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**A WALK THROUGH LLAREGGUB: A READING OF
DYLAN THOMAS'S *UNDER MILK WOOD***

PORTO ALEGRE

2012

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS
ÁREA: ESTUDOS DE LITERATURA
ESPECIALIDADE: LITERATURAS ESTRANGEIRAS MODERNAS
LINHA DE PESQUISA: LITERATURA, IMAGINÁRIO E HISTÓRIA

**A WALK THROUGH LLAREGGUB: A READING OF
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Dissertação de Mestrado em Literaturas Estrangeiras Modernas submetida ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de Mestre.

PORTO ALEGRE

Abril, 2012

FICHA CATALOGRÁFICA

FEAR, Alan Peter

A Walk through Llareggub: A Reading of Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*

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Porto Alegre: UFRGS, Instituto de Letras, 2012. **113p**

Dissertação (Mestrado - Programa de Pós-graduação em Letras)

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

1. Literaturas de língua inglesa. 2. Literatura galesa. 3. Crítica literária. 5. Dylan Thomas 6. *Under Milk Wood*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I would like to thank the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul and PPG Letras for accepting me on this course and giving me this wonderful opportunity to study these two years on my Master's Degree. My special thanks to José Canísio Scher of PPG-Letras for kind attention, patience and help. My thanks also to CAPES for the invaluable financial support in the form of the study scholarship I have received which has allowed me to dedicate a great part of my time to the research. My thanks must also go to David Higham Associates of London, administrators of the Estate of Dylan Thomas, for giving me permission to reproduce excerpts from *Under Milk Wood* in the body of my text.

To professors Rosalia Neumann Garcia and Rita Terezinha Schmitd, my appreciation and thanks for the captivating and enlightening classes.

My special thanks to my supervisor Professor Sandra Maggio for the unrelenting optimism, energy and perpetual joyful mood; the delightful energetic literature classes and most of all the priceless advice, help, hints and guidance which has seen me through this long and challenging path.

My kids Alice and Francisco deserve a mention for their patience and understanding during the weekends when I have been working hard and have not been able to give any attention to them.

Finally my very special thanks, appreciation and love go to my partner Elisabete Longaray, whose love, support, patience and gentle urging has kept me going through the most difficult times of intellect blockage and without whom I would never have begun the whole process two years ago.

EPIGRAPH

*To be born in Wales,
Not with a silver spoon in your mouth,
But, with music in your blood
And with poetry in your soul,
Is a privilege indeed.*

from "In Passing", Brian Harris, 1967.

RESUMO

A peça radiofônica *Under Milk Wood*, de Dylan Thomas, nos mostra cenas de um dia na vida dos habitantes da cidadezinha litorânea de Llareggub, no País de Gales. Como galês que sou, residente no Brasil há duas décadas, tenho percebido que apesar de este escritor ser bastante conhecido por aqui, sua obra não é muito estudada nos círculos acadêmicos. Após conduzir uma pesquisa rudimentar no formato de entrevistas feitas a professores e estudantes universitários, concluí que a recepção da obra de Dylan Thomas fica prejudicada devido às amplas diferenças culturais que existem entre o Brasil e o País de Gales. A experiência de uma oficina de leitura de *Under Milk Wood* mostrou que estudantes brasileiros de literaturas de língua inglesa podem responder muito bem ao texto a partir do momento em que começam a perceber o tom local e o estilo do cenário e das personagens, bem como as particularidades linguísticas. A resposta dos leitores, e a sua fruição da obra, crescem significativamente à medida em que percebem que dominam aspectos históricos e culturais ligados à peça, e também as referências geográficas que fazem a ponte entre o cenário ficcional do vilarejo e as cidadezinhas litorâneas similares do País de Gales da vida real, com os hábitos característicos dos moradores locais. Com base no acima exposto, o objetivo desta dissertação é se constituir um guia de leitura que seja útil para estudantes de literaturas de língua inglesa externos ao Reino Unido, como aqueles que encontrei no Brasil, bem como para tradutores potenciais da peça, ou mesmo para leitores em geral que queiram compreender e usufruir melhor aquilo que a peça *Under Milk Wood* tem a oferecer. Para melhor acompanhar os leitores neste passeio pela cidade de Llareggub, decidi estruturar o capítulo principal desta dissertação no formato de comentários críticos formados por notas e observações técnicas que visam esclarecer elementos culturais que impedem que o leitor desavisado decodifique certos aspectos da peça. O trabalho vem dividido em três seções. Na primeira são introduzidos os referenciais históricos e geográficos do País de Gales, apresentados a partir da leitura dos reconhecidos historiadores galeses John Davies e Geraint Jenkins. As informações sobre a literatura galesa produzida em língua inglesa se embasam predominantemente em Glyn Jones e Stephen Knight. A segunda seção analisa a estrutura da obra e a terceira apresenta o guia de anotações página a página. A sequência inicia com a apresentação do vilarejo de Llareggub e sua contrapartida nas cidades litorâneas do País de Gales. O guia página a página elucida aspectos culturais relacionados à narrativa, explica expressões coloquiais anglo-galesas e oferece possibilidades de interpretação para certas cenas e situações.

Palavras-chave: 1 Dylan Thomas; 2 *Under Milk Wood*; 3 Literatura do País de Gales; 4 Cultura do País de Gales; 5 História do País de Gales.

ABSTRACT

Dylan Thomas's play for voices *Under Milk Wood* offers us a glimpse into a day in the lives of the inhabitants of the fictional small Welsh seaside town of Llareggub. Welsh readers identify immediately with the eccentricity of village life and the cultural richness of the characters and setting that embody the spirit of Wales. As a Welshman living in Brazil for the last twenty years I have noticed that, although Dylan Thomas is well known here, his work is rarely studied in academic circles. After conducting a rudimentary research consisting of interviews with professors and university students, I concluded that the work of Dylan Thomas is not easily grasped because of the vast cultural differences between Brazil and Wales. An experimental reading workshop of *Under Milk Wood* has shown that Brazilian English Literature students respond well to the work when they begin to understand the local tone and style of the setting and characters, including the linguistic peculiarities. Having a better knowledge of the cultural and historical aspects of the play, as well as geographical references for possible locations of the town and parallels with factual settings and habits of native townsfolk, can help readers to better understand and enjoy the work. The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is to function as a guide for non-English native students of English Literature, such as I have encountered in Brazil, for potential translators of the play, or even for readers in general who wish to reach a better understanding of *Under Milk Wood* and take more enjoyment from it. In order to accompany the student as a guide through the town of Llareggub I decided to build this thesis in the format of a set of annotated critical comments, consisting of a number of technical observations and notes that aim at elucidating the cultural elements that prevent the otherwise uninformed reader to make his way through the play. The thesis is divided into three sections. In the first part I refer to elements in the history and geography of Wales. As a support for this contextualization chapter I resort to the foremost historians of Wales, John Davies and Geraint Jenkins. For Welsh literature written in English, Glyn Jones and Stephen Knight have been the principal authors researched. The second section discusses the structure of the play with excerpts and a description of the town of Llareggub paralleled historically and geographically with factual seaside towns in Wales. The third section consists of a page by page guide, in the form of explanatory notes, of the play itself. This page by page guide elucidates the cultural aspects of Wales found in the narrative, explains Welsh-English colloquial language used and offers possible interpretations of scenes and situations.

Key Words: 1 Dylan Thomas; 2 *Under Milk Wood*; 3 Welsh Literature, 4 Welsh Culture; 5 Welsh History.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	INTRODUCTION	9
1	WELSH LITERATURE WRITTEN IN ENGLISH	14
1.1	A Brief History of Wales	15
1.1.1	Social Unrest and Celtic Resistance	18
1.1.2	Welsh Literature Written in English	23
1.2	Dylan Thomas	28
1.2.1	The Road to <i>Under Milk Wood</i>	34
2	DYLAN THOMAS'S UNDER MILK WOOD	38
2.1	Form and Style: What's it like?	39
2.2	Themes and Motifs: What's it all about?	43
2.3	Geography of Llareggub: Where is it?	44
2.4	Characters: Who lives in Llareggub?	49
2.4.1	Principal Characters	49
2.4.2	Some Lesser Characters	53
3	UNDER MILK WOOD, PAGE BY PAGE	55
	CONCLUSION	101
	REFERENCES	106
	APPENDICES	113

INTRODUCTION

Over thirty years ago, when I was first introduced to Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* in English Literature class at *Y Pant* Comprehensive School South Wales – I was 14 years old – I never gave much thought to what it was to be Welsh. At the time I was ‘another brick in the wall’, so to speak, of the Welsh education system of the 1970s which followed the United Kingdom model of secondary education in the form of “Comprehensive Schools”, where some subjects were not obligatory and pupils were free to drop them or include them according to personal interest. Most subjects were obligatory of course and amongst these was English, taught not as a foreign language, but as grammar and literature. However, Modern Languages, which were German, French and Welsh, were optional subjects. The Welsh language in my school, and hundreds of other secondary schools throughout Wales, was taught as, and like, a foreign language, a double irony considering the original meanings of the origins of the words *Welsh* and *Wales*, which we shall see later. As a “foreign” language, my perception of it was that of another boring subject that had no use in my teenage reality, it was optional and therefore could be left out of my school subject timetable, a decision that I deeply regret many years later. As I began this current study I saw that, though in different circumstances, Dylan Thomas had also been subjected to the English education system, he had gone through an English language medium school, had been brought up in an English speaking region of Wales and spoke only English at home. The result of course was that, like myself and hundreds of thousands of Welsh people throughout history, he did not speak Welsh. Dylan Thomas was a great *Welsh* poet who did not speak the language of his homeland and wrote in *English*, how come? Why was there an English education system of schools in Wales? Why was it that our families and neighbours, in the South Wales valleys and towns spoke only English?

Only when I left Wales at the age of 16 and began to mix with other youngsters of various parts of Britain did I begin to understand something of national identity. I was given

the nickname “Taff”, a common nickname for someone of Welsh origin, as is “Paddy” for Irish and “Jock” for Scottish. “Taff” is derived from Dafydd, a popular name found in Wales, the Welsh form of David. With the nickname came prejudiced sentiments, in the form of insults and verbal abuse, passed down through centuries since the medieval England–Wales wars which culminated in the subjugation and colonization of the latter, and here basically and briefly we find the answers to the above questions. This was something that was never taught to us in History at *Y Pant* but I have since learned through self-study and reading over the years and have been stirred into a deep interest in the study of Welsh history, culture and literature. The last has been unavailable for me as a direct object of study due to my inability to speak or read the Welsh language. I have of course been able to read English language literature, and, because of my interest in literature and things Welsh, I have been led to a literature which has emerged from Wales, due to those various questions of which we have already seen, written in the English language.

Living amongst other natives of the British Isles, my sense of national identity was dormant within me, I knew I was Welsh but it was not necessary to tell people about who the Welsh were. However, since arriving in Brazil, being a foreigner, naturally I have been asked many times about my home country and many times I have been met with blank expressions when my answer is “Wales”, or I have been further pressed with questions such as “Is that in England?” and “Are you English then?”, which has led me to embark upon a personal campaign, aimed at my students or any curious unwitting victim at a bus stop or in a bar, to promote Wales as, if not a completely independent country, then at least having an independent culture with its own history, identity and language.

As to Dylan Thomas and *Under Milk Wood*, many years ago I had the idea of translating the work into Portuguese, and I set about it as a part time hobby. I naively had it in mind that if Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* can be translated into Portuguese, then surely *Under Milk Wood* would present little difficulty. I soon realized of course that I had neither the literary skills nor sufficient knowledge or experience of the Portuguese language for such an undertaking. An idea for an alternative study came to mind when I thought of my time as an undergraduate student of Language and Literature at a Brazilian university. During this time, I had observed that, amongst my colleagues and professors, little was known about Wales or literature from there. I then saw this as an opportunity to write about Dylan Thomas’s play in the form of explanatory notes for Brazilian students of English literature; literature professors who are not familiar with Wales or its literature; or for anyone who would be interested in

exploring Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, which is relatively – in Brazil at least – little studied.

When I began a preliminary research I determined that I would have to write first about Dylan Thomas himself, and as I read more on the subject, I realized I would have to write not only biographical details such as “Born in Swansea in 1914, went to Swansea Grammar School”, *etc.* though this is pertinent information for a paper about the poet, but also about the circumstances that formed his identity as a Welshman writing in the English language. The more I read, the more complex the issue seemed. The terms ‘Anglo-Welsh writing’ and ‘Anglo-Welsh writers’ appeared with any reference to Dylan Thomas and conversely his name frequently appeared with any reference to ‘Anglo-Welsh writers’. The task snowballed as I saw that in order to understand *Under Milk Wood*, we must first understand who Dylan Thomas was as an ‘Anglo-Welsh writer’. In turn, having background knowledge of Anglo-Welsh writers – where they come from historically and socially – can help us understand a little about Dylan Thomas. Furthermore, knowing a little about the history of Wales itself gives us background information as to how and why an English language literature from Welsh writers emerged, and why it emerged at a particular point in history. All of this study gave me the opportunity to write about the history, geography and a little of the culture of Wales in order that I may divulge at least a tiny part of the literary production and independent culture of this small country, little studied in Brazil.

Owing to the complex issues of colonization briefly mentioned above and discussed later, the literary production of Welsh writers can be divided into two distinct areas: English language literature and Welsh language literature. I am concerned here with the English language literature, as Dylan Thomas and his work *Under Milk Wood* fall into this field. For the most part of this study I have used the terms ‘Anglo-Welsh writing’ or ‘Anglo-Welsh literature’ to mean English language literature produced by Welsh writers. Accordingly, ‘Anglo-Welsh writers’ are writers from Wales who produce literature in the English language. I shall take a closer look at these terms in the first section. I have used *Under Milk Wood* to write about English Language literature by Welsh writers rather than the other way around, *i.e.* my research began with *Under Milk Wood* and worked backwards, though it is presented conversely.

In this thesis, then, I begin with a general outline of the history of the British Isles and the formation of the nations of England and Wales. For the historic study of Wales itself, I have used as my principal sources of information, except where otherwise specified, John Davies's, *A History of Wales*, and Geraint H. Jenkins's, *A Concise History of Wales* as both

authors are prominent and experienced historians in this field. John Davies was professor of Welsh history at the University College of Wales and was commissioned by Penguin books in the late 1980s to write a comprehensive history of the country, the first undertaking of which he completed in the Welsh language, published in 1990. Davies completed and published the English language edition of this work in 1994. Geraint H. Jenkins held the posts of Director of the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies and Head of the Department of Welsh History at the University of Wales.

A basic historic background knowledge of England and Wales brings us to the subject of literature written in the English language by Welsh writers. In this section I explore the terms ‘Anglo-Welsh writing’, ‘Anglo-Welsh writers’ and alternative expressions that have been in use, and how it came about that literature written in the English language emerged from a country which has its own native language whose origins are from almost two thousand years before modern English began to form. The answer of course is in imperial colonization and all the conduct which is implied, that of repression, subjugation and imposition by one side, submission and compliance or rebellion and defiance by the other. In this respect, Glyn Jones’s *The Dragon Has Two Tongues* and Stephen Knight’s *Writing Wales in English: A Hundred Years of Fiction* have been valuable sources of information. Writer and critic Glyn Jones was one of the first writers to research and publish about the subject of Anglo-Welsh Writing and was a personal friend of Dylan Thomas. His collection of essays about Anglo-Welsh writers, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, was first published in 1968 and revised, edited and republished by Tony Brown, Director of Humanities at the University of Wales, Bangor. The title of the publication refers to the Red Dragon, symbol of the national flag of Wales, the “Two Tongues” being the Welsh and English languages. Stephen Knight is professor of English Literature of Cardiff University and has written and published extensively on the subject of English language literature by Welsh writers.

The information of English language literature by Welsh writers leads us to Dylan Thomas and in this section I look at the background of the writer as a Welshman producing English language literature and the elements of Wales and Welsh culture in his work. I then discuss his radio broadcast work and what led him up to the creation of *Under Milk Wood*. Most of the biographical information about Dylan Thomas, unless otherwise stated, comes from Andrew Lycett’s biography: *Dylan Thomas: A New Life*, published in 2005.

Part 2 of my dissertation concerns the work *Under Milk Wood*. In this section, with example excerpts from the play, I discuss the structure, form and style of the language used as well as the subject matter and themes and motifs throughout. For a study of Thomas’s

language style, for the most part I have used Barbara Hardy's *Dylan Thomas: An Original Language*. A native of Dylan Thomas's birthplace, Swansea, and a personal friend of Thomas's daughter Aeronwy, Hardy is Professor Emeritus of English Literature at the University of London.

I explore the geographical possibilities of the fictional town of Llareggub, the location in which the action of the play takes place. By describing actual small towns and villages on the South West coast of Wales and surrounding countryside areas, from where Dylan Thomas based his ideas for Llareggub, we can have a better understanding and appreciation of the work. In this section I also give a brief description of each of the main characters. I have listed the characters in order of their appearance in the play, or in connection with another character, either as a family connection or a partner. As one of the running themes of the play is relationships, or rather, failed relationships, I have described the characters together with their counterpart, where applicable. I have not covered too much information on the characters' behaviour or personality in order to avoid repetition of information which is contained in the page by page guide section. In part 3 we find the page by page guide to *Under Milk Wood*, which elucidates the cultural aspects of Wales found in the narrative, explains Welsh-English colloquial language used, and offers possible interpretations of scenes and situations. The interpretations that I offer of some scenes are from my own understanding of the situation and need not be taken as a conclusive explanation. I have also tried to avoid a mere glossary type listing of words and explanations. I would like to stress that this work is not intended as an in-depth analysis of Dylan Thomas's play, but rather an introductory ancillary guide for Brazilian English literature students or perhaps as an introduction to Anglo-Welsh literature, with *Under Milk Wood* as a corpus of experimentation, which may also prove useful to Brazilian Literature professors not familiar with Wales, or Dylan Thomas. For the page by page guide section I have used the page numbering of the publishers New Directions edition of *Under Milk Wood*, the details of which can be found in the references. For any other edition or online copy, the student may follow the text by reference.

1 WELSH LITERATURE WRITTEN IN ENGLISH

In his book *Is there a Text in this Class?* literary critic Stanley Fish tells an anecdote of one of his students who, upon entering the class of a fellow professor on the first day of the semester, asks the question that gave the title to the book. The professor, assuming that the student wishes to know which books to buy, gives her the name of the anthology they are going to study at which the student replies, “No, no, I mean, in this class do we believe in poems and things, or is it just us?” (FISH, 1980, p.305) From that anecdote, Fish develops his work into a series of considerations about to what extent meaning is contained in a text, and to what extent meaning is attributed according to the reader’s movement through the text. This is a very interesting discussion, and Fish seems to believe to a certain extent in each of the opposite premises, but what I find particularly interesting is the first misunderstanding involving the student and the professor. If a text utters, or reads, one thing, and the listener, or reader, understands another then communication fails. Concerning *Under Milk Wood*, this is what has been troubling me for quite some time, the fact that the major problem involving the reading of the play in Brazil is that the readers read the words, but they sometimes do not know what to make of them. They cannot grasp if the tone is light, or serious, or ominous, where there is irony and where there is innuendo and *double entendre*. Sometimes an expression or the experience of what is narrated is so local that not even a good dictionary can help the reader. Because of this, I believe that it is essential that we proceed from the beginning, in a section of contextualization that will open the way to our reading of Dylan Thomas’s play. Although the antecedents presented here may seem at first glimpse quite remote, they account for the rise of a feeling of nationality that is peculiar and still exists, and for a rhythm and resonance, akin to the sort of poetic pattern transmitted orally from generation to generation, which is one of the principal traits of Welsh sonority, which directly affected Thomas’s style.

1.1 A Brief History of Wales

Though in the study of Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* we are mostly concerned with South West Wales, where the author was born and where he grew up, in order to understand the historical and cultural background of the region we must first take a broader look at the British Isles, of which the land mass of Wales forms a part, extending to the west (see map A, Appendix A)

The island of Britain, named from the Greco-Roman word *Pretani*, has always historically been subjected to waves of invaders and immigrants over the centuries, because of varying economic and social reasons. A few scattered burial chambers, known as cromlechs, and ancient stone circles, are all that remain of a people who were displaced by, or who integrated with, the taller, fairer skinned tribes who began to arrive on the island, originally from central Europe, in or around 700 years B.C.E. and would later become known as the Celts. Over the next few centuries the Celts, began to populate all but the far north of the land, however, as Britons – inhabitants of the British Isles – a united nation they were not. When the Romans invaded and began to consolidate their hold on the island in the first century C.E., the Celts had divided the land into several warring tribal chiefdoms; the Iceni, Catuvellauni and Cantiaci – from whom the county of Kent in modern day England is named – were the most powerful tribes that the Romans encountered in the south. The land that would later become known as Wales was inhabited by the Ordovices and Deceangli in the north and the Demetae and Silures in the south. It is important to understand that these last four were not effectively “Welsh” tribes as Wales would not exist as a nation until centuries later.

Over the next four hundred years the Romans built towns – some becoming as large as having a population of 15,000 to 20,000 inhabitants – forts and roads over most of Britain. The descendants of the noble warrior class of Britons intermarried with the noble Romans and Britain prospered under Roman rule. The relative peace and prosperity was not to last; at the end of the 4th century and beginning of the 5th century, a weakened, decadent Roman Empire was under attack on all fronts from various barbaric tribes on the move around Europe. In Britain, Picts, from the far north and the Germanic Angles, Saxons and Jutes tested the remaining defensive forces. In 410 C.E. the last of the Roman legions withdrew from Britain to defend the capital of the Empire, under attack from Alaric the Goth, and the Britons once again fell into local power struggles between rival tribes (SCHAMA, 2001). The weakened defences and squabbling tribes left the land vulnerable to attack and occupation by the Anglo-

Saxons, validating the adage *united we stand, divided we fall*. From this period of time, stories begin to emerge of a Romano-Celtic nobleman who was able to unite antagonistic tribes to fight against the common Saxon enemy, these oral tales would later be written down and form the legends of King Arthur. Some of these tales, passed down through centuries, can be found in the 14th century Medieval Welsh manuscripts, translated and published as *The Mabinogion* in the 19th century, more of which we shall see later.

Regardless of the tales of the heroic deeds of King Arthur, whether legend or historical figure, the Celtic Britons were unable to hold against the successive waves of invading Angles and Saxons who began to colonize the land they had taken by force. The displaced Britons migrated westwards and became foreigners in their own land, quite literally, as the region they migrated to ironically became known in the Saxon language as *Wealas*, Land of the Foreigners, the origin of the English word for the country, Wales (CRYSTAL, 1996). The Latin *Angli* or *Anglia*, for the tribe of Angles, became *Englisc* and hence Land of the Englisc or England, though this use did not appear until around the year 1000 (Idem.). Seemingly as an audacious response to the insulting *foreigner* appellation, but impossible to verify, the Britons called themselves the *Cymry*, meaning fellow-countrymen, the word remaining today in modern Welsh as *Cymru*, Wales, and *Cymraeg*, the adjective, Welsh.

Between the 5th and 11th centuries, like the Celtic-Britons before them, the Angles, Saxons and Jutes divided the land into various kingdoms. In the 8th century, Offa, king of Mercia, the modern day Midlands of England, effectively created a physical boundary between the two regions which were later to become England and Wales. Offa's Dyke, as it became known, consists of a ditch and earth wall, around 2.5 metres in height, which runs along most of the length of the modern day border between England and Wales, a distance of around 240 kilometres (see map A, Appendix A). The dyke is interrupted in parts where there is a natural barrier such as a body of water, hills or forests. Though a formidable and impressive barrier at the time, John Davies points out that the purpose the dyke, "was to denote rather than to defend the frontier" (DAVIES, 1994, p.65), perhaps the earliest recognised border demarcation between the Celtic and Saxon nations. The modern day border, marked not by armed guards or barbed wire, but only by road signs proclaiming "*Croeso y Gymru*, Welcome to Wales" and "Welcome to England" – depending on which direction you are travelling – follows more or less the same route as the ancient dyke.

With a demarcating frontier established, the Kingdoms of Wales and the Saxon Kingdoms lived in relative peace except for the occasional border skirmish and internal power struggles. All this was to change in 1066.

1066, as every Englishman knows, was a watershed in British history; the Anglo-Saxon King, Edward the Confessor, died without naming an heir and Harold Godwinson, Earl of Wessex, the logical successor, was crowned King of England on the 6th January of that year. However, the claim to the English throne was contested by Harold Hardrada of Norway who promptly mounted an invasion in the north east of England in September. With brilliant military skills, Harold of England marched north with an army, covering 300 kilometres in four days, and defeated Hardrada's army at the Battle of Stamford Bridge on the 25th of September only to hear that another contender, William, Duke of Normandy, had invaded with an army on the south coast of England. After another long march, Harold's army were defeated at the Battle of Hastings on the 14th of October by William, who became known as William the Conqueror and was crowned William I, King of England on Christmas Day at Westminster Abbey, London.

From the 11th century onwards, William I and his Normans and the successive Angevin and Plantagenet dynasties, wished to expand their empire further west, thus infringing onto Welsh territory. Over the next few hundred years across the borderlands between Wales and England, known as the Welsh Marches, the Anglo-Norman barons were given free rein by their king to raid and impose English law and punishments onto the Welsh towns and villages within their reach. According to Simon Schama, in *A History of Britain*, "In return for keeping their territories free of native Welsh control, the Marcher lords were legally considered to be masters of their own lordships, unbound by royal or common law." (SCHAMA, 2000, p.149). By the end of the 12th century, "'Englishry' was established in forbidding castles at Chepstow, Brecon and Monmouth, and the barons held the frontier as well as much of south Wales, all the way to the coast at Swansea and Gower" (SCHAMA, 2000, p.148). However it was not until 1283 that Wales was conquered and subdued in its entirety by the formidable – not only because of his imposing stature, but because of his ability and skill at military strategy – Edward I of England and a statute in 1284 imposed English law and administration over the defeated land (JENKINS, 2006).

Edward Longshanks – meaning long-legged – as he was known because of his tall stature, began a castle building programme throughout Wales to ensure compliance and to physically demonstrate the force and power of the English crown. Edward's project – Schama calls it "the most ambitious exercise in colonial domination ever undertaken anywhere in medieval Europe" (SCHAMA, 2000, p.194) – brought in thousands of skilled and semi-skilled workers from all over England; carpenters from the Midlands, defence ditch diggers from Lincolnshire and stone cutters from Devon. It was probably the first meeting that these

men and their families had had with other members of the kingdom from such diverse distant places of England and Wales. Schama writes, “There, beneath the lion standard of Edward Plantagenet, they were made to understand what it meant to be part of the great Britannic realm” (SCHAMA, 2000, p. 194). The Britannic realm that now included all of the land of Wales.

As if to remind the Welsh of their subjugation, over two hundred years later, in 1536 during the reign of Henry VIII, an act of parliament was passed which once again effectively annexed Wales to the Kingdom of England. The main purpose of this Act of Union, as it later became known, was to finally abolish any legal distinction between the Welsh and the English. However, Welsh law was already in permanent decline where it had survived and so the Act merely endorsed what was an inevitable outcome. Davies writes, “Thereafter, in the eyes of the law, the Welsh were the English.” (DAVIES, 1994, p.233).

1.1.1 Social Unrest and Celtic Resistance

Despite the strong English presence, during medieval times Welsh language literature thrived. A small testimony to this are the surviving manuscripts, *Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch*, [The White Book of Rhydderch] and *Llyfr Coch Hergest*, [The Red Book of Hergest], the former is now preserved in the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, west Wales and the latter in the Library of Jesus College, Oxford. The *White Book* was written between the period 1300-1325 and the *Red Book* written around 1375-1425 and together they contain eleven folk tales of early Celtic mythology, including one of the oldest Arthurian tales in Welsh, “Culhwch and Olwen”, passed down through the centuries by oral tradition. These manuscripts, together with an additional four, known as the Peniarth manuscripts, some of which were written one hundred years before the *White Book*, were first translated into English by Lady Charlotte Guest and printed between 1838 and 1849 in a collection known as *The Mabinogion*. Guest chose the title from the word *mabynnogyon* which appeared once in one of original manuscripts and is thought to be the plural of *mabinogi*, itself of an obscure meaning but thought to mean *tales of youth*, this derived from the Welsh *mab*, meaning ‘son’ and the fact that four of the tales end with the phrase “thus ends this branch of the mabinogi” (JONES, 1989)

In 1176 Rhys ap Gruffydd, lord over the Deheubarth region in the west of Wales and ally to King Henry II of England, held an event at his castle in Cardigan at which he invited musicians and poets to perform and compete for the title of Chief Bard with a prize of the honour of sitting at the Lord’s table (DAVIES, 1994). This was the beginning of the

Eisteddfod, a literature and music festival of the Welsh language celebrated until today throughout Wales at all levels. However, as the English language began to take hold, interest in the *Eisteddfod* waned over the centuries until a reawakening of the language and culture was stimulated by Iolo Morganwg, an 18th century poet and antiquarian who founded the modern Bardic movement and held a *Gorsedd* – a gathering of Bards – ironically, though perhaps with a purposeful strategic reasoning, not in Wales, but on Primrose Hill in London in 1792 (JENKINS, 2006). This rekindled the interest for the *Eisteddfod* and Morganwg held the first of many in 1819 in Carmarthen in Wales.

World history has shown that throughout the ages any country invaded and occupied by a foreign force, inevitably has its native population treated as second or even third class citizens in their own land, who will then revolt, Wales has been no exception. At the very beginning of the 15th century, a rebellion led by Owain Glyn Dwr of royal descent (described as “not in the role of common men” in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*) effectively expelled the English domineering force from the land and by 1405 all of Wales was under Glyn Dwr’s control. The English came back with vengeance and a larger army and after a series of defeats, the Welsh resistance crumbled and by 1413 much of Wales was back under English rule. A united Wales ruled by the Welsh for the first time in almost 200 years had been short-lived. Unlike his earlier Scottish counterpart, William Wallace, who was captured and executed by Edward I almost exactly 100 years previously, Glyn Dwr was never found, most likely he died peacefully in old age somewhere in rural mid Wales (DAVIES, 1994). He remains a national hero until this day and in the late 1970’s a pseudo-terrorist group known as *Meibion Glyndwr*, the Sons of Glyn Dwr, emerged in Wales with the aim of protecting Welsh properties for the Welsh and upholding the language and culture. Their terrorist activities involved setting fire to Welsh houses that had been bought by rich English people to use as weekend holiday homes (thus inflating the prices for the local Welsh people). Fortunately, and perhaps something can be said for the Welsh disposition if compared to their Irish counterparts, the arson attacks were carried out only during the week while the English were not in residence and nobody was ever killed or injured.

Perhaps not quite on the scale of a national uprising or full scale war, though with far reaching consequences nevertheless, a series of rebellions throughout south Wales between 1839 and 1844, known as the Rebecca Riots, were a violent protest against what the poor farming community saw as an unjust – English – taxation system. Initially targeting the toll gates, which exacted heavy payment on any transport using the road systems around Wales and into England, the rebels went on to attack English stewards, tax collectors and

landowners. Soldiers and the newly formed London Metropolitan Police were called in to quell the riots and by 1844 things had calmed down and peace was restored.

The ever increasing population and political and social unrest forced the government in London to consider a series of reforms and the Rebecca Commission was established in 1844 to investigate the trouble spots and suggest modifications. One of the commission's findings was that the Welsh language, "hindered the Law and the Established Church from civilizing the Welsh" (DAVIES, 1994, p. 387) and a series of projects in education were set in motion with the sole purpose of 'civilizing the Welsh'.

The Welsh language however was not without its champions; as well as reviving the *Eisteddfodau* at the beginning of the 19th century, Iolo Morganwg was associated with the *Gwyneddigion*, a society of Welsh patriots who campaigned for the recognition of the Welsh language in administration and law. An antecedent to the *Gwyneddigion* was *The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* established in 1751, and whose members "vowed to defend the purity of the Welsh language, to stimulate interest in the history and literature of Wales and to promote economic and scientific ventures beneficial to Wales" (DAVIES, 1994, p. 305). However, according to Davies, ironically the rather snobbish society sought members from the land owning upper classes of Wales, men who were for the most part monoglot English speakers.

In 1567 scholar and translator William Salesbury, assisted by Richard Davies, the Bishop of St David's, Pembrokeshire, translated and published the New Testament section of the Christian Bible. A parliamentary statute had proclaimed that a Welsh language bible was to be available at every parish church in Wales, a puzzling irony as the same – English – parliament had banned the use of the Welsh language in secular matters of administration ten years previously. The bible was translated in its entirety by William Morgan, Bishop of Llandaff, in 1588. Morgan translated the Old Testament into Welsh and revised and modernized Salesbury's previous translation of the New Testament. Almost a thousand copies of Morgan's Welsh bible were printed and distributed to the parishes of Wales. The availability of the Welsh bibles contributed greatly to the survival of the Welsh language and even more so, established Welsh as more than just a spoken language. Davies writes,

As parsons throughout Wales were addressing their congregations [...] in the solemn rhythms of the Welsh of the Bible [...], they familiarized the Welsh with an exalted image of their language. In imbuing their congregations with the language, they themselves became steeped in it, and thus there developed a tradition of 'literature-loving parsons' to which Welsh culture would be deeply indebted. (Davies, 1994, p.245)

Almost two hundred years later another proponent of the Welsh language, Griffith Jones, a farmer's son from south west Wales who became a preacher, with the help of a patron, Sir John Phillips, established a network of schools solely with the purpose of teaching adults and children to read and write in Welsh. By the time of his death in 1771, over two hundred thousand pupils had attended Jones's schools (DAVIES, 1994).

Despite the efforts of these individuals and societies, the English language was gaining ground. During the industrial revolution, the rich coal and iron industries of south Wales attracted thousands of workers in the 18th and 19th centuries from all over England and abroad. John Davies writes that in the town of Trefethin, at the heart of the coal fields, it was estimated that in the 1840s as high as 44% of the inhabitants were of English origin. The historian notes, "it has been argued that the industrial development of Wales was detrimental to the Welsh language" (DAVIES, 1994, p. 385).

Further to the Rebecca Commission reports was an investigation instigated by William Williams, Member of Parliament for Coventry and himself a Welshman, who prevailed upon the government to examine the state of education in Wales and the availability of education in the English language. Once again a commission was set up and three English government inspectors were sent to collect information and by 1847 they had completed a report, which on the whole, due to misunderstanding and ignorance of the Welsh language and culture, stated that education in Wales was of a very poor standard. Amongst other findings, the commission reported that the Welsh were lazy and immoral because of the use of the Welsh language. The recommendation of the commission was that all schools and education be through the medium of English.

This was the time when the British empire was a powerful force in the world and the feeling of British or perhaps more accurately, English, superiority was great; these sentiments were expressed by Cecil Rhodes, founder of the British colony of Rhodesia, who as an undergraduate student at Oxford in 1877 wrote of the superiority of the English and how much better the world will be when occupied by them (SCHAMA, 2000). Closer to home, in the British Isles, Wales, the first of the English colonised lands was not exempt from these condescending attitudes, Rhodes's contemporary, the literary critic and poet, Matthew Arnold, while praising the richness of the Celtic culture and history perpetuated by the Welsh, paradoxically strongly condemned the Welsh language as being a hindrance to advancement and progress.

In his work *Celtic Literature* first published in 1891, Arnold wrote, "The sooner the Welsh language disappears as an instrument of the practical, political, social life of Wales, the

better; the better for England, the better for Wales itself.” (ARNOLD, 1891). The imperialistic policies of the British government were manifest through several Education Acts brought about as a result of the Rebecca Commission and Williams’s investigations. From the 1870s onwards, English language medium elementary schools were established throughout Wales. Davies writes, “the completion of a network of English medium schools was a heavy blow to Welsh, especially in those areas where the language was already in retreat” (DAVIES, 1994, p. 437). The matter of intermediate education was addressed in the 1880s and another Act in 1889 set up secondary schools following the English Grammar school model; matters of local – that is Welsh – interest, economy, history and of course language, were not taught and most of the head teachers were from England. In the larger towns more and more Welsh families were finding themselves with English neighbours and the realization that the English language was the language of the future, an idea already well established in the middle to upper classes, was beginning to permeate into the lower middle and working class families of the most industrialised regions of Wales. Anglo-Welsh writer Glyn Jones states,

The Welsh language, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, was associated in the minds of many Welshmen with a peasant background from which they wished to dissociate themselves, rather than with a splendid and ancient literature and a proud and independent way of life. (Jones, 2001, p. 168)

This rather bigoted sentiment persists until today in statements such as “[Welsh is] an appalling and moribund monkey language”, written by Roger Lewis, a Welsh born journalist in a book review in the British on-line journal, *The Mail Online*, dated 12 August 2011 (LEWIS, 2011).

Glyn Jones recounts that in the south Wales town of Merthyr Tydfil, where he grew up in the first decades of the 20th century, there were no Welsh language schools, despite the fact that the majority of children attending were from Welsh speaking families. Jones’s parents and grandparents spoke Welsh as he himself did, however, the impact of the education was so much so that, he recalls, “Rapidly, in school and at home, I lost the ability and the desire to speak Welsh” (JONES, 2001, p.23). In an ironic twist, almost as though the English school masters were rubbing salt into the wound of the dying language, the pupils’ only contact with Welsh literature, while at school, was during English class when they read Lady Charlotte Guest’s *The Mabinogion*, which she had translated in Merthyr Tydfil itself and just a few miles from the school (JONES, 2001).

1.1.2 Welsh Literature Written in English

With the ever advancing and dominating English language, it was inevitable that, at some point in history, English language literature written by Welsh people would emerge. Jones (2001) observes that it would be quite impossible to determine who the first Welsh writer to write in the English language was, though one possible candidate is an Oxford Welshman named Ieuan ap Hywel Swrddwal who wrote poetry in English, albeit with Welsh orthography (*e.g.* *dd* for the English voiced *th* sound; *f* for the English *v* sound and *ff* for the English *f* sound) in the mid-15th century. For Knight (2004), the first literary effect of the colonization of Wales was when Welshmen Henry Vaughan (1621-1695) and John Dyer (1699-1757, of Wordsworth's sonnet, "To the Poet, John Dyer") became prominent poets in the English language. Raymond Garlick (1972) identifies another sixty nine Welsh poets and writers, men and women, who have written in English down the centuries since Hywel Swrddwal. As well as Henry Vaughan and John Dyer, amongst them are George Herbert (1593-1633), Hester Lynch Piozzi (1741-1821) and Sir Lewis Morris (1833-1907). Many of these had Welsh as their first language and were adept bilingual writers. However, because of the imposition of the English language through education as a result of the Parliamentary Acts of the late 19th century and the establishment of English medium elementary and intermediate schools, as well as the huge foreign population increase at this time, it is only towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century that we see a significant number of writers emerge who express Welsh culture, experiences, social phenomena and emotions in the English language.

By the 1930s the production of these writers was sufficient enough to justify the publication of an Anglo-Welsh literary magazine, *Wales*, edited by Welsh poet Keidrych Rhys in 1937, followed in 1939 by *Welsh Review*, edited by Welsh novelist Gwyn Jones, previous to this, Welsh writers writing in English had had to search beyond Wales in order for their work to be recognized and published in magazines such as Ireland's *The Dublin Magazine* or *The Adelphi* and *Life and Letters Today* in London (JONES, 2001). When dealing with the emergence of this new group of writers, one of the first questions raised – and indeed perhaps there cannot be one clear answer – is the matter of identity, that is, who are the Anglo-Welsh? A simple answer may well of course be Welsh people writing in the English language. Their historical background, as we have seen above, is that these writers are the product of the imposed English language education system in Wales, sons and daughters of Welsh speaking families forced into learning and speaking a foreign language. This is not entirely true in many cases as, depending on family circumstances and other factors, the

writers' first language may well have been English and perhaps they had little or no contact with their own country's mother tongue, Welsh. Furthermore, of the thousands of English immigrant workers who had flooded into the area with their families during the 19th century, an English born child may well have grown up, rubbing shoulders with Welsh boys and girls in the valleys schools, then began a writing career, perhaps writing about those very same towns and valleys where he or she grew up. Would this writer be considered an Anglo-Welsh writer? Or, in an inverse situation, a Welsh family who had moved to England and a child of that family writing, not about a Welsh way of life, but an English way of life, the writer is Welsh, he is writing in the English language about English things, is he an Anglo-Welsh writer? This leads to another obvious question, what is Anglo-Welsh writing? And once again one obvious answer is, work written by Anglo-Welsh writers. The answer may also be in the subject matter and style which can be studied in order to identify characteristics or forms of expression that could typify "Welshness", and here we must define "Welshness" and we can find ourselves going around in circles and getting involved in long discussions about cultural identity or even national stereotypes.

From another point of view, Welsh critic Ned Thomas (1992), identifies the first and places the origin of the Anglo-Welsh writers as a group of, mostly women, writing for English Victorian travellers arriving at Welsh seaside resorts by train in the 19th century, the production of these writers would tell stories about the remoter, "more Celtic", parts of Wales, which the less adventurous of these tourists would probably never see. Knight puts it simply, "In 1900, Welsh fiction in English was basically a way for English readers to tour Wales without leaving the armchair" (KNIGHT, 2004, p.xi). In this respect, *i.e.* the readers, Knight identifies three main phases of Anglo-Welsh writing from the end of the 19th century, the first phase has its reliance on English readers, rural based with themes of romance dominated by distorted images of the Welsh and Wales. The second phase was the writing of the industrial valleys, still very much aimed at English readers but now with a national consciousness. The third phase, which Knight calls "integration and independence", he describes as,

[...] from the Second World War to the present Welsh writers working in English have tended to find ways of integrating Anglicized Wales with aspects of Cymraeg Wales, especially through location, language, cultural history and myth. This has combined with an increasingly independent attitude, a developing sense that they are not working for English tastes at all but for an audience which, while not reading Cymraeg¹, is nevertheless self-conscious of being Welsh. (Knight, 2004, p120)

¹ Knight (2004) feels it inappropriate to call the language "Welsh", he points out that this is a Germanic, Old English, term for "foreigner", and is "a damaging mockery of the status of the native language" (KNIGHT, 2004,

The publishing industry of course had a hand in influencing for whom writers wrote for. At the beginning of the 20th century there were no publishers in Wales, and so, in order to be published, Welsh writers had to send their work to England for the English market. As more and more publishers were established in Wales, writers could write about Wales for Welsh readers who spoke and read in English (JONES, 2001).

In one short simple definition, Glyn Jones describes Anglo-Welsh writers as “Welsh men and women who write in English about Wales” (JONES, 2001, p. 37), though he admits an unease at nominating, as Anglo-Welsh, some Welsh lyric poets and some writers, such as Richard Hughes, David Jones, Emlyn Williams, Goronwy Rees and Alun Owen, as, even though they were born and grew up in Wales they do not write about Wales or Welsh matters. Jones also disregards from his book those writers who have written in English but whose principal production is in the Welsh language, he explains further, “My original definition of Anglo-Welsh, then, *ought to be* limited to indicate those Welsh writers whose entire work, *or, in one or two instances, whose best work*, has been done in English in the twentieth century” (JONES, 2001, p.8), my italics are to indicate that Jones himself was unsure of a certain definition of what, or rather, who, constitutes an Anglo-Welsh writer. In the concluding chapter of the book, Jones includes an extended definition,

An Anglo-Welsh writer can be Welsh by blood, birth and residence, Welsh-speaking and a writer about Wales [...]. Or, at the other extreme, he can be Welsh by blood, but not a writer about his native land and without the understanding and knowledge of our country resulting from domicile in it and a familiarity with its language. (Jones, 2001, p. 192)

As far as the second question is concerned – the issue of Anglo-Welsh writing – Jones argues that it would be difficult to identify any one definitive characteristic or form of expression, apart from writing about Wales – though this would exclude those who do not write about Wales – that could be identified as Welsh. The subject and content vary considerably, mostly the writers write about Wales, or at least the stories are set in Wales, though not necessarily as we have seen from Jones’s conclusions above. Some writers place their characters in the rural Welsh speaking areas of Wales, (similar to Brian Friel’s *Translations*, in which the characters are speaking and ‘switching’ between Irish Gaelic and English, though the play is performed entirely in English) whilst others write about the industrialized, heavy populated south Wales valley. The latter deal with the hardships and

p. xv) he prefers to use the word *Cymraeg*, the Welsh adjective for the language, though he has no misgivings about using the English adjective for other purposes, e.g. “Welsh writers”, even within the same sentence.

social problems of the iron works and mining communities, whereas the former write about a rural farming lifestyle. Hooker (2001) observes that one reoccurring theme in Anglo-Welsh writing is one of identity; personal identity, national identity, cultural identity and human identity.

In *Imagining Wales: A View of Modern Welsh Writing in English*, Jeremy Hooker (2001) explores the Anglo-Welsh writers' identity and material further by using an example of David Jones's writing. Jones was born in 1895 in England of a Welsh father and English mother, and lived most of his life in London. In his epic poem *In Parenthesis*, the character Dai, a Welsh soldier in an English regiment in the first World War, uses a mixture of English and Welsh and does not discriminate between myth and history of the ancient Britons in his speech (HOOKER, 2001), this, argues Hooker, is the imagined past which lives in Dai and is Jones's way of understanding national identity, "It is what sounds in Dai's voice that makes him Welsh. Not accent and speech rhythm alone, but also the things that he loves and knows" (HOOKER, 2001, p.6). Hooker writes that this is what Jones himself has done in writing *In Parenthesis*,

He made a 'shape in words' not only of his war experience, but of the things that constituted his sense of cultural identity. The things are, to a significant degree, Welsh, the words are English. It seems reasonable to call the resulting work Anglo-Welsh. (Hooker, 2001, p.6)

Writer Nigel Heseltine described *In Parenthesis* as "the first truly Anglo-Welsh product" (HESELTINE, 1938) ignoring, as Hooker has also done so, the fact that David Jones was for the most part English, born and raised, with only a Welsh, Welsh speaking, father as a connection to his claim to Welsh identity.

Originally from England, the poet and critic Jeremy Hooker moved to Wales in 1965 where he began to study Anglo-Welsh writing. In the introduction to his book on the subject he observes, "As I have educated myself in [Anglo-Welsh] writing so the writing has taught me more about aspects of Welsh culture and identity" (HOOKER, 2001, p.1), indicating the presence of Welsh values and ethos in this area of literature.

The rise of Anglo-Welsh writing has not been without its criticism, with Welsh language writers claiming their work to be the only authentic literature of Wales and critics questioning whether English Language literature written in Wales should be distinguished from the literature of England (LLOYD, 1992). Some Welsh language writers go as far as to consider the Anglo-Welsh writers as not being part of the community and are "linguistically

cut off from it” (JONES, 2001) though this is not the opinion of Jones himself who contests this by saying rather that all Welsh writers, whether writing in English or in Welsh, are very much part of their communities and that the communities are aware of and responsive towards them. He illustrates this point with an example of a policeman who was able to complete a line of a Welsh sonnet when his prisoners’ – three Welsh poets being held for destroying government property as a protest – memories failed, and of a coal delivery man whose slogan reads ‘*Dyma’r boi i dwymo’r byd*’ (This is the guy who heats the world), a perfect example of a Welsh poetical form known as *cynghanedd groes*, cross harmony, where the consonants of the first half of the line are repeated in the second half (JONES, 2001). As many of these writers were born and brought up in the mining and steel working communities of the south Wales valleys, Jones’s impression seems to be the more accurate of the two, with many of the Welsh language writers appearing to maintain a view of ‘if you cannot speak Welsh then you are not Welsh’. Jones bears no such animosity and considers all Welsh writers, of both the English language and Welsh language as “not a man apart, a freak, but rather an accepted part of the social fabric with an important function to perform” (JONES, 2001, p.xxv). That function being the traditional role of story teller, the role which dates back to the times of the Celtic tribes – pre-Roman Britain – each one of which would have their Bard, whose job it was to tell and retell the history of the tribe, to praise their leader and satirize an enemy chieftain in verse – an early form of war propaganda – to memorize and recite genealogies and family histories and to entertain the people with popular tales and myths.

The name Anglo-Welsh itself has been questioned as to whether or not it accurately represents those writers who fall into this category, with some preferring the term “Welsh writing in English” (KNIGHT, 2004). Knight points out that, “Anglo-Welsh is found unacceptable by most authors [...] on the grounds that it refuses Welsh status to Welsh people who, not speaking Cymraeg, nevertheless do not feel at all English” (KNIGHT, 2004, p. xv). However, while the term “Welsh writing in English” is appropriate and adequate for the work itself, it becomes awkward when defining the authors: “Welsh people who write in English”? “Welsh writers writing in English”? “Men and women who are from Wales but write in English”? And “Anglo-Welsh writers” seems to prevail and be a logical option.

Despite the inconsistency in defining the term, Glyn Jones states that what all Anglo-Welsh writers have in common, and is a certain identifiable characteristic between them, is their background, one that he himself shares, that is, all have grown up in Wales, either in the industrialized valley towns or the rural farming areas, and many have Welsh speaking parents. Amongst them are both monoglot English speakers and bilingual, Welsh-English speakers,

their subject matter is Wales, the stories inevitably involve Welsh characters and the settings are Welsh towns and cities or the Welsh countryside.

1.2 Dylan Thomas

In most lists of Anglo-Welsh writers, Dylan Thomas's name can be found amongst those writers who emerged at the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th centuries as a result of the English language education policies and the mass immigration into the industrialized towns of south Wales. However, being from a middle class background, Thomas seems to be an exception amongst the mostly working class writers who came from tough mining families of the valleys. Though born in the iron works town and busy port of Swansea in south Wales, Dylan's upbringing within a middle class family, was more genteel than that of, for example, another contemporary Welsh writer, Jack Jones, who was from a mining family of Merthyr Tydfil and himself worked in the coal mines from the age of 12 (JONES, 2001). As with many Welsh writers who write in English, both Dylan Thomas's parents were Welsh speakers and, following the attitudes of middle class families of the time and region, wished their son to be educated in the English language. Indeed because of the imposed education system, as we have seen above, they may have had little choice, though indications are that Dylan's father, who taught English in Swansea Grammar School which Dylan attended, wished his son to speak only English. When Dylan was born in 1914, and of course by the time he reached secondary school age, the English grammar school system of education had already been well established for a number of years. Andrew Lycett writes,

Parents of Swansea Grammar School made a decision that they wanted their sons educated in the language in which business was conducted, scientific progress debated and continents governed. This pragmatism percolated down the social scale: to many, including both Thomases' families, English was the language of economic advancement. (Lycett, 2005, p.7)

Dylan's father, David John, bought a house in Uplands, a middle-upper class district of the city of Swansea where the preferred language amongst the neighbours was English, and according to Lycett (2005), dressed as an English country gentleman and filled his personal library with only English literature, with Shakespeare as his favourite. All the indications were that David John, or D.J. as he became later known, clearly associated the Welsh language as an inhibiting element to advancement and progress, and did not wish his family – Dylan had just one sister, older than he – be exposed to what he perceived as a peasant,

backward language and culture. To further their education with a more English bent, Dylan and his sister Nancy were sent to elocution lessons where they learned to “imitate the precise modulated tones of the English” (LYCETT, 2005, p.23). Whatever his reasons, D.J. obviously did not see the advantages of bilingualism and as a result, Dylan Thomas grew up a monoglot English speaker. We will never know of course if Dylan would have had the same creative poetical endowment in English had he grown up bi-lingual. According to Glyn Jones, Thomas would have been relatively unknown outside Wales, whilst enjoying national fame through the *Eisteddfod*,

Dylan might have turned out to be a Welsh language poet. And with his passion for words, his copious language, his endless patience, his welcoming of metrical disciplines, what a superb *cynghaneddur* he would have been. But no international reputation for him then, no triumphant American visits and no packed poetry readings, no vast gramophone record and book sales, no Dylan Thomas industry. Only a few National Eisteddfod Chairs and Crowns in some suburban parlour, and a Welsh D.Litt. at sixty. (Jones, 2001, p.168)

While D.J.’s efforts to anglicise his children held sway at the family home and very likely also at Dylan’s school, the Thomas children regularly visited relatives in the countryside of Carmarthenshire where the Welsh language was dominant. Here, undoubtedly Dylan was exposed to another side of Welsh culture that he would not find in the city of Swansea. As a child and as a teenager, Dylan’s mind was being impressed upon by these two contrasting cultures; on the one hand the conservative, English speaking grammar school lifestyle of the big city and the Thomas family home where the head of the family insisted on only English being spoken; on the other, a wild, mystical, portion of Wales where Celtic myth, legend and history were a part of life as industry, development and advancement were in the city. These two ‘Waleses’ demonstrated how the culture of the country at the time was being ruptured and mutated because of the English colonization which had begun centuries before. Welsh language and culture survived in the rural west and north; English language, attitudes and values had already been well established in the principal cities of the region and a new Anglo-Welsh culture was emerging which would be a hybrid of the two. This hybrid culture is manifest in writers such as Dylan Thomas who have been able to express a Welsh way of life through the medium of the English language. About one of Thomas’s most best-known poems, Lycett writes, “‘Fern Hill’ mixes the best of Welsh and English traditions in a manner that is all the more original because not specifically oppositional” (LYCETT, 2005, p. 225). In spite of his upbringing in an English language environment, Dylan most certainly picked up enough of the Welsh language to use in his semi-biographical short stories and in

Under Milk Wood, demonstrating a certain Welshness in the English speaking characters, the Welshness that would be present in the author himself. Furthermore, it seems that not only the lexical elements of the Welsh language permeated his work; in a review in *Spectator*, the poet Stephen Spender wrote that Thomas had been influenced by Welsh bardic poetry, Dylan denied this in a letter thanking Spender for the praise and pointing out that he, Dylan, could not read Welsh (THOMAS, 1985). Despite his denial, in “Fern Hill” and other poems, Dylan employed a Welsh poetical form known as *cynganedd* – literally ‘harmony’ – the use of internal rhyme, consonance, assonance, alliteration and rhythm with syllable stress (HARDY, 2000). As well as *cynganedd*, Thomas also employed another feature of Welsh language poetry known as *cerdd dafod*, literally ‘musical tongue’, which is structuring a line on the count of syllables rather than of metrical feet of conventional English language poetry (JONES, 2001). It is often said that the Welsh accent, when spoken in English, has a musical or ‘lilting’ sound, Dylan would have been aware of this and used it to its full effect in his work, combining *cynganedd* and *cerdd dafod* with the sound of a Welsh voice – Thomas said his work should always be read out loud (LYCETT, 2005; HARDY, 2000; JONES, 2001) – once again, consciously or not, imitating another characteristic of Welsh, or Celtic poetry, that is, the musicality and the importance of the sounds over the meaning (HARDY, 2000).

The Welshness of Dylan’s work is also apparent in the settings of his poems and stories. His childhood and adolescent stomping grounds, the pre-war streets and parks of Swansea, the countryside and beaches of the Gower peninsular and the hills, fields and woods surrounding his mother’s family’s farm in Carmarthenshire, can all be found in some form or another in the stories of *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* and *Adventures in the Skin Trade*, as well as in numerous collections of poems Dylan published throughout his life. One striking example of the demonstration of both location and Welsh character is “The Peaches”, a short semi-biographical story from *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* in which his aunt and uncle’s farmhouse Fernhill – the same of the poem, “Fern Hill” – is represented as a fictional farm, Gorsehill, here it is not difficult to spot the association as fern and gorse are both wild shrubs found in the countryside over most of Wales. The English word gorse is also strikingly similar to the Welsh word *gorsedd*, meaning literally ‘throne’ and is used to mean a gathering of bards, so here Dylan is reminding us that although the language is English, the location and story are still very much steeped in Welsh tradition; the ‘gathering of bards’ is the family at the farm, as a popular saying goes, “To be born Welsh is to be born privileged, not with a silver spoon in your mouth, but with music in your heart and poetry in your soul”.

Dylan's use of *cynghanedd* and musicality in his work, despite him being a monolingual English speaker and denying being able to read Welsh, can make us believe that the poetry was indeed 'in his soul'.

Gorsehill farmhouse in "The Peaches" is described as a typical Welsh home with a front 'parlour', used only for special occasions and full of ornamental objects such as a stuffed fox, clocks, china dogs, family photographs, a fireplace full of brass items and the ubiquitous fern in a pot, which pops up in many of Dylan's stories. When Glyn Jones went to meet Dylan for the first time in Dylan's boyhood home in Cwmdonkin Drive in Swansea's Uplands, he also was entertained in the front parlour, Jones mentions that there were various features in this room which Dylan had used in his work, including a pot of ferns (JONES, 2001).

In the front parlour in Gorsehill, a rich visitor from Swansea, Mrs Williams, the mother of a friend of the narrator, is entertained when she takes the boy to the house for a summer holiday. In the story we can see the contrasting cultures of the two 'Waleses', on the one hand, the rich lady, "fitted out like a mayoress or a ship" (THOMAS, 2010b, p.96), from the city of Swansea, English speaking, who arrives in her chauffeur driven expensive motor car, she brushes a chair with a lace handkerchief before sitting down, her fingers adorned with jewelled rings; on the other hand, aunt Annie, the farmhouse wife, Welsh speaking, only speaking English here for the benefit of the visitors, her dress smelling of mothballs, suggesting little use, and wearing muddy, worn gym shoes. Aunt Annie fawning over the rich lady is representative of the centuries-old English oppression and the downtrodden Welsh populace seeking to please the oppressor, she is obliged to speak English, as the population of Wales were, and is trying her hardest by serving the best that the house can offer, tinned peaches, which are snubbed by Mrs Williams. Observing all of this is the narrator, a young boy, very much like Thomas in his youth, caught between these two cultures. As a boy Thomas was able to benefit from these visits to the country, by being immersed in the rural setting his eyes and mind were opened to a different way of life, as Lycett writes, "Rural values were certainly not those of the Uplands. [...] The countryside was also more raw, elemental and, so he discovered, strangely spiritual" (LYCETT, 2005, p.43).

Undoubtedly during his stays in the country Dylan also began to pick up elements of Welsh mythology and popular folklore, the kind of elements that he later would use in his stories and poems, an example of this is his own description of a trip to Dublin where he recounts that he had drunk 'Seithenyns of porter' (THOMAS, 1985). A 'Seithenyn' is not a liquid measurement but a legendary Welsh prince who, according to a popular folk tale was

“one of the three greatest drunkards of Britain” (JONES, 1978, p.78), and due to his neglect, whilst at a drunken feast, a sea defence wall was breached during a storm and all the lands known as Cantre’r Gwaelod, under his protection and responsibility, were covered by the sea and lost forever, which reminds us somewhat of Atlantis. The ‘long drowned’ appearing to Captain Cat in *Under Milk Wood*, echo the drowned of Cantre’r Gwaelod.

Thomas began writing poetry and experimenting with words at an early age, as a young teenager he was already publishing poems in the school magazine which he later took over as editor. As a teenager he scribbled down hundreds of poems in note books, many of these poems he selected and edited for the collections, *18 poems* and *25 poems*, published in 1934 and 1936 respectively (LYCETT, 2005). As well as writing, he took part in the school drama activities and after leaving school joined a local amateur drama group. During his time in the drama group Dylan had enough opportunity to exercise his voice and must have at some point realized his potential as a broadcaster. With his friend Daniel Jones he had set up an experimental ‘radio station’, consisting of mostly of wires and speakers, over which Jones played piano – he went on to become a renowned composer – and Dylan recited his poetry. His adolescent hobby became a part time profession when, as an adult and living in London, Dylan had made several contacts, became known as a poet and good speaker and was invited by the BBC to read his and other poems on a fifteen minute programme called ‘Life and the Modern Poet’ (LYCETT, 2005).

Radio as a means of entertainment had been very popular since the early 20s. In Britain, although plays had been broadcast at an earlier date, BBC Radio’s first play written specifically for radio, *A Comedy of Danger* by Richard Hughes, was transmitted on January 15 1924 (CROOK, 1999). Coincidentally, in the 1930s Hughes lived Laugharne in South West Wales, where Thomas made his acquaintance on a short visit, and later became a close neighbour when Thomas lived in the town in 1939. It is possible that this acquaintance with the writer of the first radio play was what piqued Thomas’s interest for radio drama. In *A Comedy of Danger* Hughes creates a situation in which the characters find themselves in a coal mine during a power cut, thus leaving them of with no sense of sight (DRAKAKIS, 1981) and so the descriptive nature of the dialogue becomes perfectly natural and the listener shares the experience of the characters in the sense that the listener is also sightless. The technique of writing radio drama and features – documentary style broadcasts – then must differ from stage drama in that the writer creates the images for the listener with the narrative and dialogue as well as considering any stage or dramatic effects and sounds, or as Crook puts it, “writing for the mind’s eye” (CROOK, 1999, p.33). One of the earliest examples of this,

though not a radio broadcast, is a phonograph recording of a description of a battle from the Great War made in 1917 by a Major A.E. Rees. This recording of approximately three and a half minutes has authentic machine gun and bombing sounds in the background while the narrative and dialogue are engineered to the foreground and intended to build up a mental picture of a rescue of a wounded soldier from no-man's land through specific descriptive language (CROOK, 1999).

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Dylan Thomas, medically excused from military service, began work in London as a script writer for propaganda films and radio feature broadcasts. Propaganda films were those with a political or social message designed to raise and maintain the moral of the public during the hard times, or to vilify the German war machine, and had no commercial advertising purpose. The feature broadcasts on which Thomas worked were based on fact – including one, incidentally, entitled “Duque de Caxias” translated into Portuguese and broadcast on the BBC Latin America Service on 26 August 1940 (LEWIS, 1981). These feature broadcasts differed from the drama style which were purely fiction, though the distinction can be vague, and during the war the features department of BBC radio produced several purely fictional works including those of Dylan Thomas (LEWIS, 1981). A distinguishing characteristic of the feature is the use of the narrator which, “is thought to be inherently undramatic and untheatrical, but is virtually indispensable in the radio feature and is not unfamiliar in radio drama” (LEWIS, 1981, p. 81). In his broadcasting work, Thomas employed the techniques of feature to produce drama. Amongst the features he wrote is *Quite Early One Morning*, a description of a small Welsh coastal town based on the topography of the town of New Quay where he lived at the time, and broadcast on 31 August 1945 on BBC Radio Wales (HARDY, 2000). In this short broadcast the narrator is a character walking through and describing the streets of the small town before the inhabitants awaken, the repeated phrase “The town was not yet awake”, seems to be the prototype of the “Hush! The town is sleeping” phrase of *Under Milk Wood*, and similarly, the images built up in detail in such phrases as, “potatoes, shears, rat-killer, shrimpnets, and tins of rusty nails” (QEOM, p.9), from *Quiet Early One Morning*, and “titbits and topsyturvies, bobs and buttontops, bags and bones, ash and rind” (UMW, p.22) from *Under Milk Wood* are very much alike. The narrator of *Quite Early One Morning* is an anonymous character who wanders through the streets of the town in the early morning, describing the scenes; in *Under Milk Wood* the omniscient narrators are the voices who describe the scenes as the night “wanders” through the streets. In both there are glimpses into the dreams of the town's inhabitants as they are sleeping. There are some similarities between the characters, Captain Tiny Evans and the

Reverend Thomas Evans of *Quite Early One Morning* become blind Captain Cat and the Reverend Eli Jenkins in *Under Milk Wood*, and some place names, such as Bethesda Chapel and Manchester House, have carried over into *Under Milk Wood* as has the character Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard who, in both works uses the line, “and before you let the sun in, mind he wipes his shoes”, though in *Under Milk Wood* it becomes “mind it wipes its shoes”. The structure of another feature written by Thomas entitled *The Londoner*, broadcast in 1946, is also a precursor to that of *Under Milk Wood* in that it follows a day in the lives of a Mr and Mrs Jackson and their two children within their community through omniscient narrators and, like *Under Milk Wood*, begins and ends with the dreams of the characters (LEWIS, 1981). In these, and other short broadcasts and propaganda films, Thomas developed a style of dividing the narrative between two or more speakers using feature techniques rather than drama ones and, “developed what might be called his radio prose, the ear-catching, exuberant, and witty idiom that culminated in [*Under Milk Wood*], especially in the speeches of the two Voices” (LEWIS, 1981, p.79).

1.2.1 The Road to *Under Milk Wood*

Combining childhood memories with the everyday life of the inhabitants of a small town was to become the basis of the radio play *Under Milk Wood*. The genesis of this work stems from Dylan’s first job as a reporter for the local newspaper when he took interest in minor idiosyncrasies of the inhabitants of his hometown and later, after his sojourn in London, the habits and customs of the people of the small coastal towns of New Quay and Laugharne. As early as 1933 at a meeting with friends Dylan had told an embryotic story of the inhabitants of a town called Llareggub, the name he chose for the fictional town of *Under Milk Wood* (LYCETT, 2005), and the same town name appeared in the short stories “The Burning Baby” and “The Orchards” from the collection *Adventures in the Skin Trade* published in 1953. In “The Burning Baby” there is a mention of “the reverend madmen in The Black Book of Llareggub” a title, altered to “The White Book of Llareggub” that Dylan used in *Under Milk Wood*. The ideas forming had a focus point for Dylan when he was residing in Laugharne the first time at the beginning of the Second World War. For a charity Christmas entertainment programme, he suggested a play about the town with the local people playing themselves, when a friend was sceptical about this, Dylan pointed out, “They are so convinced that they’re absolutely sane normal people. I think they’d be delighted to prove this on stage” (THOMAS, 1985). Thomas had learned and experienced first-hand that over centuries the inhabitants of Laugharne had acquired a reputation for certain eccentricity.

With the prototypical work of *Quiet Early One Morning* in mind, Dylan wished, in a first outlined idea for *Under Milk Wood*, to elaborate on a mere narration of day by day events and formulate a plot. The new story was called *The Town Was Mad* and the plot based around an accusation of insanity of the inhabitants of the town which is defended in court by Captain Cat. However, when Captain Cat and the town's population hear the Prosecution's speech of a description of how a perfectly sane town should be, they withdraw their defence and wish to be isolated from the rest of world admitting insanity. Later, to develop *Under Milk Wood*, Thomas dropped the idea of a plot and story line and reverted back to the format of a chronological narration of a day's events of the original *Quite Early One Morning*.

In 1950, at an invitation from American poet and critic John Malcolm Brinnin, Thomas began the first of four lecture tours of the United States during which he gave recitals of his poetry and performed sketches of his broadcast work, employing the full potential of his voice². His first poetry reading in New York at the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association Poetry Centre to an audience of over a 1000 was a huge success, despite Thomas's drunken excess and suffering from hangover and vomiting only moments before the recital. The audience were, "held spellbound, not just by the virtuosity of his delivery, but also by the nuances of his language" (LYCETT, 2005, p. 285) demonstrating a captivating musical sonority of Thomas's Welsh English. On his return from a second tour, in 1952, under gentle urging from a friend, Douglas Cleverdon, the BBC radio programmes producer, Thomas began work on his ideas that had been evolving from the feature broadcasts and *Quite Early One Morning*, still with the tentative title of *The Town Was Mad*, with an extension of - or *Llareggub*. While on a visit to the United Kingdom, John Brinnin arranged to meet Thomas in London to talk about a third lecture tour and they discussed the possibility of a performance of the, as yet unfinished, *Llareggub*. When Brinnin mentioned that the name would not be received very well by American audiences, Thomas proposed *Under Milk Wood*, suggesting nature and serenity in the short title. This title was sent to the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association in New York to be published on the programme of performances at their Poetry Centre for the following May – 1953 – though Thomas expressed misgivings at Americans being able to accurately imitate Welsh accents – an indication of his preoccupation of the sonority of his work.

² Many examples of Dylan Thomas's voice can be found on internet. A recording of Thomas reciting *Under Milk Wood* is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjJt4P4w8io>

Two months before his third tour of the United States, although the play was still unfinished, Thomas experimented with a first tentative reading in front of a live audience at Cardiff University's English Society as a rehearsal for the New York Poetry Centre performance. Even when he arrived in United States in April 1953, one month before the date of the recital, Thomas had not completed *Under Milk Wood* and Brinnin and his personal assistant at the Poetry Centre, charged with the on-stage production, were considering cancelling. Due to his lecture and recital obligations in other cities across the USA, and his drunkenness and careless attitude towards fulfilling work commitments, Thomas's work on *Under Milk Wood* was rushed to meet the deadline and incredibly he was still working on some final points and a hastily improvised conclusion one hour before the recital. On the 14th May 1953, the reading at the Poetry Centre was the first official performance of *Under Milk Wood* with a cast. The entire play requires over sixty characters, some appearing only once very briefly, however the Poetry Centre production was adapted and made with a cast of just six, including Thomas himself. No acting was required, only a good articulation of the voice. Thomas had made some linguistic and cultural adaptations for the American audience and, despite the uncertain and rushed completion, the recital was a great success in the crowded auditorium.

In October 1953 Thomas was back in the United States for his fourth tour and a further recital of *Under Milk Wood* was scheduled at the Poetry Centre. This last performance on 24th October, was described by Lycett as "by all accounts, the best yet." (LYCETT, 2005, p.364). Following this recital in New York, Thomas continued his heavily drinking lifestyle and, as a result of the excessive alcohol and drugs administered by a doctor in the mistaken belief that they would cure him, on 5th November Thomas fell into a coma from which he would never recover, he died on 9th November 1953.

The rush to have the work ready for the first New York recital and Thomas's untimely death left the final version of *Under Milk Wood* shorter than Thomas had intended, which was to expand the evening sequence to include more ballads and an extended pub scene (JONES, 1977). Thomas had shown some of this material, which he had intended to include, to his old schoolboy friend the composer Dan Jones, whose responsibility it was to prepare the text for publishing. In the preface to *Under Milk Wood*, Jones writes, "Llareggub's evening was evidently planned to be a celebration of maudlin drunkenness and ribaldry" (JONES, 1977, p. xiii). The hasty revision also failed to find an inconsistency of placing two of the characters, the couple Mr and Mrs Cherry Owen, as living in two different locations and one or two other minor discrepancies.

After the live stage recitals at the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association Poetry Centre in New York, back in the United Kingdom, the first radio broadcast, Thomas's original intention for the work, was made by the BBC in England on 25th January 1954, with the young Welsh actor Richard Burton in the role of principal narrator³. Ironically the broadcast did not cover many parts of Wales, including Laugharne, as the Welsh programmes director thought it unfit for family and home listening.

Preparing the text for publication in book form presented difficulties for Dan Jones owing to its incompleteness and to Thomas's notes and adaptations for American audiences. Nevertheless, there was sufficient material, however confused, to constitute a coherent and cohesive play in book form. In Jones's own words,

From a strictly scientific point of view only a variorum edition⁴ could unfold the whole story of deletions, substitutions, second thoughts, projected ideas, alternatives and so on. In my opinion, such an edition would be suitable only for the kind of reader who should never read *Under Milk Wood* at all. The play does not invite an academic approach [...]. My own aim has been to present a plain readable text, without fuss or distraction, and, above all, without additional reading or speaking directions, which serve only to limit the freedom of the reader's imagination. The text itself is already rich enough in suggestion and atmosphere. (Jones, 1977, p. xiii)

Radio producer Douglas Cleverdon in his book *Growth of Milk Wood*, identifies eleven distinct versions of the radio play. With the text edited and prepared by Dan Jones, *Under Milk Wood* was first published in book form in May 1954 by Dent publishers and sold over 53,000 copies within the first year of publication.

³ An example of Richard Burton reciting *Under Milk Wood* is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuPO2Kvqlms>

⁴ A variorum edition is one which includes various versions of the text as well as explanatory notes by the author or editor.

2 DYLAN THOMAS'S *UNDER MILK WOOD*

In his essay, “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach”, Wolfgang Iser (1974) examines the importance of the exchanges that take place between the two aesthetic poles of a literary work, the author and the implied reader. According to Iser, when we study a work of art we must take into account two elements, the text and the actions involved in the reader’s response to the text. If we transpose this discussion to the appreciation of a play for voices, the attitude of the reader takes on a number of peculiarities. The most relevant is the fact that the reader is now a listener: he ‘reads’ through the sounds he hears rather than through the printed signs he sees. The quality, the pitch and the modulations of the voices he listens to directly influence the fictional world his imagination creates. Another difference between a play and a play for voices is that in the first it is not common to have a narrator. In a stage play the circumstances are presented to the audience directly, through the soliloquies and dialogues of the characters, or sometimes the chorus. However, this is not what happens in a play for voices, because the reader must build up the visual aspects of the story based on the directions he gets from the narrator or narrators. In *Under Milk Wood* there are sixty three voices who present different perspectives about the things narrated. Technically, they work as a mixture of different kinds of narrator. As the act of listening is something physical, the characteristics of the voice we are listening to influence our perception of things. This is why either actors, or the author of the text, are chosen – whenever or wherever this is possible – to perform the literary reading in a radio drama, or in an audiobook. According to Iser, when the reader interacts with a text, the text acts as a kind of mirror of his whole baggage as an informed person. In this sense, when we listen to the voice of a certain actor reading a text, all the weight of our emotional connection with that actor is triggered in the response we give to the text. In the first important recorded reading of *Under Milk Wood* Dylan Thomas performed as the First Voice. Thomas was the first person invited to read for the label

Caedmon, a division of Harper Collins Editing Company, in 1951, and *Under Milk Wood* was the first ever LP released in the area of spoken-word recording⁵.

After Thomas's death the actor Richard Burton was chosen as First Voice narrator in subsequent recordings and recitals of *Under Milk Wood*. This choice was made for a number of reasons: Burton was a star, a great stage and film actor, the owner of a formidable voice, and he was Welsh. Richard Burton died in 1984 and it seems that now another famous Welsh actor, Sir Anthony Hopkins, has volunteered for the task⁶. In this sense, it is significant that when an English speaking audience listens to the rich Welsh voices of Dylan Thomas, or Richard Burton, or Anthony Hopkins, all the history of their emotional relationship with such voices is triggered and has a weight in their reading of the text they meet.

2.1 Form and Style: What's it like?

The play begins at night, in complete darkness, with First Voice narrator describing the scene of the town and the surrounding countryside. The First Voice focuses in from a general area of the town, to the streets, then to the houses and into the bedrooms and we then have a dream sequence in which we can see into the dreams of some of the principal characters as narrated in monologues by the characters themselves. As dawn breaks, the town begins to awaken and we see the people going about their day-to-day routines, at breakfast, the postman and milk delivery man on their rounds, the children on their way to school and the men and women of the town going about their daily tasks. The afternoon wears on and dusk falls, people go through their evening rituals, preparing for bed, or going to the pub. The play ends where it began, in the dreams of the characters and the cycle is complete.

The action of the play is created by the characters themselves in a continuously flowing discourse, shared amongst them, with very little interruption or pause. There are in total sixty three voices, fifty nine of which are actual personae. Of the remaining four, two have major roles and those are of the principal narrators known as First Voice and Second Voice. The last two are the Voice of a Guide Book describing the town of Llareggub and the policeman's conscience, known only as A Voice, and which speaks only one short line. Many

⁵ Besides reading his own work, Dylan Thomas also read excerpts from his favourite authors, as W. H. Auden, Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare. This material is still available through the Caedmon label, now in the CD Box *The Caedmon Collection*. (THOMAS, 2005).

⁶ In 2006 Hopkins directed a film about Thomas, *Dylan Thomas: The Return Journey*. Hopkins's performances of the poems "Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night" and "Fern Hill" can be found at the addresses displayed in the references.

of the characters also have only one very short appearance, such as A Fisherman, An Old Man, A Mother and Another Mother. There are anonymous children known as, Girl and First, Second and Third Boy in a child's game sequence and several anonymous women known as First Neighbour, *etc.* up to Forth; and two groups of women known as First Woman, *etc.* The first group appear as brides in Mr Waldo's dream, there are five, and the second group, of which there are four, are the women gossiping around the town square during the day. Mr Waldo's brides identify themselves by name, while the gossiping women remain anonymous, though it is feasible that they are the same women, minus one.

The role of First Voice and Second Voice is to create the imagery of each scene, to introduce the characters and to take us from one scene to the next, sometimes through an intermediary such the seagulls that Willy Nilly the postman observes from his backyard; the seagulls in their turn are flying over the harbour, the scene changes from the backyard to the harbour, via the seagulls (UMW, p.55-56)⁷ The actions of the characters are in some instances narrated in the third person by the characters themselves as the scene is introduced by First or Second Voice, as in this example,

First Voice: "Mr Pugh",
Mr Pugh: "remembers ground glass as he juggles his omelette"
First Voice: "Mrs Pugh"
Mrs Pugh: "nags the salt-cellar". (UMW, p.35)

Or, they relate their actions in the first person when they are "observed", that is, they are telling us what the observer is seeing, for example the gulls flying over the town observe,

"Me, Dai Bread, hurrying to the bakery [...]";
"Me, Mrs Dai Bread One, capped and shawled [...]";
"Me, Mrs Dai Bread Two, gypsied to kill [...]";
"Me, Lord Cut-Glass, in an old frock coat [...]" (UMW, p.33).

For the most part the characters are in direct interaction between themselves or are reciting poetry or singing.

Dylan Thomas wrote *Under Milk Wood* as a "play for voices" – as he himself had subtitled the work – and as such it is meant to be heard, on radio, or performed as a recital, with no visual action, the visual action is created in our minds. A great part of the narrative is of a descriptive nature in the form of creating images for the mind's eye, the narrators frequently repeat, "only you can see", and "look closer now" and the images are built up in

⁷ The page numbering here is relevant to the edition of *Under Milk Wood* as noted in the references.

sequences of descriptions of objects such as, “petticoats over the chairs, the jugs and basins, the glasses of teeth, Thou Shalt Not on the wall, and the yellowing dickybird-watching pictures of the dead” (UMW, p.3) and, “dandruff and nailparings, saliva and snowflakes and moulted feathers of dreams, the wrecks and sprats and shells and fishbones, whalejuice and moonshine and small salt fry” (UMW, p.22), the impression is that our eyes are passing over the objects described, as though we are observing a scene as an outsider and in which we cannot take part.

As well as the visual images created by the narrative, we “see” the town through the sounds, and again the narrators repeatedly invite us to “listen” and tell us, “only you can hear”. Sound effects are very few and the noises of the town are related to us by the narrators themselves: “the sea break and the gab of birds” (UMW, p.27) “kettles and cats purr in the kitchen” (UMW, p.34), “the clip-clop of horses [...] pigs are grunting, chop goes the butcher, milk-churns bell, tills ring, sheep cough, dogs shout, saws sing” (UMW p.49). Captain Cat with his accentuated hearing is attuned to the sounds of the town which he relates to us, the “slap slap” of Mrs Dai Bread One’s feet as she walks down the street, Mae Rose Cottage’s high heels clicking on the cobbles, the miaow of Mrs Beynon’s cat, the women “gabbing” around the pump.

Not only is the play replete with descriptions of sounds and onomatopoeia, Thomas was particularly captivated by the sounds of the words themselves, in an essay “Notes on the Art of Poetry” he wrote,

What the words stood for, symbolized, or meant, was of secondary importance. What mattered was the sound of them ... And these words were, to me, as the notes of bells, the sounds of musical instruments, the noises of wind, sea and rain, the rattle of milk carts, the clopping of hooves on cobbles, the fingering of branches on a window pane, might be to someone, deaf from birth, who has miraculously found his hearing ... I cared for the shapes of sound that their names, and the words describing their actions, made in my ears; I cared for the colours the words cast on my eyes (Thomas, 1963, p.147)

In *Under Milk Wood* there is a flowing musicality throughout and almost every line contains at least one instance of alliteration or assonance, “full of fowls and a farmer” (UMW, p.42), “from one of her finger bowls a primrose grows” (UMW, p.57). Thomas makes full use of *cynganedd*, the Welsh bardic device of intricate internal rhyming, rhythm, accent, consonance and assonance, “There’s the, clip clop or horses on the sunhoneyed cobbles of the humming streets, hammering of horse-shoes, gobble quack and cackle, tomtit twitter from the bird-ounced boughs” (UMW, p.49). The effect of the language used is to generate the

energy and emotion of the spring day coursing through the town. The play is also abounding in Thomas's neologisms, many in the form of participle adjectives and compounded nouns such as, "fishingboat-bobbing sea" (UMW, p.1) and "jollyrogered sea" (UMW, p.2) and, "spring morning, larked and crowed and belling" (UMW, p.26).

In the sequences of the drowned sailors and the gossiping women Thomas uses a technique known as stichomythia, from classical Greek drama, and frequently employed by Shakespeare (DRABBLE, 2009), in which two or more characters alternately speak a single line in quick-fire back and fore succession. In this example from the women in Mr Waldo's dream sequence it is as though the various women are sharing the same thoughts and vocalizing them in one continuous stream,

"Poor Mrs Waldo"
 "What she puts up with"
 "Never should have married"
 "If she didn't had to" [*sic*]
 "Same as her mother"
 "There's a husband for you"
 "Bad as his father"
 "And you know where he ended"
 "Up in the asylum"
 "Crying for his ma"
 "Every Saturday" (UMW, p.10-11)

The aural effect is dramatic and humorous as we try to keep up with the flow and make sense of the supposed rational links between each line. It is as though we are eavesdropping on a conversation between two people sat behind us on a bus or a group of people at the next table in a restaurant, we are unable to see them and therefore it is impossible to glance from one face to another as they speak, in order to have a better understanding of the exchange, or for us to participate in the conversation.

Under Milk Wood is an erotic sexual comedy and much of the language used is in the form of bawdy school-boy humour, filled with innuendo and *double entendre*, "P.C. Attila Rees has got his truncheon out [...]" (UMW, p.18), "it's organ organ all the time with him" (UMW, p.52), "O nobody's swept my chimbley/Since my husband went his ways/Come and sweep my chimbley/Bring along your chimbley brush!" [*sic*] (UMW, p.92) or just downright lewd, "Lie down, lie easy. Let me shipwreck in your thighs." (UMW, p.77) and yet sometimes beautifully erotic, "The sun hums down through the cotton flowers of her dress into the bell of her heart and buzzes in the honey there and couches and kisses, lazy-loving and boozed, in her red-berried breast." (UMW, p.67).

2.2 Themes and Motifs: What's it all about?

Overall *Under Milk Wood* is a bawdy comedy about a day in the lives of the inhabitants of a small Welsh coastal town. In it we find many domestic and social problems that are universal and timeless: adultery, alcoholism, illegitimacy, petty crime and, though certainly not even within the extreme boundaries of comedy, a hint of paedophilia. Many of the inhabitants are caught in failed or bizarre relationships, such as Mr Pugh, living in a fantasy world in which he kills Mrs Pugh in a variety of gruesome and imaginative ways; Mr and Mrs Willy Nilly, who open the town mail between them and share the gossip with everybody; Mr Mog Edwards and Miss Myfanwy Price who profess their love for each other but never meet; and perhaps the most bizarre of all, Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard who continues an imaginary relationship with her two dead husbands.

As we progress through the play, whether reading or listening to it, we begin to observe that the subject of death is repeated constantly, either by casual mention, by allusion or in a more descriptive passage. From the very beginning, in the first sequence of First Voice's narrative, the Welfare Hall is described as being in "widows' weeds". This is followed shortly after by the night being "bombazine black", bombazine is a black material used for mourning suits. The pictures in the bedrooms are "of the dead". This continues and during several points of the play death is mentioned in casual descriptions, such as Mr and Mrs Floyd sleeping, "as quiet as death". A bizarre but amusing image is of the dead in their coffins forming a "glee party" in the cemetery. Aside from numerous references and descriptions, death is more prominent in Captain Cat's dreams of his long dead shipmates and his lover Rosie Probert; Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard's interaction with her two dead husbands and Mr Pugh's fantasies about ingenious and gruesome ways of killing his wife. Lord Cut-Glass is obsessed with time and the coming of death. Mary Ann Sailors and the Reverend Eli Jenkins describe Llareggub as the Garden of Eden, "Heaven on Earth" or "God's Chosen Land", as though they are already dead and in heaven.

As a direct counterpoint to this is the theme of life and nature. With raw nature as a background – the hills, the wood and the sea – the narrative repeatedly describes, with the emphatic repetition of "it is Spring", the powerful forces of nature, shaking and stirring everything to life, even, paradoxically, the aforementioned "glee party". The animals and

plants are vibrant with life awakening in the spring. The reverend Eli Jenkins praises nature in his morning and evening prayers. Human life and reproduction is represented by the promiscuous Polly Garter with her several babies from various lovers. The daytime sequence of the play is filled with images of the potency and the impulsion of nature on everything and everyone, “Spring whips green down Cockle Row, and the shells ring out” (UMW, p.52), “Spring stirs Gossamer Beynon like a spoon” (UMW, p.53), “The town’s as full as a lovebird’s egg” (UMW, p.61).

Binding the themes of Life and Death together is Time. The action takes place over one complete day and as one complete cycle, coming around in full circle, ending where it began: in the characters’ dreams. We are constantly reminded by the narrators that “time passes”; a cock crowing, a church bell marking time, the children rushing to and then from school, are all prominent markers of the passing of time through the play. However, as a cycle, linear time is disrupted and confused throughout. In the dream sequence several of the characters dream of their childhood; Captain Cat dreams of his sea-faring days when he was younger and his long dead shipmates speak to him as do Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard’s dead husbands speak to her, the voices of the past speak with the voices of the present, the dead converse with the living. Lord Cut-Glass’s sixty six clocks are a striking image of time disrupted, by having them each set differently, he is trying to confuse time in order that it may not catch up with him, inevitably ending in his death. In the pub, the clock is stopped at half past eleven and has been that way for fifty years, indicating that it is always opening time. Mary Ann Sailors counts the years, months, weeks, and down to every day of her life, relishing every moment of it and, as she considers Llareggub and Milk Wood as a Garden of Eden, for her life and death are one and the same.

2.3 Geography of Llareggub: Where is it?

The action takes place in the fictitious town of Llareggub, which, to the unsuspecting and uninformed reader, appears as a common Welsh town name. A glance over a map of Wales will reveal hundreds of towns and villages with similar names beginning with ‘Ll’ – to a non-Welsh speaker, an almost unpronounceable sound – Llantrisant, Llanhari, Llysworney, Llanbevery, Llwhwr, and so on. Many of these towns have the prefix of *Llan* which denotes “holy place” or “church”, and in some instances it is not difficult to deduce the meaning, for example, Llan-tri-sant, “Church of Three Saints”. However, Llareggub means literally

“nothing at all”; the word reversed reads “bugger all”, which in common English slang means “absolutely nothing”. When *Under Milk Wood* was published the first time in 1954, owing to the word “bugger” being generally taboo, Dan Jones, under the moral pressure of the time, was obliged to change the spelling to Llaregyb to avoid giving offence, thus losing part of the subtle humour embedded into the narrative. Dylan Thomas’s Llareggub in some way reminds us of another “no-place”, Thomas More’s Utopia, however, here, More’s Atlantic island is transposed onto the isolated island-like town on the Atlantic facing south west coast of Wales, and the perfect society of “No-Place” is reflected in a distorted mirror that shows an opposite extreme – a malfunctioning but somehow functional society in which the foibles, eccentricities and all manner of bizarre behaviour are present and unashamedly visible.

Dylan Thomas situated Llareggub on the coast of south west Wales (see Map B, Appendix B), the coastal towns of Laugharne and New Quay, both have equal claim to being the inspiration for the town of Llareggub, which can be taken by the inhabitants as either a compliment or an insult as the behaviour of the characters of Llareggub is somewhat eccentric if not wholly bizarre. The poet lived in New Quay between 1944 and 1945 and in Laugharne, for a short period in 1939 and then in the last years of his life between 1949 and 1953. Both towns have created a “Dylan Thomas Trail” – touristic visits to bars, restaurants and public places where Thomas was known to have frequented – and a Dylan Thomas visitor centre or Museum. In Laugharne the museum is in fact Dylan Thomas’s last home, two 19th century former fishermen’s cottages, restored and combined to make one building known as The Boat House, overlooking the Tâf Estuary (DAVIES, 2000).

In his introduction to the first edition of *Under Milk Wood*, Dan Jones, wrote, “there is no doubt that he absorbed the spirit of these places and, through imagination and insight, the spirit of all other places like them.”(JONES, 1977, p.viii). Douglas Cleverdon (1969) argues that the topography of Llareggub is more likely to have been based on New Quay which has a small harbour, a wood and steep hills with terraced houses running down towards the sea. Laugharne, on the other hand, is mostly low lying and built on the banks of a tidal estuary, though in a letter to John Ormond of the photo-journal magazine *Picture Post*, Thomas wrote that he was working on a radio play about Laugharne, “though not by name, as its setting” (THOMAS, 1985). Furthermore, for the prototypical *The Town was Mad* he had explained to Marguerite Caetani, the then editor of the literary journal *Botteghe Oscure*, that the characters were based on the inhabitants of the town where he lived at that time (LYCETT, 2005).

In this respect, Davies (2000) notes that Laugharne and its inhabitants have always been a little out of the ordinary, “When Dylan Thomas came to Laugharne it was – and to

some extent still is – an isolated, atmospheric, somewhat down at heel, and rather eccentric place” (DAVIES, 2000, p.93). In the 16th and 17th centuries, as a remote coastal location, Laugharne was a base for pirates, smugglers and wreckers, the latter whose activities involved luring unsuspecting ships onto rocks by fake light signals, and collecting the washed up cargo from the consequential wreck. The descendants of these malefactors inherited an aggressive nature and unemployment between the two World Wars aggravated this further and contributed to drunkenness and violence in the town which also suffered a high insanity rate. Thomas first visited Laugharne in 1934 and described it in a letter to his girlfriend at the time as “the strangest town in Wales” (THOMAS, 1985). The colourful characters of Llareggub possess the same anarchic spirit of the inhabitants of Laugharne, Davies observes, “Certainly eccentrics abounded: the ferryman was deaf and dumb and doubled as the town barber, and one inhabitant always dressed as a Wild West cowboy.” (DAVIES, 2000, p.93). A deaf-mute ferryman named Booda worked on odd-jobs at the Thomas household in Laugharne and was implicated in the brutal murder of an old lady in the town while the Thomases were living there (LYCETT, 2005).

The “voice of a guidebook” in the narrative describes Llareggub as having five hundred inhabitants living in “three quaint streets and the few narrow by-lanes and scattered farmsteads” (UWW, p.21). The disparaging tone of the guide book echoes faithfully that of a 19th century travel book, *Descriptive Excursions through South Wales and Monmouthshire in the Year 1804* written by Irish natural history illustrator Edward Donovan, when describing Laugharne,

Laugharn [sic] is a neat, compact, seaport town, of small importance: in a situation the most retired imaginable, and is therefore seldom visited by strangers. It lies in no direct road to any place of consequence, neither are the accommodations, I have reason to suspect, inviting ... although the place is literally crowded with petty alehouses, not one of several at which we enquired, could furnish even a mug of ale. (Donovan, 1804, p.241)

It is likely that Dylan Thomas, at some time in his life, read Donovan’s travel book, the preceding paragraph to the above in *Descriptive Excursions*, is also strikingly similar to the preceding paragraph of the “Voice of the Guidebook” in *Under Milk Wood*, which is First Voice’s view of the town of Llareggub from the hill. In *Descriptive Excursions* Donovan describes, “Gaining the summit of this hill (...) the adjacent country appears widely stretched to observation, with the town of Laugharn [sic] below at the foot of the declivity”

(DONOVAN, 1804, p.241), while First Voice narrates, “Stand on this hill (...) you can see all the town below you sleeping in the first of the dawn” (UMW, p.21).

From the Voice of the Guide-Book and other parts of the narrative, Coronation Street is described as the main street which consists of terraced houses, painted in garish colours – mainly pink – and some surviving historical 18th Century houses in a bad state of repair. The town of New Quay enjoyed a building boom after the construction of a new pier in 1835, and rows of terraced houses were constructed similar to those described in *Under Milk Wood*.⁸ Following a New Quay model, Coronation Street would be constructed with Victorian houses and therefore named after the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1838. Laugharne, on the other hand, is more notable for its Georgian architecture, some of the streets are lined with Georgian terraced houses and Coronation Street in this model would be named after the coronation of George IV in 1821. It is also quite conceivable that the houses of Coronation Street are of a much later date, possibly of the Edwardian period, the coronation of King Edward VII took place in 1902.

The streets of Llareggub are cobbled, which indicates the town could be anything up to 600 years old⁹, and there is a small fishing harbour. Though there is no description of the harbour itself in *Under Milk Wood*, we can surmise that it is similar to those found in numerous coastal towns of Wales, that is, with a stone wall which extends out into the water and is sometimes angled or curved to protect a bay area in which the boats are sheltered from the open sea. The stone wall is usually wide enough to walk on and provides a platform for leisurely strolling or fishing, railings extend along the length of the path and life belts are usually placed at intervals along the railings in case of emergencies should anyone fall into the water. Most harbour walls have a small guiding lighthouse at the end. The coastal tides of Wales are such that, at low tide, which occurs twice daily, the level of the water drops so much as to leave the harbour space drained, when this happens the larger boats are supported on either side of the hull by vertical stilts to prevent the boat from falling onto its side, though in Llareggub harbour the boats are always described as being afloat with the waves lapping at the sides, therefore we must assume that it is high tide, which logically also occurs twice daily, at these times. Experienced seafarers know the times of high and low tides daily, which are published in almanacs and the local newspaper, and schedule the working day, when to leave and return to the harbour, accordingly. Another permanent feature of the harbours are

⁸ The information on New Quay was obtained from the New Quay website: <<http://www.newquay-westwales.co.uk/history.htm>> which can be found in the references.

⁹ Further information on this can be found in the chapter 3.

the seagulls, the distinct cawing cries of this marine bird are an ever present background noise in every Welsh sea town. The seagulls hover constantly over the water and are seen strutting along the harbour wall, on the lookout for scraps of food left by the fishermen or an opportunity to snatch a sandwich from an unsuspecting tourist, which they are known to do, and for this reason, not to mention other obvious hazards from overflying birds, they are considered a nuisance and pest in most towns. In Llareggub they are present when the fishermen are grumbling over the weather, and their cries can be heard numerous times over the town.

Mentioned in the story is the River Dewi which runs through or near Llareggub. In Wales the River Dewi exists as a small river that runs near the town of New Quay and into the Irish Sea, the name is derived from David and has variants in Dai, Dafydd and Tafydd; Dewi Sant, or Saint David is the Patron Saint of Wales. Laugharne is situated on a wider estuary of the river Tâf, the estuary allows small boats to enter during high tides, in Llareggub the boats are sometimes seen floating on the river, and it seems there is an easy sea to river access, similar to that of the geography of Laugharne. The “voice of the guidebook” mentions that the Dewi is “said to abound in trout”, which indicates a clean, unpolluted river, unaffected by the heavy industries which had polluted so many of the rivers of South Wales.

The Milk Wood of the title is described as sloping down towards the sea, and although the geographical position in relation to the town is not clearly defined in the text, it is implied that the wood is within a close proximity and an easy walking distance from the town, as it is referred to as a place where lovers frequent for illicit meetings, on foot as there are no cars mentioned; two of the characters are caught *in flagrante*, and Jack Black, the puritan cobbler, stalks the woods at night seeking out offending sinners. The woods found along the coast of South West Wales and other Atlantic coastal regions of the British Isles are known as Atlantic Oakwood which grows in humid climates with high rainfall and consists mainly of oak, ash, beech and birch trees as well as numerous plants, mosses and fungi. Atlantic Oakwood gives shelter to a huge variety of animal life including foxes, squirrels, rabbits and some larger mammals such as badgers and deer. In some parts of Britain the Atlantic Oakwood is the remnant of the most ancient forests dating from the last Ice Age of over 10,000 years ago¹⁰.

Other geographical features described in the narrative are the surrounding countryside and hills, the principal being Llareggub Hill, which the Reverend Eli Jenkins believes to be an ancient burial mound overlooking the town. It is unlikely, however, that a Neolithic burial

¹⁰ This information can be found on the Woodland Trust of Britain website at: <<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>>, details of which are in the references.

mound alone would reach the proportions of a hill from the top of which would afford views of the whole town, as narrated by Second Voice at one point. Nevertheless it is possible for a burial mound to be located on the crest of a hill thus increasing the size of both the hill and the mound itself, such as the one found at Cerrig Llwydion in Carmarthenshire. Probably, Thomas at some time in his life, perhaps during his childhood visits to his aunt and uncle's farm, would have visited the countryside areas and seen these burial chambers first hand. Sir John's Hill overlooking Laugharne, of which Thomas wrote about in the poems "Over Sir John's Hill" and "Poem in October", published in *Collected Poems*, is geographically similar to Llareggub Hill.

The farms scattered around Carmarthen are the model for the countryside dairy farms around Llareggub – observed by Nogood Boyo as he drifts in the bay in a small boat – and for Utah Watkins's Salt Lake Farm on which is kept a herd of dairy cows tended by the farmhand Bessie Bighead.

2.4 Characters: Who lives in Llareggub?

2.4.1 Principal Characters

Though not characters as such, First Voice and Second Voice are the omniscient narrators who share the narrative between them, changing between themselves sometimes even within the same sentence, similar to the stichomythia technique we saw earlier, however, their interactions are between longer descriptions rather than the single line, rapid back and fore exchange. Through these two narrators we build up a mental image of the scenes we are being taken through. The technique of building up the images through the narration was used by Thomas on his feature broadcast work for radio. For the most part, it is First Voice who introduces the characters and takes us through the town of Llareggub on a virtual tour while Second Voice describes the dreams and sees into the unconsciousness of the characters.

Captain Cat is a blind retired sea captain of a merchant vessel, *S.S. Kidwelly*. He lives in Schooner House in Coronation Street, towards the town square. His house is described in nautical terms, *i.e.* "portholes" for windows, "galley" for kitchen, *etc.* and is decorated with a maritime theme. As a blind man his sense of hearing is acute and he is able to "see" in the dark, as a cat can. The play was written for radio or voice, effectively rendering the listener as "blind" as Captain Cat, and so he acts, in some parts, as the bridge between our world and the world of Llareggub, the ploy of sightlessness used by Richard Hughes in the first radio drama

A Comedy of Danger in 1924. However, as important as this narrative device may seem, Captain Cat takes on the role of descriptive narrator only during a small part in the morning sequence of the play; he is sitting at his window describing the goings on around the town square, the postman's deliveries and the children as they are on their way to school. The most part of the descriptive narrative is delivered by First Voice and Second Voice.

As with other principal characters, we see into Captain Cat's dreams in the initial dream sequence, and during the afternoon sequence he day dreams at his window, his memory stirred by the sea air and sun in his face. Captain Cat's counterpart is his deceased lover, Mrs Rosie Probert who is the principal object of his dreams and his erotic day dreaming in the afternoon sequence. Despite leading a promiscuous life as a sailor, girls in every port of call around the world, and even despite, or perhaps because of, a *ménage à trois* relationship involving another sailor, Tom Fred, Rosie Probert was Captain Cat's only true love.

Mog Edwards is a draper, this profession involves selling and dealing with cloth material for clothing or furnishings. He lives in his draper's shop, Manchester House, in Coronation Street. He also describes himself as a Linendraper, Haberdasher and Master Tailor, all of which are professions in the cloth trade. Mog Edwards professes his love for Myfanwy Price, and she for him, through an exchange of letters which at times touch on the erotic. They never meet in person and the "love" they have for each other is overridden by their love for business and money which is revealed through their correspondence. Myfanwy Price works in a sweet shop and writes to Mog Edwards with reports of sales from the shop.

Mr Waldo is a philanderer and alcoholic, a lifestyle which reflects that of Dylan Thomas himself. His professions are listed as: rabbit catcher, which suggests illegal poaching activities, or is a sexual innuendo; herbalist, this means he has some knowledge of plants to prescribe herbal remedies, however at the same time, being described as a "quack" means that he is a very amateur, even charlatan, medical doctor; and cat doctor which means that he is probably an inexperienced veterinarian, and this is possibly another sexual insinuation. His only reasonable profession listed is that of barber, which recalls the Laugharne town barber who also doubled as the ferry man and did other odd jobs around the town (LYCETT, 2005). He has had a series of failed marriages and regularly sees Polly Garter for sexual encounters. Mr Waldo lives alone in Bottom Cottage, which is the last house at the sea end of Coronation Street.

Polly Garter has had several children from a number of lovers, however, like Captain Cat, despite her promiscuity, she dreams of and is very nostalgic about one particular long deceased lover, Willy Wee.

Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard is the twice-widowed landlady of the guest house, Bay View located at the top of Coronation Street, with a view of the sea, hence the name. A guest house is a private house that the owner has adapted for receiving paying guests, as in a hotel. A typical guest house can have 4 to 6 rooms, with 1 to 3 shared bathrooms; they are usually family run and are more informal and intimate than hotels. Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard however is so obsessed with cleanliness and hygiene that she refuses to have anyone stay at her home for fear of polluting the sterile atmosphere that she maintains. Mr Ogmores, her first husband, had retired from working with linoleum, a durable plastic-like floor covering, though it is unclear as to what his profession was, whether in sales, fitting or manufacturing. It is also unclear how he died. Her second husband, Mr Pritchard, is described as a “failed bookmaker”, that is, he accepted and paid horse or dog racing bets, unsuccessfully in his case. Due to his wife’s obsession with cleaning, Mr Pritchard committed suicide by drinking disinfectant.

Gossamer Beynon is the local school teacher and daughter of Butcher Beynon. Her name Gossamer means light, feathery and angel-like, this contrasts with her down-to-earth, solid common Welsh surname. She secretly desires Sinbad Sailors but is inhibited by their social class differences. Sinbad also desires her, though equally he believes her to be too high-class for his social level. Her outward appearance is of a prim and proper school mistress, while inwardly she boils with erotic desires. Sinbad, landlord of the Sailors Arms pub, spends his time fantasizing over her. He expresses a wish that his grandmother die in order that he may propose to Gossamer, this may be either because his grandmother does not approve of her or that he is devoted to taking care of his grandmother and would have no time for a wife. Sinbad’s grandmother, Mary Ann Sailors announces her age, to the day, every morning to the world from her bedroom window. She believes that Llareggub is the Garden of Eden or God’s chosen land.

Willy Nilly the postman and his wife, named only Mrs Willy Nilly, are the main spreaders of gossip. They obtain their information from the town mail which they open in their kitchen by steam from the kettle. In this way the letter can be resealed. Bizarrely though, the postman then reveals the content of the letter to the recipient and the neighbours, not always faithful to the truth. Even more bizarre is that the townsfolk accept this as normal, as though it were part of the postman’s job. His name derives from formal English “Will I, Nill I”, meaning ‘whether one likes it or not’, which is consistent with his mail opening activities – he does it regardless of the opinions of the townsfolk – it can also mean ‘without any direction or planning’ an ironic name for a postman whose profession requires logical order and plan.

If Mr Waldo is Dylan Thomas's debauched side, then the Reverend Eli Jenkins is Thomas's poetic, creative side. He is a clergyman of the non-conformist Methodist church and every morning and evening he recites a poem in praise of Llareggub. He is recording the history of the town and all its inhabitants, as well as botanical and zoological information, in a volume he calls *The White Book of Llareggub*. He is of a cheerful and optimistic disposition and he dreams of participating in the Welsh poetry and musical festival, the *Eisteddfod*. Despite being a clergyman in the Christian Church, Eli Jenkins has many characteristics of a pagan worshipper, in his dream he is in druids clothes, he addresses his morning prayer to "Dear Gwalia", an ancient name for Wales and his evening prayer he reveres the sun, the god Belenus in Celtic mythology.

Butcher Beynon lives above the butcher's shop in Coronation Street. He teases his wife constantly about the meat he serves from the shop, claiming that it is dog or cat meat or meat of a wild animal not typical of which is served from a butcher. His wife despairs at his outrageous stories but refuses to believe he would lie. Mrs Beynon is constantly shadowed by her pet black cat, seemingly like a witch. Lily Smalls is the Beynons' home help; she resents working as a maid at the Beynon household and is unhappy about her appearance, she escapes in dreams of royalty and exotic places. She has one secret admirer whom is never revealed, however she has sexual liaisons with Nogood Boyo, who quite possibly is the secret admirer and she is ashamed to admit it.

Mr and Mrs Pugh are bound together in a disagreeable relationship. Mrs Pugh is a bitter, hostile, spiteful and cold woman who torments her husband unceasingly. Mr Pugh is a schoolmaster and they live in School House on Coronation Street, opposite the butcher's shop. Outwardly, Mr Pugh is a meek mannered, acquiescent and compliant man, while inwardly he seethes with hatred for his wife and fantasizes about increasingly gruesome ways of killing her.

Lord Cut-Glass is probably the most eccentric of all the characters, indeed he seems quite insane. He lives in a small decaying house, which he keeps locked and secured very well, in Donkey Street. In his kitchen are sixty six clocks of varying shapes and sizes, each set at a different time. He is paranoid and the clocks are to keep him awake and alert to the arrival of his enemy, death, which he expects to arrive at any moment, he constantly mutters "tick-tock" in imitation of his clocks. In a complete contrast to his title and name, which is an expression for upper class manners and conduct, he eats fish-scraps from a dog dish on the floor of the kitchen and wears second-hand clothes bought from charity sales. Lord Cut-Glass represents the passing of time and man's immortality.

Nogood Boyo is of undetermined age but is probably a young man in his late teens or early twenties. He is unemployed and spends his time day dreaming around the harbour, sometimes taking out a boat, though he seems too lazy to practice fishing. Nogood Boyo has frequent sexual fantasies and paedophile tendencies. Boyo is a Welsh English dialect term for 'boy' or 'lad'.

2.4.2 Some Lesser Characters

Jack Black is a cobbler who has taken it upon himself to "cleanse" the town of sin. He patrols the streets, pubs and woods at night armed with a bible to chase lovers, drunks and sinners in general away. In one of his autobiographical stories, "Old Garbo", published in *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, Thomas mentions a Mr Matthews from the town of Swansea who "prominently feared the Lord [...] and who now walked every night, in rubber shoes with a prayer book and a flashlight, through the lanes." (THOMAS, 2010b, p.90), this is similar to Jack Black who, "pads out, torched and bibles, grimly, joyfully, into the already sinning dusk." (UMW, p.87).

Organ Morgan is the church organist, he is devoted to music and spends most of his time playing the organ, though in the narrative it makes an amusing innuendo, his wife suffers either from sexual exhaustion or neglect as Organ Morgan ignores her and only thinks of music, depending on one's interpretation.

Utah Watkins the dairy farmer is in a constant state of anger and irritation, he curses and urges the cows and dogs on the farm to attack one another, however the animals remain very docile. The cows are tended by Bessie Bighead, an orphan abandoned at the farm when she was a baby. Bessie takes care of the cows as though they were her own children; she gives each of them personal names and is responsible for milking them at the end of the day. Bessie has a loud and rough personality and has never been involved in any relationship, she is devoted to a memory of a boy who kissed her many years ago, even to the point of putting flowers on his grave.

The Baker, Dai Bread, has two wives, named only as Mrs Dai Bread One and Mrs Dai Bread Two. Dai Bread is always in a hurry and seems stressed at having two wives. Mrs Dai Bread one is a homely plump naïve woman who believes all of Mrs Dai Bread Two's predictions. Mrs Dai Bread Two is described as a dark exotic gypsy, she has the ability to see the future through a crystal ball; however, she "sees" only what suits her in order to manipulate Mrs Dai Bread One. They enjoy an amiable relationship with no apparent animosity which could be expected from two wives of the same husband.

Mr and Mrs Cherry Owen seem to be the only couple with a content marriage, even though Cherry Owen goes out and gets drunk every night. Mrs Cherry Owen tolerates his drunkenness and even humours and teases him with stories of his behaviour when he arrives home from the pub. Cherry Owen, for his part, is a foolish drunk, never becoming violent, but rather disposed to singing, dancing and becoming melancholy.

Mae Rose Cottage, introduced as an eldest daughter of Mrs Rose Cottage – a character who never actually appears – is a seventeen year old discovering her sexuality. After her erotic dream is described in the night sequence, she is found later in afternoon, day dreaming and having sexual fantasies in a meadow above the town.

Most of the other characters appear only briefly in short sequences, such as the drowned sailors in Captain Cat's dream or the gossiping neighbours in Mr Waldo's dream. There are also individuals that have very brief appearances, many with only one line, such as Child, Girl, A Mother and A drinker, of whom there are no further descriptions or indications of personality.

3 *Under Milk Wood Page by Page*

Stanley Fish, in “Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics” (FISH, 1986) considers each reader as the protagonist of his own reading. The reader opens his way through the text, sentence by sentence, searching for answers to questions such as “What does this sentence mean?” “What is it about?” “What does it say?” “What does this sentence do?”. For Fish, the sentence is not an object, it is an event. The solutions found by the reader depend on his readerly competence, which involves not only his knowledge about syntactical and lexical aspects, but also the attitude and the knowledge he has about people, things, ideas and the processes involved. In the case of Dylan Thomas, the experienced reader realizes he is dealing with a modernist writer. Modern authors such as Dylan Thomas, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, or James Joyce, frequently write cryptic texts which alternate personal experience and local life and erudite cross-references and knowledge. Scholarly information may pose some difficulty to the unsophisticated reader, and local information may complicate the reading by a foreign public. This chapter then has been devised, in order to help diminish the latter difficulty, in the form of a page by page set of annotations which aim at informing the reader about facts and usages, geographical information, cultural features and any other aspects which are specific to the simple life of simple people in Wales. This page by page section also offers possible interpretations of some of the scenes to give the reader some idea of the humour or subtle references embedded into the text.

P.1. The play begins in the hours before dawn in the small town of Llareggub. There is silence and darkness. First Voice narrator introduces the scene and describes the overall area in which the action takes place: the small town, the woods, the sea and some specific buildings in the town. Already at the beginning First Voice tells us it is spring, the season in which nature comes to life after the long sleep of winter. Nature and spring are strong themes throughout the play. The cobble streets of the town give us some indication of its age, Nicholas (1997) observes that cobbled streets were seen in towns from the fourteenth century

onwards and discontinued in the 19th century with the advent of asphalt paving. We can surmise then that Llareggub is a town of somewhere between 200 to 600 years of history.

At night the wood is the domain of courting couples and rabbits, it appears hunched and limping as an old man, though invisibly black in the night. Dylan Thomas's Welsh poetic style with the use of *cynghanedd* is immediately apparent in the line "sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack", and the emphasis is on blackness, darkness and stillness: "bible-black", gives us an idea of the religiosity of the communities. A sloe is a very dark purple type of plum. The houses appear blind with the curtains drawn so that it is impossible to see either into or out of the windows. Moles are nocturnal creatures that rely more on their sense of smell than sight, they "see" well in the night, using their noses or "snouting", in "dingles", small hollowed areas in the woodlands. "Velvet" can describe the feel of the moles' nose or snout, and also the softness of the ground of the woods. Here we have the first mention of Captain Cat, the blind retired sea-captain, like the moles, he "sees" with other senses, in his case his sense of hearing. The house where he lives is "muffled" because of the silence of the night. The emphasis is on darkness and silence, the narrator bids us "hush" and "Listen" several times to create the silent and dark atmosphere of the night in our minds.

"Shops in mourning" and "Widows' weeds" further complete the picture of blackness and are the first indications of the theme of death. The "widows' weeds" are the black clothes and veil that a widow wears to the funeral of her dead husband.

In this opening sequence we also see some of the professions of the inhabitants of the town, as well as the character of others: "drunkard", "fancy woman" and "tidy wives". These would be the same type of people that the Thomases had as neighbours while they lived in Laugharne. Farmers and fishermen reflect the geography – a seaside town with surrounding agricultural landscape – as do "webfoot cocklewomen". Later in the play we also come across "Mr and Mrs Floyd, the cocklers". The task of the cocklemen and women was to harvest the cockles, a small shellfish, from the wet sands of the beach, or the sand flats of the estuary when the tides were low. Geraint Jenkins, in an article *The Customs of Welsh Fishermen*, published in the journal *Folklore*, mentions the village of Penclawdd, on the south west coast of Wales, as having cockle gathering as the inhabitants' main occupation (JENKINS, 1972). In his description of this profession, Jenkins writes, "The life of a Penclawdd cockle woman is not an easy one, for she has to leave her home, often at an unearthly hour, to travel across the inhospitable, windswept marshland to the cockle beds" (Idem, p.3), the cockle beds are the exposed sands of the beach at low tide, various perils included the shifting sands and dangerous channels and tides which were sometimes difficult

to perceive because of early morning fogs or inclement weather. Once on the cockle beds the cockle woman,

[T]akes her allotted section of beach and with a knife known as ‘a scrape’, the surface of the sand is scratched to expose the cockles, a few inches below the surface. The cockles are then gathered together with a rake or ‘cram’ and placed in a sieve. The sieve is shaken backwards and forwards and from side to side to ensure that all under-sized cockles fall through the mesh.(Idem, p.3)

Care was taken not to overharvest the cockles by using a sieve to allow the smaller ones to fall back into the sand to continue growing to full size. The cockles were then boiled at a fire on the beach or taken to the boiling plants in the village. From there the women travelled to the market towns in Wales to sell their cockles at market stalls or travelled as far as Hereford or Gloucester in England to sell the cockles door to door. Each licence holder was permitted to collect five hundredweight¹¹ of cockles per season. Thomas describes the cockle women as being “web-footed” such as like a duck or aquatic bird, this is an allusion to the fact that the women spent a lot of their time in the water, probably without any form of footwear. While Thomas lived at Laugharne, he could observe cockles being harvested from the estuary from his workroom window and there was a cockle processing plant just a few hundred metres from his home (DAVIES, 2000). As with the villages of Penclawdd and Laugharne, harvesting the cockles would be an important industrial activity of Llareggub.

The girls dream of weddings, “gliding” down the aisle, again there is a theme of nature with glow worms and in the woods. The boys dream of adventures or sex – “wicked”. “[J]ollyrodgered”, one of Dylan Thomas’s many neologistic participle adjectives, refers to the “jolly roger” flag flown by pirates in the 17th and 18th centuries, the most common design being the skull and crossed bones or crossed swords on a black background. The flag was designed to instil terror in the victims, a form of psychological warfare, and to force them into surrendering rather than put up a fight, in the case of which no quarter would be given. Carpenter (2008) notes that the origin of the words Jolly Roger is possibly a corruption of the French *joli rouge*, literally *pretty red*, from the blood red flags that the earlier pirates used, or from “Old Roger”, meaning the devil, with the “jolly” referring to the grinning skull. As a harbour town on the south west coast, Laugharne, in its history was used by pirates, smugglers and wreckers as they sailed out across the Atlantic to the Spanish colonized islands of the Caribbean in the 16th to the 18th centuries (DAVIES, 2000) and Llareggub, based partly

¹¹ Five hundredweight = approximately 255 kilograms.

on Laugharne, shares a similar history. The notorious pirate Sir Henry Morgan (1635-1688) was born and raised in the region of Monmouthshire in south Wales, a coastal region to the west of Laugharne (CARPENTER, 2008). There is also a sexual connotation here, “roger” is a vulgar slang expression for intercourse originating from the 18th Century (GREEN, 1997), as a past participle adjective, and with the suffix “jolly”, it seems the boys are indulging in adolescent homosexual fantasies.

P.2. “Anthracite statues” is mute continuation of the above assonantal line, “sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack”, anthracite is “coal-black”, anthracite coal was once used for heating and steam power because of its slow intense burning properties. Whilst the coastal towns of Wales had the sea as a source of production and commerce, inland south Wales established coal mining as one of the main industries. In the south central region of Wales coal was mined as early as the 14th century (DAVIES, 1994). During the industrial revolution this activity expanded considerably and coal mining and related industries, such as transport, became the greatest source of employment. Dylan Thomas’s hometown of Swansea was affected by the coal mining industry as it was, alongside Cardiff 50 km to the east, a major port for exporting the coal.

Dogs have wet noses, the yards where they sleep then are “wetnosed”. Cats are active on the rooftops, the levels of which seem like a cloud in the darkness of the night. Cats “streak”, running fast across the roofs and “needle”, their claws are as sharp as needles. The narrative continues to take us through the night as it “moves” over the town. through the voice of the narrator as the images are constructed, we “observe” the streets, the woods, the hill and the boats in the harbour, their names taken from Greek and Welsh mythology, *Arthusa* and *Rhiannon*; sea birds, *Curlaw* and *Cormorant* and other popular names chosen by the local fishermen.

Again darkness and silence are emphasized with the repetition of “listen” and “black”. The town is “fast asleep”, an expression meaning totally and completely asleep, but at the same time “slow asleep”, that is, calm and not hurried. The narrator invites us several times to “listen” to the sounds made in the night, which are in fact no sounds, such as the dew falling, the town “breathing”, “invisible starfall” and the night moving. Through the narrator we imagine night as a natural living element, moving through the streets, mutating itself to the scenery as a chameleon would change colour according to the ambient it finds itself in. In the chapel the night is part of the congregation on a Sunday morning, dressed in “bonnet and brooch and bombazine black”; bombazine is a black silk and cotton material used for

mourning suits; “butterfly choker and bootlace bow” are the forms of necktie that would be worn by the congregation, who would often cough (“like nannygoats”) and suck mintoes, a fruit or mint sweet. The night, like the congregation, is also “fortywinking”, sleeping, as are the people of the town.

In the Four Ale the night is “quiet as a domino”. In *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (EVANS, 1991), Four Ale is described as a cheap beer sold at four pence per quart. The pre-decimal currency of Britain, before decimalization in 1971, consisted of pounds, shillings and pence, derived from the Latin *librae*, *solidi* and *denari*. In this system, twelve old pence made up one shilling and twenty shillings were equal to one pound, therefore there were 240 old pence in one pound sterling; using a currency calculator which allows for inflation¹², this amount calculates to the equivalent of approximately 0.38 pounds sterling in today’s modern currency of Britain. Given that one quart is equal to approximately 1.14 litres, this beer seems to be incredibly cheap considering that a pint of beer, *i.e.* 570ml in modern times costs close to 3 pounds sterling, most of which is tax. A “four-ale” refers to a pub which sells this cheap beer; dominos is a popular pub game amongst the customers. Here it is unclear whether First Voice is referring to the town pub, The Sailors Arms, or another establishment of which there is no further reference.

It is like black flour in the bakery, then night in Donkey Street has all the characteristics of a donkey, “trotting silent, with seaweed on its hooves” and “neddyng”, Ned is a popular name for a donkey, as is “Rex” or “Rover” for a dog. The cobbles of the streets are littered with cockle shells owing to the industry of the town, as the night moves down the street, the narrator builds up the images of the everyday objects in the windows of the houses.

P.3. The night then “tumbles” past the Sailors Arms like a drunken man. This establishment, the Sailors Arms (sic) is the local pub, the owners of which are Mary Ann Sailors and her grandson Sinbad Sailors, a reference to the ancient Arabian tales of Sinbad the Sailor. There is very little description of the pub itself in the play, other than it having dirty windows and a ships clock. The clients of the pub are mostly the fishermen of the town, and the pub would be decorated with ornaments from ships, the harbour and from the sea. In *The Village Pub*, a photo book of traditional country pubs of Britain, Roger Protz (1992) describes one such pub as having two ship’s figure heads above the entrance and pictures of ships along the walls and objects from the sea, such as shells, starfish, dried sea-horses and buoys,

¹² This information on the Government Archives website at: <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>> details of which can be found in the references.

suspended in a net hung from the ceiling. Another sea-side pub has model ships, photos and a ship's engine indicator on the bar set at "Stop". These pubs offer a variety of beers mostly served as a "pint", the traditional measurement and straight glass of approximately 570 ml.

Pub names themselves are part of the rich history and culture of Great Britain, Redmonds (2004) notes that the original pub names were derived from an object or symbol which would be hung outside indicating that the house may serve refreshments. The Romans hung out a small bush at a tavern to indicate that wine was served in that establishment, or a checkered board that would indicate games could be played there. Centuries later as the modern pub developed, some establishments were frequented by professions of one particular trade, *i.e.* Bricklayers or Carpenters and the pub was named in their honour. The "Arms" was added because the guild badges of the different trades resembled a heraldic device, the "arms" of a noble family. The correct form of the sign would of course be "The Sailor's / Sailors' Arms", however as some sign writers are perhaps lazy or not so literate, it is often rendered as "The Sailors Arms" – as we find in Llareggub – "The Carpenters Arms", "The Kings Arms" *etc.* without any thought of the genitive form. The proprietors of The Sailors Arms in Llareggub are Mary Ann Sailors and Sinbad, the surname being Sailors, the pub therefore should correctly be named "The Sailors's Arms".

The "slow deep salt and silent black, bandaged night" once again gives us a visual image of the darkness and silence of the night, "salt" with the sea air, "bandaged" in blackness. "[B]linded bedrooms" is a continuation of the previous alliterated line and the narrator builds up the images of the everyday common objects in the bedrooms of the inhabitants: clothes discarded on chairs, false teeth, pictures with religious messages and photos – the "dickybird-watching pictures of the dead". The "dickybird" refers to a small brass bird that could be made to tweet and warble with air and water, used by early photographers to capture the attention of children, the photographer would often use the phrase "watch the birdie" moments before taking a snap in order to have the subjects looking at the bird which was mounted on or near the camera.

Coming towards the end of the long introductory narrative, *First Voice*, now informs us that we are privileged to "see" and hear inside the dreams of the inhabitants of the town. The first dream we see is that of Captain Cat. It is immediately obvious from Thomas's choice of neologistic adjectives describing Captain Cat's home that it has a theme of a nautical nature and the sibilant line recalls the hiss of waves on a seashore. We can envisage the captain's room from this very short introductory phrase. Seashells, found on the beaches of any country, are often collected by children or adults as curiosities and scattered around a

house for decoration or play. In his travels Captain Cat may have collected many exotic shells from distant lands and used them to decorate his room. As well as the shells, the retired sea captain has also adorned his room with a ship in a bottle or perhaps several. This traditional sailors' craft involves inserting a fully rigged model ship into a bottle to produce a seemingly impossible object which raises the question of how the ship entered through the small neck of the bottle. The answer is easy, though to execute the task requires a delicate and steady skill of hand and eye. It is done either by first constructing the ship with collapsible mast, sails and rigging, which are pulled upright using controlling threads when the whole structure is inserted into the bottle; or the whole ship is delicately constructed inside the bottle using special long instruments and a very steady hand. An experienced sailor such as Captain Cat would be familiar with the techniques of this craft though it is not clear in the narrative whether he himself constructed the models or acquired them from old shipmates. The shells and bottles are also yonic and phallic symbols which allude to the Captain's past life of debauchery and sexual excess that we catch hints of throughout the play. "[S]hipshape" used to mean organized and neat, originally is a nautical term meaning the sailing vessel was properly rigged, equipped and ready to sail (EVANS, 1991). Finally in this short phrase, the captain's bedroom is described as his "cabin", the private quarters on a ship, and the house is named "Schooner House", a schooner being a sailing vessel with at least two masts.

In mid-sentence First Voice passes the narration over to Second Voice who takes up without pause and begins to describe Captain Cat's dream which we are privileged to "hear" and "see". The retired blind sea captain is dreaming of being on board his ship the S.S. *Kidwelly* in rough seas. S.S. is a standard initials prefix, meaning Steam Ship, for merchant vessels. Kidwelly is the name of a historical town on the south coast of Wales, perhaps the port of origin of the captain's ship. In the dream, Captain Cat is pulled down into the "Davey dark" and his long dead shipmates appear to him one by one and talk about old memories; as we would expect the vocabulary is replete with nautical terms, expressions and references. The "Davey", in the expression the narrator uses to describe the deep sea, comes from sailors' terminology of the evil spirit of the sea, "Davey Jones", and "Davey Jones's Locker", meaning the sea itself, especially when referring to it as the fate of drowned sailors. A possible origin of the expression is a corruption of the West Indian "duppy" meaning "devil" and Jonah, the biblical character who was swallowed by a whale, or that there was a particularly evil pirate named Davey Jones (EVANS, 1991).

P.4. In this dream sequence there are five “drowned” characters, referred to as “First Drowned”, “Second Drowned”, *etc.* As each of them speaks they identify themselves by name to the Captain. The first of the “drowned” is Dancing Williams, who bemoans his fate, “I lost my step in Nantucket”, indicating he died by some misdemeanour or accident. Nantucket is a small island off the coast of Massachusetts, U.S.A., which, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, was the centre of the whaling industry of North America. The island is mentioned several times in Herman Melville’s novel *Moby Dick*, Ishmael, the narrator, begins his journey from Nantucket and two of the principal characters, Captain Ahab and Starbuck are natives of the island. Next to appear in Captain Cat’s dream, as a “white bone talking” is “Tom Fred the donkeyman”. In seafaring terms the “donkey” is a small auxiliary steam engine – so named because a horse would do the most important work leaving the subsidiary work for a donkey – installed on the deck of a ship, it was the donkeyman’s task to maintain and operate this engine which could be used for such jobs as winching small loads on board or pumping water onto the deck for swabbing purposes, or pumping water out of a flooding hold (EVANS, 1991). Tom Fred reminds Captain Cat they had “shared the same girl once, her name was Mrs Probert” – who briefly introduces herself into the story – which brings a sexual connotation into the narrative, a man with an exceptionally large penis may well be known as a “donkey-man”, “donkey-rigged” or just “donkey” (GREEN, 1997).

Third Drowned, Jonah Jarvis is a possible allusion to the biblical character who was swallowed by a whale. Fourth Drowned, Alfred Pomeroy Jones introduces himself as a “sea-lawyer”, which is a sailor who constantly argues for his rights or a troublemaker (EVANS, 1991) – this is confirmed by himself in his phrase “crowned you with a flagon”, meaning to strike on the head with a large metal or ceramic jug – it is also a nautical term for a shark. He tells us that he was born in Mumbles, a hilly green peninsular south west of the city of Swansea, and “died of blisters”, though it is not clear as what caused the blisters – it is a possible symptom of syphilis – and contradicts the “Drowned” epithet. Curley Bevan, Fifth Drowned initiates a series of requests and queries from all the dead sailors, for Captain Cat to answer.

P.5. In this sequence we find an example of colloquial Welsh English in the phrase “I never done what she said I never”, uttered by Third Drowned, Jonah Jarvis, who has used the past participle of the verb “do” – as in a present perfect construction but without the auxiliary verb “have” – in place of the past simple “did” (LEWIS, 2008). Fifth Drowned’s opening question is about coconuts, parrots and shawls, which he would collect on his many voyages

around the world to take back to his wife. Coconuts and parrots of course would not be found easily in Wales and therefore were a rare and unusual present.

When First Drowned, Dancing Williams, asks “How’s it above?” each of the dead sailors in turn asks a question enquiring about things in the living world that they are missing, this demonstrates the Welsh characteristic of *hiraeth*¹³, which is a feeling of longing for something or someone which is lost. These are simple earthly items, sounds or smells that can be experienced in small towns or villages throughout Wales. Second Drowned enquires about ‘Rum and laverbread’, rum was included in a sailors daily ration and laverbread is typical Welsh dish of seaweed cooked to a paste and fried, traditionally served at breakfast.

P.6. The questions are a reflection of the sailors’ simple lifestyles they led while they were living. “Ebenizer’s bell”, for example, is the bell used for indicating the service at a chapel, Ebenezer was a name frequently used by nonconformist chapels, Curly Bevan was a churchgoer or perhaps he just misses the sound of the bell on a Sunday morning. “Tiddlers in a jamjar” are very small fish usually found in ponds or streams and collected by children using nets then kept in the glass recipients previously used for jams; Jonah Jarvis is remembering his childhood and one is reminded that while he reminisces about tiny fish, his biblical namesake was swallowed by an enormous ‘fish’. Jonah Jarvis also enquires about the “Tenors in Dowlais”, this is a reference to a male voice choir, a tradition of Wales, especially amongst the coal mining or iron works communities. The small town of Dowlais was once at the centre of the ironworks industry in the south Wales valleys. Alfred Pomeroy Jones, Fourth Drowned, on the other hand, enquires about the cows on the farm, *Maesgwyn*, literally ‘White Field’ is a common name for a farm or rural dwelling. This demonstrates the diversity of the origins of the sailors, from the heavily industrialized towns to the rural villages and farms.

P.7. The narrative leaves Captain Cat lamenting in his dreams and First Voice and Second Voice, once again sharing a sentence between them, move on to introduce two more characters, Miss Myfanwy Price who is dreaming of her lover, Mr Mog Edwards, who, despite seeming to be a lacklustre business-like character with a rather mundane profession, appears in her dream as an immense, muscular super-hero. The dream image of Mog Edwards is with a wide rough solid chest, thick muscular thighs and with a deep bass voice, with long flowing golden hair – “Samson-syrup-gold-maned” – burning, fiery eyes and “barnacle-

¹³ For Brazilian readers, this would be the equivalent of *saudades*.

breasted”, barnacles are tiny shellfish creatures which accumulate on wood or rocks which has been under the sea for a length of time, the hulls of boats are often coated with barnacles. In his declaration of love for Miss Price, Mr Edwards, a draper, lists a great variety of cloth that can be found in the “Cloth Hall of the world”.

P.8. In this initial dialogue between them we begin to have an idea of the nature their relationship, with Mr Edwards as being very business-like in manner, “heartless” when the shop is open, and evoking cash register bells at the wedding instead of the normal church bells. A stage direction has chapel bells and cash register bells ringing.

The narrator is again emphasising the darkness repeating ‘dark’ and ‘black’ several times in this section, to introduce the character, Jack Black the cobbler. His attic is described as ‘bible-black’, reminding us of the religion ingrained in the communities and telling us something about Jack Black himself. Jack Black’s puritanical activities include chasing lovers from the woods, described as “gooseberried double bed”; a ‘gooseberry’ is a popular slang for an unwanted third person when couples are courting, the ‘gooseberry’ can be an intentional chaperone or an unwitting accompanier such as a younger sibling. It is also a popular mythical tale that babies are found under a gooseberry bush. The wood here is obviously then a place for lovers, with or without chaperones, and a place for “making babies”. Jack Black, in his dreams, and in his waking hours, flogs, that is whips, ‘tossspots’, meaning unemployed, drunken lazy persons, from cheap sordid bars, known as ‘spit and sawdust’ because of the custom of scattering sawdust on the floor to absorb the spit of the customers. Finally, the last of his favourite localities for seeking out sin is the ‘sixpenny hop’, this is a weekly ball, usually held in the church hall – in Llareggub probably in the Welfare Hall – especially popular in the 1930s and during the war, where it would be frequented mostly by young women, as most of the men were away, and possibly by foreign soldiers, Americans or Canadians, stationed nearby (EVANS, 1991). Jack Black’s cry of “Ach y fi!”, is a Welsh expression of disgust and repugnance, this is one of the expressions that Dylan Thomas would most certainly be familiar with, and no doubt heard uttered either by his own parents or by his many relatives in rural west Wales.

P.9. Evans the Death dreams of when he was a child and his mother making Welsh cakes in the snow, these are a simple traditional tea snack, similar to pancakes and made from flour, butter, currents, sugar and spices and baked on a hot plate griddle rather than in an oven. In contrast to the blackness that we have seen repeated and emphasized up to this point,

paradoxically, the undertaker, whom we associate with black clothes and the blackness of mourning, is dreaming of whiteness, the snow and white bedclothes.

First Voice introduces us Mr Waldo, a large man of 17 stone which is approximately 108 kilograms. Mr Waldo is described here as an all-round handy man whose professions, or activities include, “catdoctor”, this has sexual connotations, as ‘cat’ is an allusion ‘pussy’, a vulgar word for the vagina; “rabbitcatcher” is another innuendo, rabbits are known for their reproductive capabilities – later in the play he is seen as a womaniser – and “quack” an amateur medical doctor. His items are laid out in an organized way in his room, his boots are placed in the washbasin, perhaps because of limited space, and his bowler – a hat fashionable with lower to middle classes at the beginning of the 20th century – is placed on a nail. He has a kind of sweet black beer, milk stout, and a dessert made from bread under his pillow in case he feels the need for a snack during the night. He is “dripping”, that is sweating, as he is a large heavy man and it is a warm spring night.

PP.10-15. At the beginning of his dream, Mr Waldo’s mother is reciting a popular children’s nursery rhyme, his wife then calls out to him and begins to cry and worry about the neighbours’ gossip.

Similar to the ‘Drowned’ sequence, we now hear the neighbours gossiping about Mr Waldo’s lifestyle in a series of rapid-fire, back and fore, short statements in which they talk about the insanity of his father, his extra-marital affairs and his drunkenness, “hasn’t got a leg”, is their way of saying “legless”, an expression meaning drunk. “If she didn’t had to” is another Welsh-English colloquialism of using the past participle where, in this case, the infinitive is necessary (LEWIS, 2008). An expression of surprise, disgust or delight in Welsh-English begins with “There’s ...” followed by an adjective or noun, as opposed to the more commonly heard, “How...” or “What a...” (Idem.), for example “How lovely”, in Welsh English is rendered as “There’s lovely”; “What a beautiful day”, becomes, “There’s a beautiful day”. The noun combination is frequently followed by “for you”, highlighting as a perfect example given of that subject, the neighbour’s observation here is “There’s a husband for you”, giving an emphasis on the example of a debauched type of husband. The gossiping neighbours comment that he has been seen “talking to the lamppost” and “using language” – their euphemism for swearing – and singing in the “w”, again a prim ladies’ euphemistic abbreviation for W.C. In the dream Mr Waldo then becomes a small boy and a different pair of neighbours, “Third” and “Fourth” continue the comical exchange. The two neighbours, stereotypical gossiping women, mention that the boy is “black as a chimbley”, this is a Welsh

English colloquialism for “chimney”, and amongst other misdemeanours, has been seen “ringing doorbells”, a schoolboy prank which involves ringing or knocking at somebody’s door then running away to hide and observe the person coming to the door to find nobody there; “chalking words”, that is, writing obscenities – the written equivalent of the neighbours earlier comment of “using language” – and finally, the young Waldo is said to have been seen in the bushes “playing mwchins”. In *Dylan Thomas’s Welsh*, Terence Hawkes (1960) explains that *mwchin* is a combination of the English “mooching” and a Welsh dialect word “mitching”, both words mean skipping school or missing class, however because of the similarity to the Welsh word *mochyn*, meaning pig, *mwchin* has the meaning of “dirty”, Hawkes writes, “It is usually used when scolding children, and can refer to physical or moral dirt (...) Placed in a phrase as a plural noun, *mwchins*, the reference in the dialect is to a whole vague area of “dirty” behaviour in children” (Hawkes, 1960, p.346). The humorous inference here of the child “playing *mwchins*” in the bushes is more than that of just skipping school, and we are left in no doubt as to the behaviour of the young Waldo when a short time later one of the mothers screams, “Waldo, Waldo! What you doing with our Matti?”

Between them, the two neighbours recommend that Waldo be given sennapods – the pods of the senna plant are used by herbalists as a laxative (LUST, 1986) – and locked in the dark; sent to the reformatory, a correction centre for young offenders; and finally they chorus together, “Learn him with a slipper on his b.t.m.”, here we have a Welsh English colloquial term of the use of “learn” in place of “teach”, this is because of Welsh language influence, the Welsh verb *dysgu* is used to mean both learn and teach (LEWIS, 2008) Once again the neighbours’ reluctance to use certain words, instead they use the three shortened initials to mean “bottom”, it is also an abbreviated form of the name of one of Waldo’s lovers, Beattie Morris, mentioned earlier by the gossiping neighbours. Waldo’s dream ends with a list of potential brides lining up to marry him at the church. As he is a widower, they may also be deceased wives and it is a memory of the weddings, though one of them is a “Mrs”, a married woman, suggesting they are illicit lovers. In his dream, the preacher’s standard words, used when marrying two people, “your lawful wedded wife”, become distorted to “awful wedded wife”. It seems to be a nightmare as Waldo becomes a child again at the end of the dream and screams out.

PP.15-18. Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard’s “iceberg-white nightgown” and “polar sheets” are in indication that as well as the widow being meticulous with washing and cleaning, there is an icy-cold atmosphere, devoid of warmth and emotion at Bay View. Also the sheets are

“virtuous” meaning that Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard allows no men into her bed. She is dreaming about her two dead husbands, Mr Ogmores and Mr Pritchard, who are asleep on either side of her. In this sequence Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard demands that her husbands recite their tasks which they must carry out in a strict hygienic disciplined order. As with Captain Cat’s drowned shipmates and Mr Waldo’s gossiping neighbours, the two husbands pass the dialogue back and fore between them in short sentences interjected with brusque comments from their widow. The tasks are a reflection of Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard’s obsession with health, hygiene and cleanliness and show a belief in popular cures and preventions, such as wearing a flannel band to avoid sciatica, charcoal biscuits, herbal tea and salts for digestive ease and an “asthma mixture” smoked in a pipe. The family pets, a canary and Pekinese dog, “the peke”, are to be “sprayed” and inspected for fleas respectively. Her final demand is that the sun cleans its shoes before it enters the house a line which Thomas used in his prototypical broadcast feature *Quite Early One Morning*.

P.18. Gossamer Beynon is dreaming of being in an elaborately decorated slaughter house – she is the daughter of the town butcher – she “ferrets”, that is searches for something, under a pile of chicken feathers, a ferret is also a small mammal used for hunting rats and is a natural enemy of chickens. These associations suggest a feral nature to Gossamer Beynon; the man she finds in a paper bag, as though ready to take out from a supermarket, is also wild and animal like with a bushy tail, similar to a ferret, this also links to Gossamer’s later utterance of “my foxy darling” (UMW p.22).

Organ Morgan cries out for help because of the surreal dream that he is experiencing. He is dreaming of a bizarre musical performance made up of men and women honking like geese and babies singing opera. The phallic policeman’s truncheon, a thick wooden cudgel used by the British police force as a weapon, and “playing cadenzas”, a solo improvisation, make a humorous *double entendre* in the line “P.C. Attila Rees has got his truncheon out”. The surreal picture is complete with cows making noises like reindeer bells, and the women from the welfare hall, “hoofing”, a slang word for dancing, in their underwear – bloomers – on the roof of his home, named after the composer Handel. “Roof”, “hoof”, “bloomers” and “moon” in the last line is Thomas’s common use of poetic assonance in his prose.

P.19. The “sea-end” of town is the part of the town that meets the shore line, the towns of New Quay and Laugharne in west Wales extend from a hill and slope gently down to the

sea, as we have already seen, it is likely that Dylan Thomas modelled the town of Llareggub on these two Welsh towns. The sleeping couple Mr and Mrs Floyd are seen as two salted brown fish in a box – a kipper is a salted, smoked herring – as cocklers, the Floyds would be exposed to the elements, sun-burned brown and “salted” by the constant contact with the sea and sea air. Once again here there is a repetition of the motif of death.

Salt Lake City in Utah was one of the places that Thomas stopped at during his extensive tours of the United States and Canada; in April 1952 he gave a lecture to the students at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. Farmer Utah Watkins is dreaming of counting sheep which have the face of his wife, she knitting and bleating like the sheep, as she dreams she is reciting the knitting movements sounding like the sheep bleating, “Knit one slip one”, *etc.*

Ocky the milkman, in his dream is pouring away the milk – a churn is a metal container used for milk – into the river and crying, and here is another reference to death, “like a funeral”; he is literally illustrating the popular adage “to cry over spilt milk”, as he is a minor character, we never discover if his dream relates to any waking situation in his life, “crying over spilt milk” would indicate that he is lamenting some mishap, the fact that in his dream he himself is pouring out the milk suggests that he caused the mishap and his comment “regardless of the expense” shows his financial carelessness.

P.20. Cherry Owen, a regular customer and drinker at the Sailors Arms is “drinking” a fish, a surreal image that Dylan may have picked up when he participated in a surrealist movement exhibition in London when in his early twenties (LYCETT, 2005). On this page, Cherry Owen is placed as living in Cockle Street, next door to Ocky Milkman, later Cherry Owen is placed in Donkey Street.

The policeman, P.C. Attila Rees, whilst still half asleep, mistakes his policeman’s helmet for a chamber pot, usually kept under the bed, and urinates into it, the inner voice of his consciousness warning him of the consequences in the morning. He is “Foghorning”, a foghorn is the sound of a ship’s loud horn in foggy weather and so this means that the policeman is either still snoring loudly or has a bout of flatulence. P.C. is the standard British English abbreviation for Police Constable, the lowest rank of police officer. Willy Nilly is dreaming of his rounds to deliver the mail and knocking on doors whilst actually knocking his sleeping wife by his side, she is dreaming of being late for school.

P.21. Sinbad Sailors dreaming of the girl he is in love with, Gossamer Beynon, the damp pillow indicates that he has been having an erotic dream of her and he has experienced a nocturnal emission, or ‘wet dream’. As Lily Smalls leads a rather dull life, she is dreaming of a possible escape from her routine, and her dream has combined the elements of excitement and adventure with the reality of her domestic surroundings; a mogul is a rich business tycoon or a member of the Mogul Empire of 16th to 18th century Indian and the wash-house could refer either to a public baths building where the working classes could go to bathe themselves or the laundry annex to a house.

Mae Rose Cottage is referred to as Mrs Rose Cottage’s eldest, indicating that Mae has siblings, though there is no mention of any other of Mrs Rose Cottage’s children and Mrs Rose Cottage herself has no speaking part. Second Voice describes Mae Rose-Cottage’s erotic dream, she is burning with desire in a furnace, the multi-layered location expands outward from a phallic tower to a yonic cave, to a waterfall – her wet dream nocturnal emission – to a wood, the outermost layer of a green sanctuary in nature. Her lover, with “brilliantined”, that is glossy, perfumed hair, must surmount each of these layers, reflected respectively in the adjective, noun sequence which follows: burning, tall, hollow, splashes and leaves, in order to reach her. Dylan Thomas may have taken her name from Mae West, a film actress and playwright throughout the 1930s. Dolores was a character in one of Mae West’s plays, “The Pleasure Man”.

The lonely Bessie Bighead, dreams of picking flowers for the grave of a young man who kissed her long ago. The statement here of Bessie being born in a workhouse, an institution to shelter poor people, is inconsistent with a later statement which says she was born in a barn.

P.22. Butcher Beynon’s dream is full of bloody images of uncommon meat – owl, dog and human – the butcher frequently teases his wife about the produce he serves, here he is also “pulling the legs” of his dream, an expression to mean, teasing and joking with someone. Gossamer’s utterance of “my foxy darling” is consistent with the early description of her dream in which her lover has a “bushy tail” (UMW, p. 18)

First and Second Voice continue to describe the dreams and the night between them, Second Voice lists even the details of the detritus that the characters see in their dreams: bones, ash, dandruff, nailparings, etc. As the town is a harbour, fishing location, the tiny elements of flotsam and jetsam enter into the dreams: shells, fish bones, sprats – a small fish – and “whalejuice”; “juice” from a whale is known as spermaceti fluid formally used in

cosmetics, lamps and leatherwork (MELVILLE, 1994), also known as sperm, so “whalejuice” is an obvious sexual reference. Moonshine is the light of the moon reflected on the water but also means whisky or alcoholic drink made illegally.

P.23. First Voice describes an owl catching a mouse in Bethesda chapel graveyard by the grave of Hannah Rees, “Beloved Wife”, who is possibly the deceased wife of the policeman PC Attila Rees. The Reverend Eli Jenkins is dreaming of *Eisteddfodau* (singular, *Eisteddfod*) a festival of poetry, music and dance celebrated throughout Wales from junior school level, up to international level, in which musicians, singers and poets compete for prizes. The modern National Eisteddfod is held at a different location alternating between north and south Wales, in August every year. Tents and pavilions are erected on the *Maes*, a field with an area of approximately 35 hectares, in which the competitive activities, poetry, song, dance and storytelling take place. The main aim of the National Eisteddfod is to promote Welsh language and culture. As well as the competing public, the National Eisteddfod is also the venue for the *Gorsedd*, gathering of bards, during which each year the winner of the best Welsh poem with strict metre entry is awarded the Chair and participates in the *Cadeirio'r Bardd* ceremony, the Chairing of the Bard. The winner of the best poem in free verse is awarded the crown and participates in the Crowning of the Bard ceremony, *Coroni'r Bardd*. The Chair and Crown are designed and created by local craftsmen especially for the event¹⁴. The current International Eisteddfod takes place at a fixed location, the town of Llangollen in north Wales in July each year. International music, dance and performing arts are the main attractions at this event¹⁵. In 1953 Dylan Thomas was commissioned by the BBC to make a radio broadcast about the event, he contrasted the ordinariness of the Welsh town to the exotic nature of the visitors from many countries around the globe, dressed in their respective national costumes. The newly crowned Queen Elizabeth II attended this event, though Thomas made no mention of her in his broadcast (LYCETT, 2005).

The *crwth* and *pibgorn* that the reverend is dreaming about are traditional instruments which are used principally in Welsh folk music. The *crwth*, dating from medieval times, is a form of lyre with six strings and played with a bow, similar to a violin, sitting with the instrument resting on the lap, or with the instrument held against the chest. The *pibgorn*, literally “pipe-horn” is a wind reed instrument with a wide single or double horn and holed

¹⁴ This information is available on the Eisteddfod website at: < <http://www.eisteddfod.org.uk/> > which can be found in the references.

¹⁵ This information is available on the International Eisteddfod website at: < <http://www.international-eisteddfod.co.uk/> > which can be found in the references.

flute, it can be played either by blowing direct into a mouthpiece or by connecting it to an air bag, the sound is something similar to that of the Scottish bagpipes (NIDEL, 2005). Dressed in druids robes, a “seedy nighty”, the reverend is in the beer-tent – the temporary bar of an outdoor event – which would be a very popular during the Eisteddfod. It was from here that Dylan Thomas made his BBC report (LYCETT, 2005). The beer-tent is described as being “black with parchs”, *parch* in Welsh means ‘respect’, as the word appears to be a plural noun in English, this is possibly an English/Welsh abbreviation of the Welsh word *parchedig*, meaning church minister which would account for the blackness – the reverends’ robes. The English verb ‘parch’ means to make extremely dry or thirsty, a beer-tent would be made dry, the customers becoming thirsty, with the presence of so many church vicars, wordlessly commanding respect and dignity, that is to say, no consumption of alcohol.

Mr Pugh spends his time, awake and here in his sleep, plotting of ways of killing his wife, here we have just a tiny glimpse of his mind with the one word “murder”.

During the day Mrs Organ Morgan suffers from the ceaseless organ playing of her husband, in her dreams then she wishes only for silence, her hands are blocking her ears in her sleep.

P.24. The Garden of Eden that Mary Ann Sailors is dreaming of is her own back yard; for Mary Ann Sailors, the town of Llareggub is the Garden of Eden. First her kitchen is described; the cobbled floor, ceiling hooks and settle – a long wooden bench common in country Welsh kitchens. In the backyard, again there are cockleshells on the path – it is near the sea – there is a vegetable patch with onions, beans and tomatoes. A washing line stretches low over the garden as Mary Ann Sailors has to “duck under the gippo’s clothespegs”. “Gypo” is a colloquial term for Gypsy, itself an exonym for the Romani people who inhabit many European countries. One of the Gypsies’ sources of income was from selling small household items, including wooden clothes pegs, door to door, Mary Ann Sailors had bought her clothes pegs from a door to door Gypsy peddler. In the orchard she sits beside an old man, evoking an old Adam and Eve beneath the forbidden fruit tree. She shells fresh green peas, which represent new life, a contrast to herself and the old man – the beginning of life and the end of life.

PP.25-26. The next four dreams are simple short indications of the nature of each character. Dai Bread is dreaming about a harem where a sultan’s wives live and into which no men are allowed to enter. Dai Bread himself practices polygamy and a harem would be a

logical place to house his wives, leaving him in peace. Polly Garter only dreams of babies, a reference to the on-going theme of life and nature. Nogood Boyo's dream of nothing indicates his laziness. Lord Cut-Glass's dream is to remind us, as First Voice does so in the next line that time is passing. The dawn is approaching, an owl, perhaps the same that had caught a mouse earlier, flies past Bethesda chapel to its own chapel, the place where it worships nature in its own way, the oak tree.

After the single distant bell note, First Voice narrator changes tone for the last viewing of the sleeping town before it awakens; now the narration is more brisk without the softness, silence and darkness, we are no longer moving slowly through the streets, following the black silent night, we are now commanded to stand on Llareggub Hill and observe the wakening town. On the hill is a stone circle, one of many scattered around Britain's rural landscapes. The original stone circles were made by the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age peoples of Britain between 4000 and 1000 B.C.E, long before the Celts arrived on the islands. It is likely that these ancient stone circles were places of worship or astronomical observation. The later arriving Celtic druids worshiped deep in dark forests and not within the stone circles on open planes (SCHAMA, 2000). However, when Iolo Morganwg revived the Druidic movement and held a *gorsedd* on Primrose Hill, he began the practice of holding the ceremony within a stone circle of twelve stones and in 1819 he linked the *gorsedd* with the National Eisteddfod by holding a spontaneous ceremony at the Eisteddfod in Carmarthen within a circle of small stones that he had produced from his pocket. For the *gorsedd* held at the National Eisteddfod each year a stone circle is constructed on or near the *Maes* one year and a day before the event for the Proclamation Ceremony which officially announces the venue for the *gorsedd* for the following year. The circle consists of twelve stones of varying size and shape, of up to one metre in height, which are placed according to alignments of midsummer and midwinter sunrises, they are usually taken from the surrounding area and remain in place to indicate the *gorsedd* site. A larger flat topped stone, known as *Maen Gorsedd*, is placed in the middle of the circle and is used as a platform from which the ceremonies are conducted. The circle and *Maen Gorsedd* are not removed after the Eisteddfod is over, giving some prestige to the town as an Eisteddfod site. Since 2004, where a construction using real stones is not practical, due to the location or local council regulations, portable synthetic stones are used, probably much to the horror and disgust of hard-line traditionalists¹⁶. The stone circle on Llareggub hill, so First Voice informs us, was constructed neither by Ancient Britons nor Neo-Druids but by

¹⁶ This information is available on the museum of Wales website at: <<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/884>> which can be found in the references.

“Mrs Beynon’s Billy”, her son. This is the only mention in the play that Gossamer Beynon has a brother; there is no indication as to whether Billy is a small child, a teenager or a young man, which would determine the size of the stones he is able to handle. Also there is no indication for the reason of Billy’s stone circle, whether as a childhood game or some religious ceremony that Billy had been involved in.

Though the description of the town and its inhabitants according to the Guidebook is rather less than complimentary, it gives us an idea of the size, three streets and narrow by-lanes, with surrounding farms, and population. A “watering place”, literally accumulated residue rainwater where the animals of a dry savannah would stop to drink, suggests a small meeting place where people gather to socialize and drink, “decaying” and “backwater” on the other hand convey the meaning of the place as being abandoned, isolated and forgotten, with only the eccentric inhabitants keeping the town alive. The rows of two-storey houses are very common to most towns in Wales and most sea-side towns have a small fishing harbour. The guide book suggests that the only thing which could interest the tourist, as there are no leisure or sports attractions, is the habits and customs of the locals which are reminiscent of a past time preserved in the town. As we have previously seen, the guide-book description of Llareggub is strikingly similar to the description of Laugharne in the 19th century travel book, *Descriptive Excursions through South Wales and Monmouthshire in the Year 1804*.

Three more of Dylan Thomas’s compounded participle adjectives, from the nouns lark, crow and bell, describe the early morning as the town begins to wake up, the morning air is full of the song of the lark, the crow’s cawing and the sound of the town hall bell. Captain Cat is the first awake and pulls the bell rope to announce the beginning of the day. As the people light the coal fires with old crumpled pages of newspapers, the ashes of the burning paper is carried up the chimney and blows upwards appearing like snow.

PP.27-28. Contrary to the guide book’s disparaging tone is the Reverend Eli Jenkins’s morning prayer in the form of a poem which he recites every morning by heart. His verse compares the small town and its geographical features to other, larger places around Wales. He begins by addressing the poem to “Dear Gwalia”, an ancient name for Wales derived from the Saxon term *Waelas*, denoting “foreigners” from which the name Wales also comes. The reverend then lists the mountains of Wales, Cader Idris, Moel yr Wddfa, Carnedd Llewelyn and Plinlimmon, mostly peaks around the Snowdonia region, and praises their mightiness in comparison to the humble Llareggub Hill, he goes on to list most of Wales’s largest rivers: Sawdde, Senny, Dovey, Dee, Edw, Eden and Aled and comments that Llareggub’s River

Dewi is tiny by comparison. He finishes the poem by saying that by choice, given all the beauties and splendour of all of Wales, he would stay in the humble village of Llareggub.

P.29. The inhabitants of the town are woken up by the town hall bell, described by Dylan's long compound adjective; "Polly put the kettle on", is a traditional nursery rhyme, suggesting here that the kettle should be put on the stove to boil the water to make the morning tea. As in the dream sequence where we had glimpses into the dreams of some of the individuals of the town, now we visit the households and observe the morning rituals. The "treasure", an invaluable person to have, referring to a housemaid, Lily Smalls is the first up in the Beynon household to make the breakfast. Her "dream of royalty", another indication of the adventurous life she wished she had. As she is waiting for the kettle to boil, she holds a conversation with herself about her looks in the small shaving mirror.

PP.30-31. Lily Smalls's double sentiments in taking the tea to Mrs Beynon are echoed by Mr Pugh as he is doing the same for Mrs Pugh, though Mr Pugh's sentiments are much more sinister than those of Lily Smalls. As he climbs the stairs and he whispers the words that he would really like to say to his wife but never can, his tone changes as he enters the bedroom and offers the tea, for her part, she complains before she has tasted it. Mrs Pugh looks out of the window into the street and makes observations on the people she sees in the early morning. The first thing Mrs Pugh sees is Lily Smalls, having taken tea for Mrs Beynon, is now washing the front step of the house.

P.32. We have an idea of the policeman's size, as broad as an ox and boots like barges – large cargo boats – and his mood, in a "beef-red huff" and "black browed", as he has to wear the helmet he had mistaken for a chamber-pot some hours earlier. The fact that the town policeman has nothing to do other than "see that the sea is still there" indicates that there is very little or no crime in Llareggub. From Mrs Pugh observing the street, First Voice passes us to the seagulls, sounding like women discussing the price of fish at a market and observing various characters in the same scene.

P.33. We have a brief description of Dai Bread the baker as he hurries to work, and his two wives, one a homely housewife figure and the other an erotic dark gypsy type character. On this page Dai Bread's home is placed on Donkey Street, the name changes later to Donkey

Lane, another inconsistency, probably because of Thomas's hurried revision. Ironically, Dai Bread's wife borrows bread from a neighbour, Mrs Sarah, she enquires about the neighbours boils, a painful inflammation, commenting on Mrs Sarah's reply, that we are not privilege to, that sitting down makes a change, humorously indicating that the boils were on Mrs Sarah's backside. Lord Cut-Glass is dressed in a cast off coat and trousers bought from "Bethesda Jumble" – a jumble sale is a charity market of second hand clothes and other items that are no longer wanted and donated for the sale, usually organised and held at the local church hall. Lord Cut-Glass is seemingly always rushing everywhere and muttering "tick tock", reminding us that "time passes" still, the repeated utterance of the First and Second Voice narrators during the dream sequence.

P.34. Nogood Boyo, is "up to no good in the wash-house", a scene which Thomas remembers from his childhood and reproduces in the short story "The Peaches", where the narrator observes his cousin Gwilym masturbating in an outside lavatory.

The image of a neat and prim Miss Price hanging out or collecting clothes from the clothesline and returning to her breakfast, the egg kept warm by a cosy – a small knitted "jacket" – contradicts the erotic dream that she had had of her lover, Mog Edwards, which we were privy to during the dream sequence. Polly Garter is in the yard breast feeding a baby and wondering about the fathers of her children. First Voice narrator describes for us the sounds and smells of the inhabitants of the town making breakfast. We have an overall view of the town from Bay View at the top end to Bottom Cottage. At the top end of town, Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard is dressed – prepared to clean the house – in "smock and turban" as though in military uniform preparing to "engage the dust" as a soldier would "engage the enemy"; "big-besomed" is a humorous pun of "big-bosomed", a besom is a broom made of bundles of twigs tied to the end of a handle. Her address and breakfast reflect her own impression of the "top end" of her class in society, at the opposite, bottom end of town and society, is Mr Waldo whose breakfast consists of remaining cabbage and potato of the previous day's dinner, mashed together and fried, known as bubble-and-squeak because of the noise it makes while it is frying, and kippers, salted and smoked herring. His rude manners and disgusting behaviour are shown when he drinks directly from the sauce bottle.

P.35. We have short glimpses into two of the characters' breakfasts and personalities; Mary Ann Sailors's porridge and religiousness and Mr Pugh's omelette and desire to murder his wife. The postman's wife, like a witch, "broods and bubbles" with a "coven" of kettles, is

always ready in the kitchen to open the letters to the inhabitants of the town with the steam from the boiling kettles, using this method the letter can be resealed with no indication that it had been opened. The Reverend Eli Jenkins absentmindedly dips his pen into his morning drink instead of the ink. Captain Cat's kitchen is the "galley", a kitchen on a boat or ship, he is eating "sea-fry", or laver bread.

PP.36-38. Here Mr and Mrs Cherry Owen are placed as living in Donkey Street in one room. Their breakfast consists of leftovers of the previous night's supper; onions "in their overcoats" are unpeeled onions, and the broth – a thin soup – of bones and bacon rind is in indication of their financial situation and social class, though Mr Cherry Owen seems to have enough money to go to the pub and consume large quantities of beer every night. It is probably because of Cherry Owen's nightly drinking that they live in relative poverty, Mrs Cherry Owen however, does not seem to mind. Mrs Cherry Owen is recounting to her husband his drunken antics of the previous night. There is no reason given as to why Cherry Owen was carrying a bucket, other than that he was drunk. He was also carrying a fish-frail, which is a woven basket for carrying fish, it is impossible that it could contain any liquid, in this case, stout, a black beer, so we must presume that the stout was in bottles and Cherry Owen is using the basket to transport the bottles. When Cherry Owen had tripped over the bucket, Mrs Cherry Owen recounts, "the floor was all flagons and eels", indicating that the fish-frail had indeed contained flagons of stout, a flagon is a large metal or ceramic jug and the wet bucket had contained eels, which Cherry Owen had inexplicably obtained some time during the night at the pub. "Bread of Heaven" is a Welsh hymn, originally called *Cwm Rhondda*, written at the end of the 19th century by John Hughes¹⁷, and performed at popular sports events such as rugby matches, or spontaneously sang by the spectators who know the lyrics in the Welsh language by heart, reiterating Glyn Jones's observation that poetry and song are integrated into the Welsh society (JONES, 2001).

P.39. At breakfast the butcher teases his wife about the liver they are eating, saying that it is a cat liver from the brother cat of their own pet, also casually informing her that it was "doctored", meaning neutered, as if that fact would make eating cat liver acceptable. He continues to tease her listing various anomalous meats that he has supposedly butchered and

¹⁷ This information is available on the Welsh Biography website at <<http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s1-HUGH-JOHN-1873.html>> which can be found in the references.

served over the last few days, Mrs Beynon becomes hysterical, however, when Lily smalls accuses Mr Beynon of lying, his wife comes to his defence and says he would never lie.

P.40. Mr Beynon teases his wife further with a remark that he is going to butcher corgis with his cleaver. Corgis are a Welsh breed of dog – the name literally “dwarf dog” in Welsh – originating from the 12th century and bred for working with cattle, their small size allowing them to nip at the cattle’s legs while dodging around the trampling hooves. The corgi was also known as a “Yard Dog”, because of the measurement from tip of the nose to the tip of the outstretched tail was once the measurement for one Welsh yard¹⁸. The corgi is the favourite dog of the Queen Elizabeth II.

P.41. The Sailors Arms clock is set permanently at 11.30, opening time, and the comment that it is “always opening time at the Sailors Arms” shows a disregard for the law of pub licensing hours that many rural or small town pubs had. The law which established limited opening times, was passed during World War II in order for people working in essential industries, such as munitions, not to turn up for work drunk or with a hangover. The law was not repealed until 2003¹⁹. The clock stuck at the same time for fifty years shows the age and tradition of this type of pub. This is also an indication of the disruption of linear time in the play.

As the morning moves on, the inhabitants of the town are going about their daily routines, the old men and babies wheeled into the street or the backyard to take sun and air and the children are prepared for school. The babies, school children and old men in this scene recall the first, second and last ages, of Jaques’s *Seven Ages of Man* monologue in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*; “the infant mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms”, the school boy “creeping like snail unwillingly to school” and the “second childishness and mere oblivion” of the old man.

The fishermen are grumbling, that is complaining; we can assume that fishermen would complain about lack of fish to be caught, however, the bay is described as “dab-filled”,

¹⁸ This information is available on the Kennel Club of Britain website at: < <http://www.the-kennel-club.org.uk/services/public/breed/display.aspx?id=5145>> which is in the references.

¹⁹ This information is available on the BBC website at: < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A266942>> which can be found in the references.

a dab is a fish commonly found in northern European waters and is edible²⁰, the fishermen therefore have no reason to grumble with the sea being full of fish to be caught. Nogood Boyo has taken a small boat into the bay; he ships the oars, meaning he ceases rowing and places the oars in the boat so that the boat drifts freely with the sea current and the wind. His idleness is such that he lies in the water accumulated at the bottom of the boat which is filled with the detritus of the boat owner's activities of crab fishing; it is not clear whether Nogood Boyo himself is the owner, his indolent and apathetic attitude suggests that he would not be capable of any such activity.

P.42. From the boat in the middle of the bay, he has a view of the distant farms on the hills in the surrounding countryside. In the town the shops are opening and Mog Edwards is observing potential customers and measuring them up for various items of clothing with his expert judgment. We are reminded of his nature in the “darkness behind his eye”, a black void into which he shouts as if to remind himself that he loves Miss Price.

First Voice describes some of the commonplace occurrences of the town. Apart from a mention in the Voice of the Guide-Book of weekend motorists – tourists or visitors – here is the only mention of a motor vehicle, the car driving to the market containing chickens, geese or ducks which the farmer will sell. Milk churns are aluminium containers, usually of about 20 to 40 litres, which the farmer leaves at the entrance to the farm to be collected and taken to the processing factory²¹.

At this point Captain Cat takes over for a short period as principal narrator, *i.e.* it is his voice that will describe the scenes as they unfold, however, unlike First and Second Voice, Captain Cat remains in one location and is not omniscient. He is sitting at an open window of his home and “observing” the goings-on in the town square. With his acute sense of hearing he is able to recognise the voice or idiosyncratic sound that each child makes, identifying the children as they pass on their way to school. “[O]ur Sal” suggests that she is a member of Captain Cat's family though there is no other mention of any family; “one of Mr Waldo's” shows that Mr Waldo's offspring are so numerous that they cannot be remembered by name and are only known as “one of” his; “Ty-pant” is a house name, *ty* is the Welsh word for house and *pant* is hollow or small valley, so literally, *Valley House*; “the rash” is an allergy or a disease which causes skin irritation such as varicella or rubella.

²⁰ This information is available on the Fish Database website at: <<http://www.fishbase.org>> which can be found in the references.

²¹ This information is available at the University of Waikato website at: <<http://www.nzdl.org>> which can be found in the references.

P.43. Captain Cat recognises the postman's step and is able to tell at which house he is stopping. The first is Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard's house, Bay View. Considering Bay View is at the top end of the town, furthest from the sea, and Schooner House, Captain Cat's home, is in the town square, closer to the sea – though the distance between them is unspecified – Captain Cat is able to hear the door knock and the conversation. His blindness has sharpened his sense of hearing which compensates for his lack of omniscience. The knocker is apparently wrapped in soft leather – a kid glove – perhaps not to damage the paintwork, or in order not to make a harsh sound. We now see a hilarious sequence of events in which Willy Nilly postman relates to the recipient the content of their letter which they are receiving from him; furthermore, as he moves from house to house, he builds up each story, changing and embellishing facts with innuendoes and *double entendres*. The situation is even more incongruous because of the fact that nobody in the town seems to mind that their personal mail is being opened and the contents relayed to all of the rest of the population, this seems consistent with Dylan's first idea for the story, *The Town Was Mad* in which the inhabitants of the town are found to be insane. Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard receives a letter from a vegetarian ornithologist requesting accommodation for two weeks. The sender of the letter has enclosed a pre-paid envelope as a courtesy, as he wishes to receive a reply without Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard having the annoyance of paying. Builth Wells is in central Wales and a distance of approximately 100 kilometres from the south west coast.

P.44. Despite Bay View being a guest house, Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard never allows any guest to stay because of her obsession with cleanliness and hygiene. Willy Nilly pleads for the case of the bird-watcher, humorously teasing Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard and making sexual insinuations, "his little telescope", and "he only wants a *single* bed", which she chooses to ignore.

P.45. Captain Cat counts Willy Nilly's steps to the next house, Mrs Rose Cottage's. Captain Cat has memorized the days on which the inhabitants receive certain letters, knowing that today is the day that Mrs Rose Cottage receives a letter from her sister in Gorlas, a village about twenty kilometres east of Laugharne. The enquiry about the twins' teeth seems to come from the sister, however, at the next house, the postman tells Mrs Pugh about Mrs Rose Cottage's sister's twins, who have to have their teeth extracted. The earlier enquiry then was from Captain Cat himself, following the family drama and curious to know any news, or from

Mrs Rose Cottage asking about the contents of the letter. As well as the news of the twins, the postman tells Mrs Pugh of Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard's refusal to have a bird-watcher guest making the story confusing and unclear. Mrs Pugh knows of the postman and his wife's penchant for opening and reading the mail as she asks what the parcel contains – a book for Mr Pugh, reflecting his sinister nature. By the time he reaches Manchester House, the postman recounts: "Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard won't have birds in the house", changing Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard's original refusal of the human guest.

P.46. "[T]o do in somebody" is an expression which means to kill, the postman treats this as "very small news". Even the lovers' letters are not immune to the postman and his wife's scrutiny. Myfanwy Price's letter to Mog Edwards is an inventory of the stock of the sweetshop and items sold. "Doilies" are small knitted place mats for plates or cups; "boiled sweets" are hard sweets of boiled fruit syrup; "humbugs" are boiled sweets with a mint flavour and "jellybabies" are a soft jelly-like sweet in the shape of a baby.

Captain Cat recognises Mr Waldo's step as he rushes to the pub and predicts that he will ask for a of stout – a dark beer made of roasted malt – with an egg in it. A raw egg in a pint of stout was said to be a cure for a hangover (EVANS, 1991) and so Captain Cat presumes that Waldo has a hangover – probably a normal state for him to be in – however, when the latter receives the paternity summons, he rushes to the pub and asks for the stout with no egg, he is in such a state of anxiousness learning that he is a father once more, that he wishes to remain drunk. Mr Waldo's philandering conduct is reflected in his correspondence and the postman's use of the word "another".

P.47. First Voice and Captain Cat are observing and narrating the next sequence of the routines of the inhabitants walking in the spring sunshine in the street. Captain Cat's acute hearing is such that he is able to recognise individuals by their step. The neighbours are gathering by the town pump in the square to gossip. Nogood Boyo and Mrs Floyd "talking flatfish" shows that their conversation is not of any importance or is just nonsense; flatfish is a slang for a dull stupid person, in this case Nogood Boyo himself, and in the expression "to lie like a flatfish", an obvious punning derivation, it means that they are telling lies (EVANS, 1991). Even though Mrs Beynon expresses horror at her husband's teasing that he butchers cats and dogs for meat, she is likened to a witch with the black cat following her everywhere, the witches' "familiar"; the sea Captain's hearing is unable to detect the silent cat's paws and he hears only the miaow. Captain Cat names "Mrs Twenty-Three" after the house number of

where this lady lives, it is a common habit amongst townspeople to allocate a house number to a person when the person's name is unknown or difficult to pronounce. Her "dewlap" is the loose skin under the chin, indicating that she is an elderly lady, or it is slang for a loose, flabby belly. Captain cat observes that high heels are unusual to wear in the morning and deduces that it is Mae Rose Cottage. The teenager, becoming a young woman, is experimenting with sensual fashion even though she is on her way to the meadow to milk the goats, Captain Cat is reminded of someone from his youth, probably Rosie Probert. Contrary to his acute earlier hearing when he was able to hear the conversation between the postman and Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard, now Captain Cat is unable to hear what the women are gossiping about, perhaps because they are all speaking at once, but catches brief snippets their conversation which is about usual day by day occurrences of their reality.

P.48. Captain Cat's observation of Organ Morgan "at it early" is another *double entendre*; Spring is the season of rebirth and fertility in nature. The milkman on his morning round delivers pints of milk in cans to the doorsteps of each house. Captain Cat's reference to the milk being "half dew" means that the milkman has diluted the milk with water to save money. To emphasize this Captain Cat comments that Ocky is "watering the town"; he is cheating the customers, like Willy Nilly postman opening and reading the mail, the town inhabitants know this fact and the milkman's dishonest practice continues without complaint. When Polly Garter approaches the square the gossiping neighbours fall silent and Captain Cat greets her and tells her about the gossiping women, comparing them to geese, "huddle", "peck", "flounce" and "waddle" are all actions that can describe movements of a goose, the "hiss" is the incessant gossip which Captain Cat reports to Polly Garter. The husbands are likened to the male goose, a gander. Goose is a slang word for an ignorant, uneducated person and as a verb is vulgar slang for the sexual act (GREEN, 1997); the "gandering husbands" are being adulterous with Polly Garter in the wood. Captain Cat notes that although Polly Garter cleans the floor of the Welfare Hall for the Mother's Union Social Dance, she herself would never attend this event, as it is for respectable married mothers – "wedding-ringed holy". "[W]altzing breadwinners snatched", *etc.* refers to the working husbands, breadwinners, who are obliged by their wives to attend the dance, though they would rather spend the evening in the pub.

P.49. As the morning moves along, we are reminded that it is springtime; the town, the morning and the people are "busy as bees", the simile reflecting the spring and nature

which is stirring the town. First Voice narrates a sequence of sounds and images of the morning, the alliteration and assonance conveying the activities of the inhabitants and the hustle and bustle of nature, “humming hammering”, “twitter” of the birds on the “bird-ounced boughs”, that is, the branches of the trees with the light weight of the birds resting on them – an ounce is a unit of imperial measurement equivalent to 28.34 grams. The grunt of the pigs is followed by the chop of the butcher’s cleaver, linking one with its inevitable fate in the action of the other. “Milk churns bell”, they make a clanging sound when banged together, the farmers are collecting up the empty churns. “Clog dancing farms” is a reference to the Dutch Friesian cattle, bred especially for producing milk. The noises of nature are mingled with the sounds of the human activity in the town, dogs, birds, sheep and cattle compete with working saws, the gossiping women and the school where the children are teasing and shouting, a “beargarden” is a place of tumult and noise, in Tudor times it was a place where the bears were kept for the popular sport of bear baiting for public amusement (EVANS, 1991). The women chattering in the general shop are again likened to geese as they “scratch and babble” and again this initiates a sequence of gossiping. Second Woman’s interjection of “la di da”, is an expression originating from a late 19th century music hall song to mean affected upper class or high-society mannerisms (EVANS, 1991), and is used here as a criticism of Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard’s pretentious upper class habits and lifestyle.

P.50. The gossip is snippets of information about Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard and the story heard from Willy Nilly postman about the bird-watcher’s request for a room. Again we have the neighbours in a quick-fire, back and forth dialogue, they are unaware of their irony in the stories of Mr Ogmores, who was a “proper gentleman” even though he used to spy at women undressing and he hanged a dog. “Tallyho” is a hunting cry of horsemen when the fox is spotted. On this page is the only mention of Mrs Organ Morgan’s store, in all other appearances of Mrs Organ Morgan she is the suffering wife of the church organist with no indication of a store, this is perhaps an oversight of Thomas due to the rushed completion of the work.

P.51. The women go on to talk about the butcher teasing his wife and Nogood Boyo. We are given a hint of a suicide, murder or tragic accident with the mention that a Mrs Samuels had “been in the water a week” and found by Nogood Boy while he was out fishing. The neighbour’s comment of “There’s a nasty lot live here” is a reference to the violent history of the town of Laugharne and recalls Thomas’s original idea for *The Town Was Mad*.

Further underlining the eccentricity of the town are the topics of the women's conversation: Ocky Milkman's wife who has never been seen and is compared with the "empties" the empty milk bottles which are sterilized and filled again to be delivered. The scandal of Dai Bread's bigamy, another unconventional, and criminal, feature of the town, like the postman opening letters and the milkman diluting his product, there is no interference from any authority concerning the baker's crime, nor is there too much concern from the inhabitants, apart from idle gossip.

P.52. The neighbours conclude their discussion sympathising with Mrs Morgan, the sexual innuendo is quiet clear with "organ organ all the time" and "up every night until midnight playing the organ".

The two main themes of the play are illustrated here with First Voice's comments on the sunlight and life bursting through the town in the spring then Second Voice presents a contrast with Evans the Death, who, despite attempting to remain dignified, is also affected by the spring, his heart leaping in his chest, described as coffin-like, an allusion to his profession.

P.53. Gossamer Beynon also tries in vain to be still and disparages herself for her involuntary movements. Her profession mentioned her – schoolmistress, a prudish and formal image – is in contrast to that of the sensual young woman stirred by the forces of nature, there is a conflict within her, she wishes to be refined but at the same time is very much aware of her sexuality. The puritan Jack Black controls his urges channelling his energies into the physical force of hammering a shoe, forcing the image of the erotic Mrs Dai Bread Two from his mind by denying that the shoe is the property of anyone. The warmth of the sun and the sea breeze sooth Captain Cat into a day-dream of his sea-faring days, "ship" used as a verb means to "take on board" it is an appropriate verb to use for the sea Captain, he is taking memories on board. The omission of the genitive 's' on "Captain Cat sea memory", seems to be a grammatical error; though, considering the play is intended for voice, this may have been intentional, or a revision oversight, as when the phrase is spoken a genitive 's' would merge with 'sea' and become indistinguishable. Captain Cat is daydreaming that he is in an exotic land, exercising his authority as the Captain to have the first choice of the prostitutes available. His question is in a pidgin French slang, "jig jig", meaning sexual intercourse, originates from 19th century and is a corruption of an expression used by Indian women during sex, sailors would have picked up the expression and taken it around the world on their travels (GREEN, 1997).

P.54. The narrator tells us that Mary Ann Sailors speaks softly to herself, however the stage direction is that she speaks loudly. As an elderly person she is probably slightly deaf and believes herself to be speaking quietly. Another contrasting image is presented with the elderly Mary Ann Sailors, looking out of her window at Llareggub Hill, described earlier by First Voice as “old as the hills”, speaking of the spring and her old age. Her declaration of the “Chosen Land” is punctuated by a happy long cry of children’s voices, here as a stage direction. We can see here the two extremes presented in the play, the young and beginning of life and the old at the end of life.

The next scene is of Willy Nilly and his wife in their darkened kitchen in the act of steaming open and reading a letter from Mr Mog Edwards to Myfanwy Price, the windows are running with condensation from the steam, described as tears making it a sad scene, made more so by the whimpering hens in the back yard for the “likerish”, a corruption of liquorice, a strong flavoured black candy, similar to the tea they are scraping for. Mr Edwards’s letter begins with a description of his own establishment as a letter heading. The proprietor is described as being “late of Twll”. Twll is a fictional town, and the name, like Llareggub, has a hidden, or rather enciphered meaning. The meaning of the Welsh word *twll* is ‘hole’, in colloquial Welsh it is usually inseparable from the word *dyn* meaning ‘man’, and is a term of abuse, quite literally “arsehole” (HAWKES, 1960), the newspaper, *Twll Bugle*, is further humorous obscenity, incongruously and hilariously followed by “Beloved Myfanwy Price my Bride in Heaven.

P.55. In Mr Edwards’s letter to his bride to be he mentions that it would be impossible for him to tie a white ribbon in her hair indicating that she is not so pure and chaste as he wished her to be, or is a confirmation that they never meet in person. He tells her of his erotic dream and talks about business transactions from his store, Polly Garter bought two garters, without stockings they would only be used for an erotic show, Mr Edwards is naïve about this and wonders what the use would be, Mr Waldo probably got the “outsize”, that is large, nightgown from Polly Garter, Captain Cat had described her earlier as having a body “like a wardrobe”, as Mr Edwards confirms they know where he obtained the nightgown, it seems common knowledge that Waldo is “secretly” trysting with Polly Garter. Tom the Sailors is a character only mentioned here, by name probably related to Mary Ann and Sinbad but there is no further reference to him. Willy Nilly goes out to the backyard toilet, humorously named House of Commons, the chamber of parliament where the Members of Parliament conduct

their sessions; this association with an outside toilet is a statement of the politics and politicians of the day. Many terraced houses, built in the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century, were simple constructions of two rooms downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs, until they were modified in the 1960s and 1970s, the “bathroom” consisted of a small outside building with only a toilet bowl. The bath was a tin or copper bathtub, placed in front of the fireplace in the main living room of the house. Willy Nilly sees the seagulls squawking overhead on their way to the harbour.

P.56. The scene shifts to the view of the harbour where the fishermen are observing the sea. The fish in the sea are transformed into an image of money, tobacco, tinned salmon, winter clothes, *etc*, all of which are items that the fishermen buy with their income from the fishing. However, showing an irrational behaviour that we have seen in other inhabitants of the town, paradoxically they choose not to go out, observing that the weather and sea are inclement for fishing that day, even though it is “sea smooth to the sea’s end”, that is the horizon, and “lulls in blue” indicating that it is perfectly calm which is further emphasised later by “still still sea”, a double adjective emphasis and also an adverb-adjective combination meaning “until now remaining calm” . They spit – “gob” – at a seagull for luck and go to the pub. Spitting to ward off evil has been a superstition since Roman times and seagulls are considered to be bad luck by sailors as they are thought to be reincarnated drowned sailors, so spitting at a seagull would be a double protection for the fishermen (WEBSTER, 2008), ironically unnecessary as they have no intention of going out to sea..

As the children run out of school, Captain Cat is chanting the nursery rhyme along with them. “Draggletail”, originally *daggletail*, is a careless unkempt woman who allows her long gown to drag in the dirt of the floor (EVANS, 1991), the schoolyard is obviously dirty and muddy.

P.57. The children’s nursery rhyme, an abominable story of the baby in a milking pail, that is, a tin bucket, follows a pattern of traditional nursery rhymes that deal with cruelty, violence, sex and death. Many of these rhymes were explicit cruel stories, such as “Ding dong bell pussy’s in the well”, about a boy, Johnny Flynn, who throws a cat in a well, and another boy pulling the cat out; strikingly similar to Johnnie Crack and Flossie Snail. Other rhymes were a criticism of royalty or the government of the time (ROBERTS, 2006) The “music of the spheres” refers to a theory of Pythagoras which he named the *Music or Harmony of the Spheres*, and in which he posited that the planets made sounds as they span on their axis and

moved around the universe and that the entire universe was in harmony according to the sounds. Johannes Kepler, the 17th century German astronomer also wrote a treatise on the subject (EVANS, 1991). Comically, here the harmonious sound of the universe is *The Rustle of Spring*, a popular piano composition written by Norwegian composer Christian Sinding in 1896. Here is another contrasting image of the themes of life and death, the force of the spring is such that even the dead in the cemetery have formed a joyful “Glee-party”, a singing group; “muffled” and “Vegetables make love above the tenors” is the encrypted reference for this.

Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard carries a flywhisk, feather or hair fibres attached to a handle and used for disturbing or killing flies; because of her obsession for hygiene, it is unconceivable that there would be any flies in her boarding house. In some cultures flywhisks are used as a mark of authority or symbol of power, in this case the power that Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard has over the ‘kingdom’ of her household. In Buddhism and Hinduism the flywhisk is a symbol for brushing away ignorance and earthly afflictions²², it is ironic then that Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard is afflicted with what seems to be an obsessive-compulsive disorder.

P.58. The two Mrs Dai Breads are sitting in the street, the previously named Donkey Street is now called Donkey Lane. The adverbs “darkly” and “plumply” describe Mrs Dai Bread Two, the dark exotic Gypsy, and the overweight Mrs Dai Bread One, respectively. They are “blooming”, like flowers out on a spring day in the sun. “[D]ewy sun” is a possible reference to the patron saint of Wales, St. David, known in Welsh as Dewi Sant. Mrs Dai Bread Two has with her one of the Gypsy’s ‘tools of trade’, the crystal ball and is teasing her counterpart by “seeing” the future in the ball.

P.59. Mrs Dai Bread Two continues to build up the story of their husband beside the bed and climbing into the bed with the both of the women, however she claims the image is clouded over before she can identify which of the women he has chosen for that night, leaving Mrs Dai Bread One frustrated. Here a stage direction reminds us that all the way through the conversation of the two women and their potentially erotic story, the children have continued their song of Johnnie Crack and Flossie Snail, casting a bizarre comical touch onto the scene.

The morning singing highlights the life energy that is streaming through the town on this spring day. As the Reverend Eli Jenkins makes his “morning calls”, visiting people who

²² This information available on the Art of Asia website at: < <http://www.mfah.org/art/detail/fly-whisk-chauri> > which can be found in the references.

are old or perhaps sick, he hears Polly Garter singing while she is cleaning the Welfare Hall floors.

P.60. Polly Garter's song is a comical, bawdy, but somehow poignant memory of one of her former lovers, Little Willy Weazel. Tom, Dick and Harry, areonyms for various men, indicating that Polly Garter has been promiscuous throughout her life. Comically, the lewdness of the song escapes the Reverend who only hears the musicality and underscores Wales's *Land of Song* appellation.

P.61. As he goes along his way, the Reverend is being observed from the pub window by Mr Waldo. "[S]moked herring brown" associates the pub to its fisherman clientele while indicating that the window has been stained with the smoke of their pipes, the uncleanliness is illustrated with "unwashed Sailors Arms", a double meaning: the pub and the limbs of the customers. Mr Waldo with his "odes" is another indication of the poetry and music ingrained into the society as Jones (2001) had observed. "[T]reacle" is a slang term for second rate port wine (GREEN, 1997), or more probably – given his earlier request for a pint of stout and his under-the pillow reserve – Mr Waldo's own slang for the dark and thick sweet stout beer. Sinbad Sailors is not paying attention to Mr Waldo and is only dreaming of Gossamer Beynon.

P.62. Mr Waldo's opinion of women differs from that of Sinbad Sailors. Waldo is probably thinking of Polly Garter. Sinbad Sailors's insensitive comment about his grandmother dying perhaps suggests that on her death he would inherit the pub and feel himself worthy of Gossamer Beynon's hand in marriage, or that his grandmother disapproves of Gossamer, thinking her too high class for her grandson, which is his own opinion of her, though his feeling is of devotion and not disapproval. The children's song makes a humorous interpolation between Sinbad Sailors's comments and Polly Garter's song giving us an idea of the former's romantic proposal and the latter's sexual activity.

Captain Cat's home and window are described in nautical terms, a schooner is a sailing boat and a porthole is the small round window of a boat.

PP.63-64. He is listening to the schoolchildren who are playing a teasing kissing game, "forfeiting" refers to a game in which the participants must pay a penalty if they do not fulfil a request, in this case, a kiss. The ambiguous demand, "Kiss Gwennie where she says",

the geographical locations mentioned – lane, hill and wood – as well as the fact that the children do not physically go to those locations when the kiss is given by two of the boys, have underlying connotations of children discovering and experimenting with their sexuality. The second boy has an Italian surname, Cristo; many Italians migrated into south Wales during the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century looking for job opportunities in the industrialized valleys and busy port towns (DAVIES, 1994).

P.65-66. The third boy refuses to kiss the girl and cannot supply the coin as forfeit, he is then humiliated and runs home crying. The “triumphant bird-like sisters” remind us of the Harpies of Greek mythology, half woman, half bird creatures that snatch and grasp items from their victims, the girls have “buttons in their claws”, they have grasped at the boy and pulled the buttons from his shirt. The abuse from the boys suggests that his mother and father had been promiscuous; the father with the “wild barefoot women of the hovels of the hills” is a town dweller’s stereotype of the people who inhabit the rural mountainous areas far from the populated coastal towns and cities. The boys and girls soon forget their victim and rush into the sweetshop. The description of Myfanwy Price is at the same time comical and sexual, “puff-bosomed”, describing her breasts and her puffing up like a robin, a small proud bird; her buttocks “tight as ticks”, a tick is a tiny blood sucking arachnid, or perhaps the tick of a clock, the sentence continues with “gobstoppers big as wens that rainbow as you suck”, which is the beginning of the list of the items which the children are going to buy and not a further description of Myfanwy Price. A wen is a fatty cyst can grow under the skin, the gobstopper – a large round hard sweet – will give the impression of a growing cyst if held in the mouth inside the cheek. The sweets are associated with the mischievous behaviour of the children: the growing cyst; nougat to form a long stretched out tongue; gum for sticking in girls’ hair and red sweets to simulate bloody saliva. The last items on the sweets list, dandelion-and-burdock, raspberry and cherryade, are fizzy soft drinks, known as “pop”, the narrator links this to a line from a children’s song, the origin of which is a 19th century music hall number telling of an escapade of “in and out the Eagle”, ending in “pop goes the weasel”. The Eagle was a pub in London and the expression “pop” was to pawn something, the meaning of “weasel” is obscure, it is possibly a tailor’s iron or a Cockney Rhyming slang, “Weasel and Stoat”, for ‘coat’; the idea being that the item was pawned in order to have the money to buy more drink, (EVANS, 1991) and in this case the children are buying drink, albeit non-alcoholic.

P.67. In contrast to Myfanwy Price’s awkward but sexual description, that of Gossamer Beynon is categorically sensual and erotic, the sun warms her “red-berried” –her nipples – breast, where it becomes “boozed” – drunk with lust in the honey of her heart – she is stripped naked by all the eyes that are following her down the street. She becomes the Eve – the Earth Mother of All – in the “Dai-Adamed” world, ‘Dai’ is a common Welsh first name, an abbreviation for ‘David’ – this world is populated by Welshmen – and Adam of course is the first man from whose rib Eve was modelled; this is also a pun on “macadamed”, a road surfacing method pioneered in the 19th century; The Gossamer Beynon Eve walks on a modern road surface in her “Garden of Eden”. Sinbad Sailors is fantasizing about placing his rough hands on her thighs, “dewdamp” and “mangrowing cock” are explicit sexual references. As she walks past the pub, she is also thinking of Sinbad. The expression “Salad-days”, was first coined by Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra* (HARDY , 2000) and is used to mean youthful inexperience, showing an inner nature of Gossamer Beynon, as her “deep self”, despite her overt sensuality; this is in contrast to the next description of the “spring of her self”, her awakening sexuality: “big-beamed”, large breasted, for child feeding as Mother of the World, and “Eve-hipped”, with fertile child-bearing potentiality. She thinks of Sinbad Sailors as being uneducated and not refined, by observing that he “drops his aitches”, that is, he does not pronounce an aspirated ‘h’ at the beginning of a word, for example ‘ouse in place of ‘house’, however this does not impede her desire for him as her next comment again shows her manifest sexual nature, “cucumber and hooves’, a phallus and devil-like.

P.68. Her outward appearance that Sinbad observes is “demure”, “proud”, “schoolmarm” and “icemaiden”, contrary to all of the previous description and belying her latent sexuality. Before she enters her home she once again feels the “conflagration” of a burning desire for him.

First Voice takes us to a completely contrasting scene of the dining room of Mr and Mrs Pugh’s house, from the burning, sexual, erotic fantasies of Gossamer Beynon and Sinbad Sailors, we now observe the icy hateful relationship of the Pughs. The image described is of coldness, grey, dark and drab and tomb-like, the “vault” of the room and cold “shroud” meat, emphasize the dismal atmosphere. A cottage pie is made with minced meat with a potato puree covering, without a normal pastry pie crust, the cold meat suggests a dead body with the cold “shroud” potato, covering. Mr Pugh is reading his book, recently received from the postman, and covered in order that Mrs Pugh cannot see the title, Mrs Pugh of course knows what the book is, having being told by Willy Nilly.

PP.69-70. Mrs Pugh taunts Mr Pugh about his bad manners of reading at the table. In his imagination Mr Pugh is concocting a deadly poison in a laboratory, outwardly he is being polite to Mrs Pugh while she abuses and insults him. A “spinney” is a small copse of bushes; “crucible” is a porcelain container used for melting substances in chemistry. Again the room is described as a vault and the atmosphere as icy cold, to emphasize the frozen relationship between them. Mrs Pugh is being sarcastic about Polly Garter, calling her a saint and mentioning that she was “martyred” the previous night, an allusion to the sexual act. A change of scene takes us to Organ Morgan’s dining room where Mrs Organ Morgan is gossiping about the behaviour of Polly Garter and Mr Waldo, first introduced in the previous scene of the Pugh’s dining room. Mrs Organ Morgan relates that the couple had pretended to be looking for birds’ nests, a child or collector’s pastime involving collecting the eggs from the nest, the activity is known as “nesting” or “bird nesting”, which Mrs Organ Morgan uses as an euphemism for sex, it is also an allusion to the vagina and pubic hair.

P.71. The couple had been caught *in flagrante*, Mr Waldo in “long combinations”, a one piece undergarment, and Polly Garter with her dress over her head. Mrs Organ Morgan is likened to a large aquatic bird, gulping down the fish as a pelican does with whole fish. Organ Morgan has not been listening to his wife’s gossip and is thinking only of the organ music, again there is a school-boy humour *double entendre* in the comment “It’s organ organ all the time with you”.

P.72. The eccentric Lord Cut-Glass in his kitchen full of clocks ticking away is a reminder that the afternoon is wearing on and a reminder for him of his own mortality. Amongst the clocks of all shapes and materials is a “tu-wit-tu-woo” clock, this is an onomatopoeia for the sound of an owl’s cries, the clock presumably then makes this sound as a chime. An owl is symbolic of wisdom, a counterpoint to Lord Cut-Glass’s insane conduct. The clocks show the passing of time, however they are set at different hours suggesting that Lord Cut-Glass does not wish to know the correct time or he wishes to confuse his “unknown enemy”, death in some form, which can surprise him at any time, any day.

P.73. Lord Cut-Glass is immune to the force of the spring, its nature and bounty – the “lust and lilt and lather” and “breasts full of rivering May-milk” – of which the whole town has been affected by and “fallen head over bells in love”, he only sees each day passing as

another day closer to his death, his personal Armageddon. Again the narrative takes us to the other extreme, from the doom laden image of Lord Cut-Glass waiting for death, the Polly Garter continuing her risqué song about her former lovers, but the theme of death remains in her song.

The pace of the narrative slows down suggesting a long warm lazy afternoon with the words “lolling”, “yawns”, “dozy” and “idles”. The sea is described as having fishes sleeping in its lap, like a cat would in a person’s lap. The meadows are “still as Sunday” – nothing happens on Sunday afternoons. All of nature is seen as sleeping and dozing, bulls in the fields, goats in dingles – small valleys – and ducks in ponds.

P.74. As we saw into the humans’ erotic dreams during the dream sequence, we now see the pigs “erotic” dreams, the “squeal and snuffle of yesses” humorously echoing Molly Bloom’s soliloquy in Joyce’s *Ulysess* (JOYCE, 1994). Meanwhile in another contrasting image, the donkeys are “angelically” drowsing and the scene snaps back to Mr and Mrs Pugh at the dining table, where Mr Pugh is rudely awoken from a doze by Mrs Pugh’s acidic comment. The former once again escapes into his fantasy world in which he is a master chemist concocting evil poisons. His moustache is worn Victorian style in honour of Dr Crippen, a notorious homeopathic practitioner who, at the end of the 19th century, poisoned his wife and mutilated her body beyond identification. Mr Pugh’s fantasies may well come from descriptions of Dr Crippen’s deed; after killing his wife, Crippen dissected the body and disposed of head, limbs and bones in such a way they were never found and the remains were so mutilated as to make even identification of the sex impossible (TRESTRAIL, 2007). Dr Crippen, like Mr Pugh, was also a mild mannered quiet man.

P.75. Captain Cat is again nostalgically dreaming of his sea-faring days. The “fug and babel” refers to the heavy smoky atmosphere and sailors speaking in many languages of the dockside bars. The verb “rove” means to wander with no specific objective over a wide area, though in naval terms it is the past participle form of the verb *to reeve* which means to pass a rope or rod through a hole²³, there is no doubt as to the sexual meaning of this; “twine” and “souse” also have sexual connotations, meaning respectively, ‘twist together’ and ‘plunge into a liquid’. The main object of his lustful dream is Rosy Probert, who speaks to him from the

²³ This information available on the University of Sydney website at: <http://www.psych.usyd.edu.au/vbb/woronora/maritime/Glossary.html#R> which can be found in the references.

dead “bedroom of her dust”. The phrase “In that gulf and haven, *etc.*”, in nautical terms, is an indication that Rosie Probert was visited by many sailors in her lifetime, but she chose Captain Cat as her special lover. “[N]ear to him” suggests that the old retired sea captain himself is close to death.

PP.76-77. Captain Cat’s early life is described as having been “sardined with women”, many sardines are packed tightly into a tin, so this suggests his life was full of lovers, the fish participle also alludes to his sea life, however Rosie Probert was his only true love, as with Polly Garter and Willy Wee. In the poem she asks him about his sailing experiences, he replies in alternating verses the last one of which he makes a direct reference to their sexual relationship while she was alive. “Jack ” is abbreviated from “Jack Tarr”, which is a general colloquial term for a sailor (EVANS, 1991), this makes her instruction of “knock twice Jack” an invitation for all and any sailor to visit her at any time.

PP.78-79. The theme of death here is very strong as Rosie Probert reminds Captain Cat that she no longer exists and is fading from her own memory into darkness and the complete nothingness which is death. As his dream and vision of Rosie Probert fades, Captain Cat calls out to her and begins to cry, observed by a child and her mother passing in the street; soon, the child also forgets Captain Cat when she sees Nogood Boyo in the fishing dinghy in the bay, “bluebagged” because of its shape and colour from the reflected sky and also a reference to a laundry bag, from which Nogood Boyo pulls out a corset. Nogood Boyo’s degenerate character and an indication of paedophile tendencies, is revealed with the child’s comment about him offering three pennies to do something unmentionable. Nogood Boyo pulls from the sea a whalebone corset, a restraining ladies’ undergarment made, not from bone, but from a hard keratin substance known as *baleen* from the jaws of a whale.

P.80. He fantasizes about the gypsy, Mrs Dai Bread Two, to whom he offers the corset and a bite of his “little apple”, an obvious sexual reference. As she was previously described as wearing nothing but a bangle, her “brass nightgown” refers to this object, a single item of jewellery without a clasp or joint worn on the upper arm, wrist or ankle. The imaginary Mrs Dai Bread Two refuses his sexual advances and so his mind invokes another object of desire, the geisha girl. His whining entreaty of wishing to be a “good boy” and that nobody will let him, suggests that Nogood Boyo is suffering from psychotic delusions of a sexual nature. In

his mind he is lying in a large silky bed in an exotic eastern land with a geisha girl, in reality he is masturbating at the bottom of a stinking, water-filled boat.

P.81. Mirroring the smooth blue sea of the bay, is the smooth green grass of the meadow, but here, in contrast to the depraved figure of Nogood Boyo lying in the boat, is the virginal figure of Mae Rose Cottage playing an imaginary chance game alone by blowing on a dandelion seed ball, each blow releases a number of feather-like seeds, when there are no seeds left, the last statement uttered would be the true outcome. It is not clear who the object of Mae Rose Cottage's love is and Second Voice's comment about her "never been sweet in the grass" is a reference to her virginity.

The Reverend Eli Jenkins is stained with ink and writing his "Lifework", the White Book of Llareggub, the name of which echoes two historical medieval Welsh manuscripts, *The White Book of Rhydderch* and *The Red Book of Hergest*; the former now preserved in the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, west Wales and the latter in the Library of Jesus College, Oxford. The White Book was written between the period 1300-1325 and the Red Book written around 1375-1425 (JONES, 1989), together they contain eleven folk tales of pre-Christian Celtic mythology, including the earliest Arthurian tale in Welsh, *Culhwch and Olwen*, and passed down by oral tradition. These tales were first translated into English by Lady Charlotte Guest and printed between 1838 and 1849 in a collection known as *The Mabinogion*. The reverend's *White Book of Llareggub* contains his own knowledge of the industry, history, topography, nature and biography of the town's inhabitants. Though most probably an extensive work we have only two brief glimpses into the content of the book. The reverend is surrounded by paintings and photos, the bards and preachers in their ceremonial robes – "fur and wool" – from "squint to kneecaps", *i.e.* the robes are draped from the head to the legs and as "heavy as sheep", a reference to the heavy woolen robes. The photographic image of his mother is that of a Victorian woman with a typical figure of the time, dressed in black with her waist squeezed tightly by a restricting corset, the "stays" in which she is suffering, and with a large bust with the appearance of a table top.

P.82. The Reverend makes a humorous reference to the dining table appearance of his mother's chest when he asks the angels to be careful with their knives and forks. No reason is given for there being no photograph or painting of the Reverend Eli Jenkins's father, Esau, however it may be because of his disgraceful dismissal from the church, that is, "undogcollared because of his little weakness", a *dog collar* is a stiff collar with no opening at

the front and a fastening at the back, worn by the clergy, the participle means that Esau's dog collar, and therefore his position in the church, was taken from him due to his behaviour. His "weakness", alcoholism, led to his death by accident in a field which was being harvested manually with the long hand held sharp instrument, the scythe; he died "with one leg", that is, "legless" meaning drunk, and of course refers to the horrific injury that he suffered.

Once again the scene changes from the town to the country and we see the Farmer Utah Watkins bringing the cattle back in from the fields for milking. In this brief scene it seems it is the animals on Salt Lake Farm that have a sense of peace, love and tranquillity that we would associate with the Mormon faith with which the farmer's name and the name of the farm is connected, and not Utah Watkins himself, who is impatient, angry and aggressive.

P.83. Though not resorting to physical violence, Utah Watkins incites his animals to attack each other while they show quite remarkable calm behaviour by ignoring his outbursts and bestowing affection on him. The dairy cattle are described as his "summerbreathed slaves", they have the "breath" of the summer in them, this suggests that they were born during the summer, however this would not be the previous summer as they would be only 8-9 months old and too young for breeding and milking.

The history of Bessie Bighead in the *White Book of Llareggub* is described as having been written with love and care by the Reverend Eli Jenkins, it is not clear as to whether this is the reverend's usual mode for writing all the book or if he reserves it only for special cases such as that of the abandoned orphan. Bessie Bighead, a name which describes her appearance and manner, was born in a barn – inconsistent with the earlier information which states she was born in a workhouse – perhaps at Salt Lake Farm, and abandoned as a newborn. There is no indication as to whose doorstep she was left on or who her adoptive parents were, however, as she works on the farm and seems familiar with farm work such as milking the cows, it is likely that she grew up in Utah Watkins's family. The "haggard rags" of her life describe a poor, uneventful and underprivileged upbringing, while the "glittering thread" is the one event, the time when Gomer Owen kissed her, which brightened her dark existence. The moment of the kiss for her, was the transformation from darkness to light.

P.84. The play moves into another phase as the day is coming to an end, the dusk is likened to a dust settling over the town and its inhabitants. Like the night in the pre-dawn dream sequence, the dusk moves through the streets and envelopes the entire town which is now "the capital of dusk" and a place of love. First Voice's repetition of "dusk" and "dust"

echo a priest's incantation of "dust to dust" at a funeral; the winter – the night "snow" – and the "ceremonial dust" of the funeral hint at the cycle coming to a close. To emphasize this, the first household we see in this dying day is that of Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard, who seals herself into her house and sleeps upright in a chair, as though dead in a tomb, where she summons up her two dead husbands, who have been waiting for the end of the day and her command.

PP.85-86. Each one is reluctant to be the first through the door, death and decay is indicated with "tears where their eyes once were" and as they "ooze" through the keyhole of the door. In turn, at her command, Mr Ogmores and Mr Pritchard once again begin to recite a list of tasks they must perform, however, this time Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard interrupts them with the cold order for them to remove their pyjamas; this reveals that even though she has an icy manner, she still holds secret sexual desires for her husbands. The mature older woman's fantasies are contrasted with the young and innocent Mae Rose Cottage who is exploring her sexuality in the field and seems unsure of what she is doing but has been conditioned, within the religious community, to believe that what she is doing is a sin and that she will go to hell for it.

P.87. To underline and remind us of the predominant Christianity of the community in which Mae Rose Cottage has been brought up, a scene change takes us from the naked young girl in the field to the Reverend Eli Jenkins who, in the same manner in which he greets the day with a prayer poem, so he ends the day likewise, asking for a blessing on the town in a poor doggerel verse in which he seems to acknowledge the non-too conventional behaviour of the inhabitants in his lines "we are not wholly bad or good" and "And Thou, I know, wilt be the first/To see our best side, not our worst.". Despite the Christian predominance and the Reverend's position in the church, he makes a reference to an ancient Celtic pagan sun worship – "And to the sun we all will bow" – of the town's ancestors.

Further emphasizing the religiosity and contrasting immoral standards of the town is Jack Black's fervent behaviour of persecuting what he perceives as "sinners". "Grinds his night teeth" indicates he is using dentures especially for the occasion of going out at night in order to look respectable, his "religious trousers" have the front aperture – the flies – sewn up with a particularly strong thread normally used for repairing shoes, so that he may not fall into any temptation of exposing or touching his genitals. He "pads" out, suggesting that his boots are muffled against any noise so that he can surprise courting couples, "torched and bibles" another two of Thomas's neological participles suggesting that Jack Black is armed like a

soldier ready to do battle, but his weapons are a torch and a bible. He is at the same time “grim” and “joyful”, conflicting emotions that show he relishes the task ahead of him, though, again like a soldier going to war, realizes the seriousness of the situation. He likens Llareggub to the biblical city of Gomorrah, recorded in the *Book of Genesis* as having been destroyed by God for being a centre of vice, corruption and sexual exorbitance.

P.88. As if to illustrate the “Gomorrah” that Jack Black is heading for, we then observe Lily Smalls “up to Nogood Boyo”, a pun on the expression “up to no good”, meaning engaging in mischievous behaviour; linked with character’s name, this leaves us in no doubt as to what they are doing. Further immoral conduct of the inhabitants is exemplified with Cherry Owen going to the pub to get drunk. The expression “Sober as Sunday”, originates from the pub licensing laws of certain counties in Wales that prohibited the pubs from opening on Sundays (DAVIES, 1994), this is ironically contrasted with “drunk as a deacon”, a mild taunt of drinking habits of church officials. Mrs Cherry Owen’s marriage to “two husbands” parallels that of Dai Bread with his two wives and the twice widowed Mrs Ogmores-Pritchard.

P.89. Night falls, “dusk is drowned”, a reference to the consumption of alcohol in the pub, and the image is of the lit windows of the town on the hill. The lights are reflected in the waves of the sea, “larrup” means to beat or hit, it suggests here that the waves are beaten by the harbour walls or the rocks and beach, it is also onomatopoeic and similar to the word “lap”, the action of the waves as they arrive at the beach or beat against the boats tied in the harbour. “Rockabye baby” is a traditional nursery rhyme sung to lull a baby to sleep, here the “baby” has been replaced with “grandpa”, again an echo of the last age of the Seven Ages of Man, and “cradle” in the last line has been replaced with “whiskers”.

P.90. The old men who do not sleep for fear of dying during the night are put into a corner in the kitchens. Young girls are preparing to go out – putting on make-up and styling their hair – possibly to the Welfare Hall dance for which Polly Garter was cleaning the floor. The “Dance of the World” means the universal courtship rituals of meeting the young men in the street at the “lamplit leaning corners” where the men wait, leaning on lampposts, to “wolve” and whistle; to “wolf whistle” is to oafishly whistle in a show of appreciation at the girls; punning “wolf” to “wolve” used as a verb, has predatory connotations. However, the whole scenario of going out in the night to meet men at lamp lit corners also suggests the

activities of prostitutes, the “unmarried girls” putting on their make-up and “Dance of the World” then have different implications.

The drinking at the Sailors Arms is in full swing, with most of the clients already drunk. As they are probably for the most part single men, or men in doomed relationships, they wish the failure of the “Dance of the World”, that is the failure of the courtship rituals and the relationships which would follow. The Cherry Owens’s comment of dancing not being natural is followed by First Voice’s ironic observation that he has just drunk 17 pints that is nearly 10 litres, of beer, which is certainly not a natural thing to do. The farmer’s lantern light remind us that life continues beyond the town and out in the country.

P.91. After his evening poem, the Reverend Eli Jenkins has returned to his poem-room and continues his work in the *White Book of Llageggub*. It seems that the book is a mixture of the reverend’s dreamy poetical style and historical and biographical facts, however it is not clear where and how he gets the historical facts, if indeed they are true, though the narrative mentions that he writes “only the truth in his Lifework” (UMW, p.81). Here the reverend is stating that Llareggub Hill is a burial mound – *tumulus* – raised by the Neolithic or Bronze Age peoples who had inhabited the region thousands of years before the arrival of the Celts. The burial mound, or barrow, would have been constructed anytime between 5000 and 800 B.C.E. (SCHAMA, 2000); one such existing example is the Rillaton Barrow in Cornwall dating from approximately 2300 B.C.E. and found to contain human remains and artifacts such as a bronze dagger, pottery and glass. When the Celtic peoples began to arrive, around 800 B.C.E. these earlier settlers integrated into the Celtic society – there is no evidence of violent invasion or dominance by the Celts – and the burial mounds and henges continued as sacrosanct places. About the civilization of Britain at the time the Romans arrived, Simon Schama observes,

So this was (...) an indigenous British culture, which had evolved in contact with, rather than having been conquered or settled by, continental Europe. Iron Age Britain (...) had grown up on sites that had been occupied for thousands of years. Although the stone henges and burial barrows that marked its landscape had been built at least a millennium before, it seems likely that ritual practices still took place on these ancient sites. (Schama, 2000, p.25)

It seems then that Reverend had an extensive knowledge of historical Britain. The “Land of Summer” that he refers to is Somerset, the name derived from the Saxon for “Summer Land”, (ASH, 1973) in south west region of England and located south east of

Wales, also populated by Neolithic and Bronze Age and later, Celtic peoples. The Celts migrated, or fled from invading Saxons, north west from Somerset to occupy the region of south Wales. The Saxons of the Kingdom of Wessex (West Saxons) pushed further west and reached the Severn Sea by the year 650 C.E. (DAVIES, 1994), thus displacing the Celtic Britons. The “old wizards made themselves a wife out of flowers” is a reference to an episode from the tale *Math Son of Mathonwy* in the *Mabinogion* in which the youth Lleu is cursed by his mother in an act of vengeance, “that he shall never have a wife of the race that is now on this earth” (JONES, p.68, 1989). The magician Gwydion and king Math thwart the curse by creating a wife for Lleu, “then they took the flowers of the oak and the flowers of the broom and the flowers of the meadowsweet and from those they called forth the very fairest and best endowed maiden that mortal ever saw” (JONES, p.68, 1989). Incidentally, Lleu’s brother in the tale is Dylan, after whom Dylan Thomas was named. Thomas was brought up in a household in which Welsh mythology was not unknown and he himself became familiar with it in his lifetime, albeit in the English language.

Mr Waldo begins a bawdy song in the Sailors Arms. Pembroke is a small town in south west Wales and, despite Mr Waldo’s singing of “Pembroke City, it has not gained official city status. The town is notable for its 13th Century castle and keep – the central fortified tower of the castle, where Mr Waldo claims to have lived near – which is the birthplace of Henry VII of England (DAVIES, 1994). The song tells of the hardships of a “chimney sweep”, a boy employed to climb into the chimney shaft in order to clean out the accumulated soot, a dangerous task, often resulting in the boy becoming stuck in the chimney shaft and dying of asphyxiation, or if the boy survived this, he would probably contract a respiratory related disease, or cancer from the carcinogenic substances. The boys were given very poor fare as the song suggests, though it is unlikely that they could survive on a diet of only gin and watercress (CULLINGFORD, 2003). Here “chimney” has been colloquially termed as “chimbley” and the song takes on obvious sexual connotations with the young woman inviting the boy to sweep her “chimbley”.

P.92. Captain Cat retires to bed – described as a bunk as on a ship – and, as at the beginning of the cycle, we see his drowned shipmates in a repeated dream as they present themselves to him one by one. The drowned’s “still” utterance is a double meaning of “remaining so” and “not moving” or in other words, dead. Rosie Probert has come around full cycle from her previous statement of forgetting being born she now has forgotten dying and has come back to life again for Captain Cat’s dream.

P.93. Making a link between the dead and the living, First Voice announces that the dead come out in their “Sunday best”, that is, their best clothes, normally a suit worn on Sundays for the church service and to be seen by the other families of the town. The next scene is of Organ Morgan on his way to the chapel going through the graveyard. In a delirium of hero worship, he mistakes the drunken Cherry Owen for Johann Sebastian Bach in the graveyard. There is a small humorous play on words between the Welsh language and the composers name: “bach” is Welsh for “small”, and is used also as a diminutive or as a term of endearment following a name, such as “Johnny Bach”, meaning “Little Johnny” or “Dear Johnny”, a name made popular in a traditional Welsh folksong, “Sospan fach”, “little saucepan”, which all Welsh children know by heart, whether native speakers of the language or not. According to the lexical item before, the initial consonant suffers a mutation and in this case the word becomes “fach”, thus “Bach fach” is “little Bach” or “Dear Bach”, and “Johann Sebastian mighty Bach”, is affectionately “Dear Johnny Bach” (DAVIES, 2006).

P.94. Mr Mog Edwards and Miss Myfanwy price continue their relationship in which they never meet or go further than exchanging letters; a confirmation of the state of their relationship is Miss Price’s room where “Mr Mog Edwards will never enter”. His request of “Come to my arms, Myfanwy” is followed by him hugging his own money. The money which he has earned through the sales of the day is, in reality, his “Money-Myfanwy” substitute; the love that he has for the sweet shop owner is transferred to the money which he gains. By contrast, physical “love” is represented with the two of the more physical of characters, Mr Waldo and Polly Garter as they once again indulge in their form of “nesting” in the woods. Polly Garter’s long dead love, Willy Wee, paralleling that of Captain Cat, Rosie Probert, always remembered as her only true love. The final words of the action of the play before First Voice’s closing comments are Polly Garter’s repetition, an emphasis on the theme we have seen throughout the play, “dead, dead, dead”.

P.95. The final closing narrative from First Voice is an enigmatic reference to several of the characters, and, principally about life, death and nature, the main themes of the play. “[B]lack glad sight” and “hunters of lovers” is a reference to the puritan cobbler Jack Black who stalks the woods and streets at night looking for illicit lovers, “every tree-foot’s cloven in the black glad sight” indicates that he knows the woods very well, especially as, it is at the base of the trees where he finds the coupling lovers. However, the plural “hunters” indicates

other night stalkers, perhaps rabbit hunters, if we refer back to the opening sequence, the wood is described as “courters’ and rabbits’ wood”; Jack Black hunts the courters to chase them out and prevent them committing sin and the hunters hunt the other “lovers” in the woods – the rabbits. Mary Ann Sailors and Eli Jenkins believe the wood and town to be Garden of Eden. The “fairday farmhands” are the young men who work on the farms and use the woods for sexual trysts with the town girls, “wantoning” means lustful and licentious, the “ignorant chapel of bridesbeds” suggests that the young girls are naïve to the farmhands’ intentions, believing them to be honourable with intent to marry. Eli Jenkins believes that man will remain the same, living, multiplying and dying and that the wood is a testimony to this. As the town sleeps, the wood is coming alive with the activities of the lovers, the wildlife and nature. The town fades and the woods come to life as though the woods are the reality and the town of Llareggub has been merely an illusion and we can almost imagine Puck appearing out of the mists and begin his closing monologue from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, “If we shadows have offended [...]” which reminds us of the true meaning of the name Llareggub.

CONCLUSION

From an original project of writing an *Under Milk Wood* guide, this work expanded to a retrieval of significant elements appertaining to Anglo-Welsh history, culture and writers. This brief glance into the history of Britain and the formation of the nation of Wales, I believe, is valuable as a way of absorbing information that helps us to a better understanding of Dylan Thomas's work. The principal aim of this thesis has been to guide a Brazilian literature student through the intricacies of Thomas's language used in *Under Milk Wood* as well as to elucidate the Welsh cultural, historical, geographical and social elements present. However, as the work unfolded and as I began to study and write more on the background to *Under Milk Wood* and now contemplating the finished product, I can see that, as well as being guiding notes on the play itself, my thesis – at least I very much hope – can introduce the subject of English language literature from Wales. I would like to say that with this work I have laid a foundation for Welsh Studies here, however, that may be a little too presumptuous.

As we have seen, the historical background of *Under Milk Wood* goes well beyond Thomas's first dabbling in the town of Llareggub when he amused his friends with stories of a town with that name and the later embryonic *Quite Early One Morning* and *The Town Was Mad* stories. As just one small sample from a vast area of literature that I unearthed in my research, Thomas's work is a product of centuries of the moulding of a hybrid culture formed from a rich tradition of Celtic story telling that reaches back hundreds of years, and a domineering colonizing society which began with the intrusive Anglo-Normans in the 11th century and culminated in the influx of thousands of immigrant workers into the heavily industrialized South Wales valleys of 19th century. What has emerged from this are writers who have a unique Welsh identity without having the Welsh language to express that identity with, because that is not part of *their* Welsh culture. All the Welshness they have is expressed in their form of the English language without compromising any of those elements or aspects

of Wales in which they are inserted. By beginning at the beginning – to paraphrase Thomas’s opening words of *Under Milk Wood* – and working through the centuries, firstly with the historical events then on to English literature produced in Wales and finally to Dylan Thomas and *Under Milk Wood*, I hope I have been able to at least tell a little of the story of the Anglo-Welsh writers and also reach my principal aim of making *Under Milk Wood* more comprehensible for Brazilian English Literature students.

Had Thomas lived we would have seen an extended afternoon-evening in the town of Llareggub, with a drunken night of bawdy songs in the Sailors Arms and perhaps a look once again into the dreams of those other characters of whose dreams we observed at the beginning and not only of Captain Cat, Mog Edwards and Myfanwy Price. However, as it is, the play seems to be just about the right length, further drunken ballads may render it as tedious as a real life drunk in a pub; the dreams would be repetitions of those we have already seen, the cycle has ended and it is not necessary to begin again.

What else then does Dylan Thomas have to offer? Anyone searching for another radio play from Thomas, with the same merit as *Under Milk Wood* will be disappointed as this was the only work of this type that he produced, apart from the shorter feature broadcasts, many of which can be found in the collection published as *Quite Early One Morning* which I have included in the references. Before his death Thomas was experimenting more and more with radio feature broadcasts and talking about ideas for further plays for voices and other projects. On his third visit to the United States he met with the composer Igor Stravinsky and they discussed a project of an opera about post-nuclear war survivors (LYCETT, 2005), a reflection on the feelings of the world during the early years of the cold war. Unfortunately Thomas’s untimely passing cut short a production which would certainly have seen more radio plays and many more poems and short stories.

Nevertheless, what remains is an extensive amount of work which includes numerous volumes of poetry, the poems of which, I must confess, I do not know as much as I would like to, except that they are intense, powerful and enigmatic, many of them dealing with the subject of nature and death and life cycles as does *Under Milk Wood*. Of his prose, most of Thomas’s short stories were published in the volumes: *The Map of Love* (1939), which is in fact a collection of poetry and prose; *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (1940); *Adventures in the Skin Trade* (1955) and *A Prospect of the Sea and Other Stories* (1955). Thomas’s earlier stories, such that can be found in *The Map of Love* and *Adventures in the Skin Trade* are dark gothic fantasies with themes of sex, death and the darker side of human nature, in total contrast to his later humorous semi-autobiographical works. An example of this is “The

True Story” from *Adventures in the Skin Trade*, which tells the story of a young woman who murders her charge, a bed-ridden elderly woman, by battering her head against the wall, the young woman then steps out of an upstairs window in the belief that she would fly. Or “The Followers”, from the same collection, a surprising ghost story, in which two young men are silently spying on two women who are looking through an old photograph album in their home, the young men are suddenly shocked by a disembodied voice beside them which answers a question one of the women asks. Many of these stories were initially rejected by Thomas’s publisher Dent for being “too obscene” and the ones considered less so were chosen for *The Map of Love* (KNIGHT, 2004).

The stories such as which are found in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, on the other hand, are delightful growing-up stories, told in the first person, of a young boy, and later adolescent, in the city of Swansea and the surrounding countryside and beaches of the Gower Peninsular, sometime before the Second World War, very much like Dylan Thomas himself. “The Peaches” is one example we have already seen; in “The Fight” the narrator, a teenage boy called D. Thomas fights with another boy, Dan Jenkyn, but they soon become close friends. At Jenkyn’s home they discuss music, poetry, girls and football, Jenkyn plays piano and they begin an arts journal with Jenkyn as musical editor and Thomas as poetry editor. It is not difficult to see that Jenkyn is Dylan Thomas’s childhood friend, the composer Dan Jones, who became entrusted with the compilation of *Under Milk Wood* for publication from the manuscripts, Jones’s father’s first name was in fact Jenkyn.

Of course Anglo-Welsh writing does not stop at Dylan Thomas; this research has led me to uncover, as I have already mentioned, a vast area of literature that I had never previously given much thought too, only glancing through the last few chapters of Stephen Knight’s *Writing Wales in English: A Hundred Years of Fiction* reveals many names of contemporary Welsh authors writing in the English language, of whom from now on I shall get better acquainted with. One title mentioned in Knight’s book made me remember a student of mine many years ago who had been reading a Portuguese translation of it, *People of the Black Mountains*, by Raymond Williams. This, at least, is one example of Welsh literature written in the English language that has been translated for the Brazilian market; this area then is not entirely unknown here.

Two very famous names come to mind, although it is debatable as to whether or not they can be included in the lists of Anglo-Welsh writers, according to the criteria I have discussed in section 1. Those names are Ken Follet and Roald Dahl. If “Welsh writer writing in English” is the only basic requirement then Follet certainly falls into this category. He was

born and brought up in Cardiff and is a best-selling novelist. However, none of his works concern mainly Wales or Welsh matters, but are rather, action thrillers which cover a large geographical and temporal area. Two of his best works – a strictly personal opinion – *Pillars of the Earth* and *World Without End*, are historic novels which relate events around a cathedral in the fictional town of Kingsbridge in mid-east England in the 12th to 13th centuries. If there is any connection to Welshness it is that one of the principal characters in *Pillars of the Earth* is a Welsh prior named Phillip who relates of his childhood and the English border raid that killed his parents.

Roald Dahl, the well-known children's author and short story writer, was also born in Cardiff, though Dahl's parents were from Norway having moved to Wales at the end of the 19th century. Dahl attended school in England and spent most of his summer holidays at his grandparents' home in Norway. Dahl's children's stories, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Matilda*, amongst many others, are well known around the world, as are his short stories, many of which have an unexpected or gothic twist; however neither the children's stories or Dahl's short stories specifically deal with Welsh matters or locations.

Finally, as I have been summing up my work in this conclusion, I received an e-mail divulging the *Seventh Symposium of Irish Studies in Latin America* which will be held at the end of August of this year, 2012. The symposium is promoted by the Brazilian Association of Irish Studies and has many distinguished speakers from several countries including professors from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Further investigation of the list of acronyms printed on the promotional e-mail reveal an *Asociación Española de Estudios Irlandeses*, a Society for Irish Latin American Studies and a European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (which suggests many more associations throughout Europe). It is a testimony to Ireland's rich heritage to have so many associations dedicated solely to the study of its land, people, history and cultural production and I cannot help wondering, why not Wales too? Why is there no *Associação Brasileira de Estudos Galeses*? The answer lies in what I have touched on throughout this paper, and can be summed up in the question I am frequently asked, "Wales? Is that in England?". Sadly, since the first Anglo-Norman settlements in South Wales and especially since the 1536 Act of Union, and other factors that I have discussed here; politically, Wales has been considered part of England and the consequences of this have been that Wales's identity as a nation has merged with that of England and the latter, as the dominating culture, has remained as "Top of Mind", so to speak, in the minds millions around the world.

From the extensive bibliography that I have researched during this paper, there is no doubt that Anglo-Welsh writing is now recognised as a field in literature, separate from English literature from England, however my feeling is that this is not so in Brazil and, I suspect, many other countries. Considering not only its literary production, but also the unique Celtic culture that distinguishes Wales from England, a culture of people who are able to tell their stories, their very Welsh stories, in both the Welsh language as well as the English language, and considering the rich turbulent history that has produced this culture, I believe that Wales offers as much as Ireland in quality and quantity and I sincerely hope that in the future we may see an *Associação Brasileira de Estudos Galeses* and that Wales gets the recognition that it deserves.

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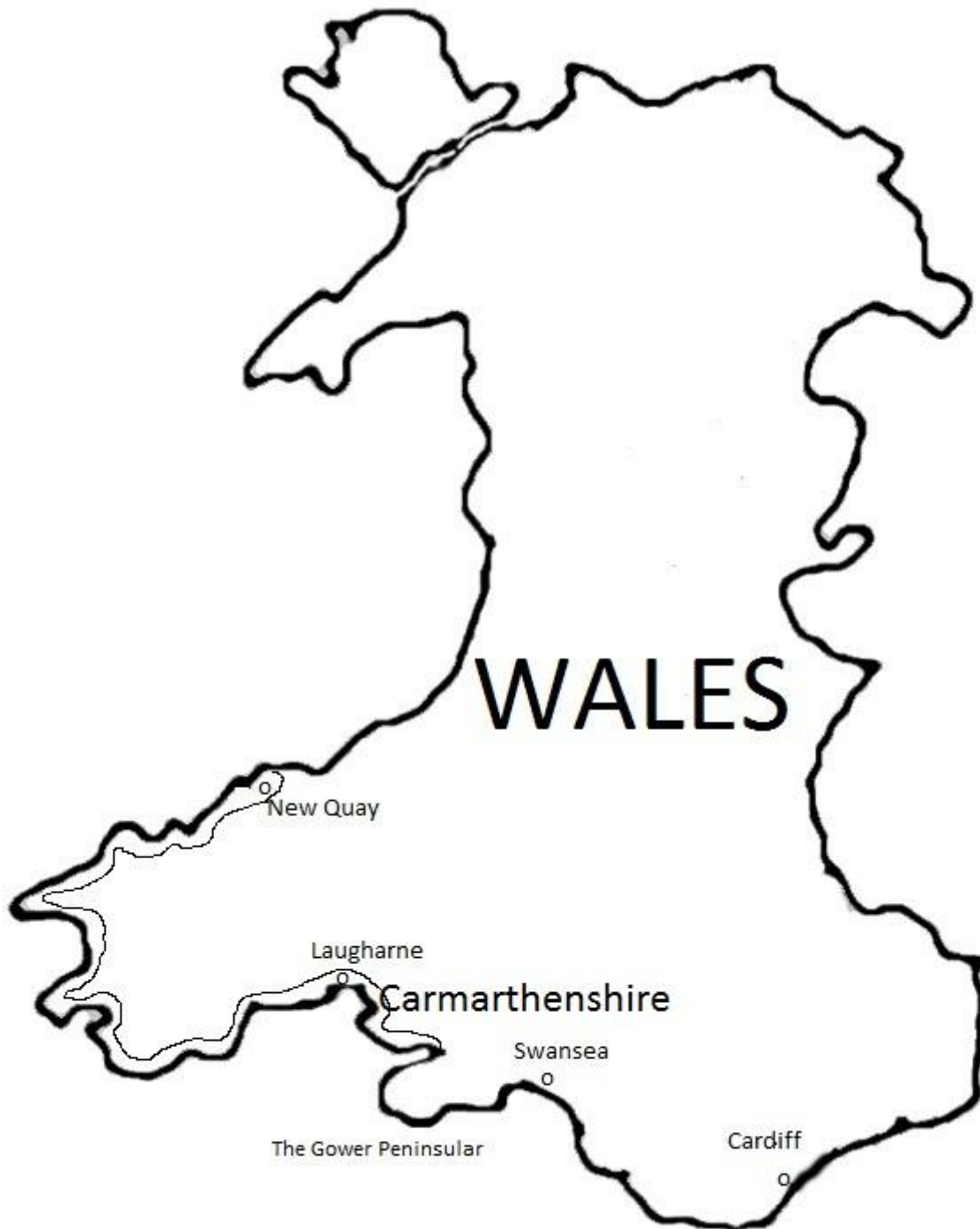
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Map of the British Isles



Map of the British Isles showing the nations that make up the United Kingdom: Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland with their corresponding capital cities; the current Wales/England border and the approximate route of Offa's Dyke.

Appendix B: Map of Wales.

Map of Wales showing the capital city Cardiff; Dylan Thomas's birth place, Swansea and the towns of Laugharne and New Quay and the region of Carmarthenshire. The shaded area shows possible locations for the city of Llareggub.