wales between 1979 and 1997 that led to the political outcomes which have permanently reshaped the future of Wales.

It is studies such as these, which sit at the intersection of political science and cultural studies, that offer enormous potential to explain developments in the most democratized era in history. The explosion of the Internet offers wide access to public fora that in turn affect the nature and outcomes of institutionalized governmental structures (Dahlgren 2000). It is no longer enough to study elite-level politics. Scholars must instead have their ear to the ground, listening to what is happening among the world’s ‘netizens’. The works emerging from Chapter Arts Center in the 1980s were in some ways an early experiment in expanding the democracy of public fora. Access to thousands of viewers on Channel 4 and millions of home video players allowed amateur filmmakers, who would otherwise be marginalized in traditional institutions, to contribute to the public discourse. The Chapter film collection is one of the many resources that provide academics with access to the grassroots feelings and movements which ultimately led to devolution in Wales. The ethnicization of South Wales certainly made advancing nationalist claims easier, or at least possible on a much wider scale. This development is as much a part of the political history of Wales as the 1997 referendum establishing devolution itself.

The next step in this research agenda is to look outside of the 1980s and towards the present day. South Wales is once again undergoing enormous demographic changes as the number of migrants from outside the UK increases steadily (Jivraj 2012). The ethnic diversification of South Wales means that identity images such as place are no longer congruous with narratives of kinship; a migrant can live within the same meaningful space as a fourth-generation Welshman yet not be considered Welsh. Because of this, images of South Wales identity developed during the 1980s may no longer be seen as valid identifiers of Welshness and be removed from the identity narrative entirely. Ethnicization may actually be receding – and claims of a civic identity in Wales, while premature, may be sensing a new narrative developing to replace ethnic narratives. To test these theories, scholars must dig into the new, democratized public fora which influence the public discourse and see how people view the self-image of themselves and their communities. Only then can we begin to comprehend the next twenty years of Welsh politics.

Even as changes inevitably take place in the South Wales identity narratives, there is little doubt that the historical legacy of the miners' strike and pit closures will remain. Social life was deeply intertwined with narratives of community and place which emerged from the loss of traditional institutions, and women's expanded roles in politics and society never receded back into the home. All of these images were brilliantly captured by the filmmakers at Chapter Arts Centre and preserved by the NSSAW as a piece of the story of Wales. Their works explored the reality of life for miners and their families during the last great industrial action in British history, an event which defined an entire generation. The exploration of the Chapter film collection will hopefully not stop with this thesis, but will continue to be a source of insight and inspiration for scholars and observers interested in the dynamic events shaping one of the oldest nations in the world.

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