Visions of the Future, Farming and Land Use in Welsh Science Fiction

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Abstract: Farming is the quintessential human activity that has dramatically re-shaped landscapes across millennia. Highly politicised, farming landscapes have in different contexts been appealed to as support for Nationalist thought, instituted as policies for expansion and the displacement of other peoples and non-human agents, and constructed as sites for the consolidation of oppositional and radical politics. In the context of climate change, contemporary farming practices have been challenged by a range of alternative modes of land use such as rewilding, challenges to the meat industry and to industrial farming practices. The recognition of the need for change as a response to the effects of climate change and the national conversation about land use and farming in Wales discloses a contested space where visions of the future are hotly debated. This article examines works of Welsh science fiction that have attempted to narrate aspects of rural change from the vantage of futurity. Analysing Islwyn Ffowc Elis' *A Week in Future Wales: A Journey to the Year 2033* (2021; original Welsh version 1957), Lloyd Jones' *Water* (2014; original Welsh version 2009), and Cynan Jones' *Stillicide* (2019), it asks how rural change is conceived in the Welsh context and how these works relate to other narratives of climate change beyond the Welsh context. Focussing on how the resources of the mode are used to investigate the significance of farming landscapes, it will analyse how transformations that respond to key ecologic and socio-political issues are imagined.
Keywords: Rural change, farming, Wales, water, Cymru

Farming has dramatically re-shaped landscapes across millennia.[1] Highly politicised, agrarian landscapes have been appealed to as support for nationalist thought, instituted as policies for expansion and the displacement of peoples and non-human agents and constructed as sites for the consolidation of oppositional and radical politics. Historically positioned at the margins of Empire, the Anglosphere and Europe, the question of a distinctively Welsh identity has been central to discursive

[1] This paper is an outcome of research for the project Narrating Rural Change, which received funding from the Learned Society of Wales and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). The project website can be found at: https://ruralchange.swansea.ac.uk/

constructions of the Welsh nation and its future. Landscape occupies a key place in these debates about identity, nationhood and belonging, yet the changing patterns of land use and the role of farming in Wales take on new dimensions in the context of climate change. With 90% of Welsh land dedicated to farming (Neil, 2021), the constitution of farms in the light of their acknowledged contribution to climate change and the urgency of establishing food infrastructures to address food insecurity are both critical matters which position farming as central to climate mitigation and adaptation. The need for change as a response to the effects of climate change and the national conversation about land use and farming in Wales discloses a contested space where visions of the future are hotly debated. The importance of thinking through landscape, identity and climate change makes rural change crucial to the contemporary imagination of the future of Wales.

This article examines works of Welsh science fiction (sf) that narrate aspects of rural change from the vantage of futurity. Analysing Islwyn Ffowc Elis' *A Week in Future Wales: A Journey to the Year 2033* (2021; *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd*, 1957), Lloyd Jones' *Water* (2014; *Y Dŵr*, 2009), and Cynan Jones' *Stillicide* (radio-play and print, 2019), it asks how rural change is conceived in the Welsh context. Focussing on how sf is used to investigate the significance of rural landscapes, it will analyse how transformations that respond to key ecologic and socio-political issues are imagined. These stories project and re-voice history whilst re-mapping identity to speculate on what Welshness might mean in the future. Key historical events function as touchstones of Welsh identity: the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley and the displacement of the Welsh-speaking community of Capel Celyn to provide water for Liverpool in 1965—"a tinnitus in the ear of Welsh history" as Lloyd Jones puts it in *Water* (2014: 282)—textures not only the climate-wracked future of that novel, but also the portrayal of novel water infrastructures in Cynan Jones' *Stillicide*. Whilst *A Week in Future Wales* was published before the Tryweryn Valley flooding, a footnote to the English translation reveals that plans for the dam were in place by the time Elis wrote the utopia (2021: 220). The incident therefore appears as one of numerous parallel developments to Elis' portrayal of a dystopian Wales.

The flooding of the Tryweryn Valley to create the Llyn Celyn reservoir has become an indelible symbol for Welsh nationalism. This event is one of numerous instances of the appropriation of land for English interests; in the 1880s Llanwddyn in North Wales was flooded to create the Llyn Efyrnwy reservoir, which supplied water to Liverpool and Merseyside, while in 1906 the Elan Valley reservoirs were completed to provide water to Birmingham (Griffiths, 2014: 451). The resistance to the Tryweryn Valley's flooding was informed by historical appropriations of Welsh land that went beyond the construction of water infrastructures. The Ministry of Defence's establishment of military facilities in Wales during the 1930s-1940s (Bohata, 2004: 82; Griffiths, 2014: 451; Atkins, 2018: 459) and England's Forestry Commission's acquiring of land for afforestation from the 1920s (Bohata, 2004: 81-85) provided a wider context for understanding the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley as an event of national significance.

The resistance in Wales to the displacement of the forty-eight Welsh-speaking residents of Capel Celyn "was a manifestation, and microcosm, of a much wider concern about Anglo-Welsh relations" (Cunningham, 2007: 633). A memorial painted in 1965 along the A487 that bears the words 'Cofiwch Tryweryn'

(Remember Tryweryn) has "arguably become the most important landscape of memory for this episode in Welsh history" (Griffiths, 2014: 456). The flooding of Tryweryn symbolises the complex and uneven power relationships between England and Wales and for the "drowning of a nation" (Griffiths, 2014: 452). The symbology of Tryweryn has been developed and promulgated in literature and other cultural productions to generate a 'prosthetic memory' of the event, in which "people are invited to take on memories of a past through which they did not live" (Landsberg, 2004: 8).

Islwyn Ffowc Elis' *A Week in Future Wales*

A Week in Future Wales is a utopia first published by Plaid Cymru [Party of Wales], which was formed in 1925 to campaign for recognition of the Welsh language as the official language of Wales, and later for Welsh independence. Elis adapts the dream frame narrative seen in utopias such as W. H. Hudson's *A Crystal Age* (1887), Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888) and William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890) such that experimental research into the fourth dimension shows that time-travel is possible for individuals who possess a specific genetic predisposition (Elis, 2021: 18-19). Protagonist Ifan Powell is transported first to an independent utopian Wales and then to a dystopian Wales that has become a totalitarian colony of England. This enables Elis to present two competing visions of Wales' future in order to agitate for political action in the present.

Elis' utopia is open and contingent: his two competing visions of Welsh futurity are unstable and do not exhaust alternative possibilities. Their realisation is dependent wholly on action in the present, as the doctor who sends Powell into the future explains. Philip E. Wegner argues that sf's utopianism "is [...] located in those moments where the closure of the conventional realist work is displaced by an openness to the unfinished potential of historical becoming" (2014: 577), while Matthew Beaumont argues that "[u]topian fiction dreams that the diffusion of its ideas in the present will create the conditions necessary for instituting its ideal society in the future" (2005: 194). *A Week in Future Wales* is no exception; Powell arrives to free Wales as a sceptic of independence and becomes committed to Welsh independence after direct experience with the possibilities for the nation. This experience takes the form of the utopian tour,[2] which brings Powell into contact with Wales' future landscape and the ways of life which have shaped that landscape as an expression of a pluriform Welsh identity. Elis interrogates stereotypes of Welsh identity as nostalgic and archaic and negotiates between conceptions of an anachronistic parochialism and a version of modernity that challenges capitalism and English supremacy. *A Week in Future Wales*' depictions of vehicular travel offer views of the landscape that are informed by travel writing during the interwar period and beyond, which enables an experience of a constructed rurality that embodies national identity: "[C]ountryside recreation and tourism in the interwar years were shot through with notions of citizenship and 'anti-citizenship.' There were 'correct' ways of appreciating the countryside and the place of the motor car in this landscape was complex" (Gruffudd *et al*., 2000: 594).

David Matless explains of the 'motoring pastoral' that "the petrol engine allowed

[2] The utopian tour is a staple device of classic utopias, such as Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* (1666) and Émile Souvestre's *Le Monde tel qu'il sera* (1846).

a nostalgic passage to an old country, its landscape and rustic inhabitants fitting through photography and prose into pictorial, pastoral conventions" (2016: 97). Elis' depictions of travel draw from the motoring pastoral but combine this form with utopia and sf to undermine nostalgic portrayals of a static rural landscape. Gruffudd writes that, "[t]o leave the currents of industrial capitalism was to leave English influence," and that counterpoising images of the self-sufficient peasant farmer with the capitalist was part of this rejection (1994: 72). Elis' utopian future is socially experimental, technologically adept, ambitious, plural and welcoming. Co-operative farms and other businesses are organised to constrain capital accumulation so that no individual or corporation can wield undue influence. Science and technology places Wales in a position of confidence vis-à-vis a world struggling with the legacies of capitalist exploitation, which threatens to erase national and regional identities.

Pastoral and Agrarian Visions of Future Wales

A Week in Future Wales connects independence, the agrarian and pastoral vision of the Welsh landscape and a Blochian view of utopian hope as founded on hunger as the fundamental human drive (Bloch, 1996: 75). Mair, the daughter of Powell's host Llywarch and Powell's guide and love interest, reflects that "Man will never be clever enough to be completely free. He'll always want food" [Ddaw dyn byth yn ddigon clyfar i fod yn gwbwl rydd] (133; 128). Echoing Morris' *News from Nowhere*, the Welsh landscape is a distributed system of farms, industry and countryside that combines the pastoral and industrial. This vision draws on a well-established debate about homecrofting, which was preoccupied with the relationship between industry and the local:

> James Scott took up the campaign for 'Homecrofting a plan which expected to 'save industry by anchoring it to the soil' [...]. He re-envisioned the industrial valleys of Wales as a series of 'home-croft towns, in which a few thousand families make for one another everything they require... where the inhabitants produce not only food but everything climate allows.' (Linehan & Gruffudd, 2004: 53)

To safeguard against hunger and economic decline Wales prioritises agriculture. Powell's tour confronts him with a vision of "Wales [...] spread around us like a garden" [yr oedd cymru o'n cwmpas fel gardd] (133; 128). Government investment into agriculture, which "nearly left the nation broke," [fe fu bron i'r gwario hwnnw dorri'r genedl] is foundational to Wales' success and makes "Welsh agriculture today [...] the most successful in Europe" [Amaethyddiaeth Cymru heddiw yw'r fywa' llewyrchus yn Ewrop] (136; 131). An invention called "*Silk Mist*" [*Tawch Sidan*] is applied to fields to prevent soil depletion and to enhance plant growth, making this vision of an agrarian Wales dependent on technological investment (144; 138). Care is taken to ensure that farm and countryside are concordant with a pastoral vision for Wales. The invention «gwybrin» enables "[e]very building that's put up in the countryside, that is at risk of impairing the view rather than enhancing it [to be] made invisible" (155). As Mair explains, "[w]e're crazy about keeping the countryside beautiful" ['Rydy'ni'n benboeth dros gadw harddwch y wlad] (131; 127).

If this image of a pastoral Wales leaves little room for co-shaping the land in collaboration with non-human agencies, this problem

is partially acknowledged in relation to technologies of weather control:

> The weathermen can control the weather to some degree these days. But there's a school of thought that thinks it's better to let things take their course, so long as there aren't weeks of unbroken rain or a long drought. They interfere if that happens. [Mae'r gwŷr tywydd yn medru rheoli'r tywydd i raddau erbyn hyn. Ond mae ysgol sy'n credu bod y tywydd yn ei fympwyon naturiol yn well, ond bai fod wythnosau o law di-dor neu sychder hir. Maen' hwythau o blaid ymyrryd bryd hynny] (152; 146)

Utopian rural change is depicted as continuous with traditional views of a pastoral and agrarian landscape as an expression of Welsh national identity. Technology and new social and economic arrangements make such landscapes possible and reject their positioning as regressive. Yet despite the interplay between tradition and social transformation, the portrayal of gendered social roles, which assigns domestic duties to many of the women that Powell meets, and the failure to acknowledge non-human agents as co-shapers of the landscape aligns *A Week in Future Wales* with what Chris Ferns suggests is a problem endemic to libertarian utopias; the new, utopian social order that Elis depicts recapitulates gender stereotypes and anthropocentrism such that "it embodies a specifically male fantasy of establishing a familiar security" (1999: 174).

The Local and the Global

Although the Welsh landscape can meet the nation's need for sustenance, it cannot satisfy the nation's desire for imported food that had once been a familiar part of life and so the landscape is transformed technologically. Despite the localism of Wales' co-operative farms, mining, and other industries, utopian Wales is outwardly oriented. A technology that illustrates this orientation and which has implications for how the landscape and the local are constructed involves "bottling sunshine," [gostrelu pelydrau haul] which enables Welsh farmers to grow lemons, "coffee and cocoa and oranges and bananas," "all in greenhouses, of course" [coffi a choco ac orenau a bananâu [...] y cwbwl wrth gwrs dan fetel gwydrin] (32; 32). This technology is dependent on an international infrastructure for trade, as bottled sunshine is exported by tropical countries. Nonetheless the produce of distant lands is still imported; Llywarch explains that "Welsh produce isn't as good as what grows under natural conditions in the tropics and sub-tropics" ['Dyw'r cynnyrch Cymreig ddim cystal â'r cynnyrch sy'n tyfu dan amodau naturiol y trofannau a'r is-drofannau] (32; 32). Containment in greenhouses is crucial to maintaining continuity between past and future landscapes even if plantations of greenhouses—which are absent from the utopian tour—threaten to transform the rural landscape. Powell's concern upon learning of this arrangement centres on the possible abandonment of traditional Welsh produce: "[b]ut Welsh farmers haven't given up on growing wheat and raising sheep and cattle?" [Ond 'dydi ffermwyr Cymru ddim wedi rhoi'r gorau i dyfu ŷd a magu defaid a gwartheg?] (32; 32). Despite the near obsolescence of carnism in this future Llywarch explains that "we grow and raise more than ever" ['rydy'ni'n tyfu ac yn magu mwy nag erioed] (32; 33), thus asserting that the threat to national identity represented by the produce and production of utopian desire is minimised.

The symbol for Wales' confidence as an independent nation is its space programme,

which operates in collaboration with a "Worldwide Council for Moon Exploration" [Gyngor y Gymdeithas Fyd er Archwilio'r Lleuad] (169; 162). Wales' engagement with the unknown, both in nation-building and through space exploration, is proof for Powell that appropriate use of science and technology combined with humane social reform offer promising futures for nations such as Wales:

> I was in a rich country, and in an age which was achieving astonishing things and keeping its head. The old rough and tumble of the 20th Century had passed away. These Welshmen could handle progress with wisdom and achievement with humility. Yes. This was an era to stay in. [Yr oeddwn mewn gwlad gyfoethog, ac mewn oes a oedd yn cyflawni'r anhygoel ac eto'n cadw'i phen. Yr oedd hen ruthr a brwysgedd yr ugeinfed ganrif wedi mynd. Yr oedd y Cymry hyn yn medru cydio cynnydd wrth bwyll a gorchest wrth wtleidd-dra. Oedd. Yr oedd hon yn oes i aros ynddi.] (171-172; 165)

Powell's journey through time is paralleled by the journey through space of the Gwalia II expedition, thus aligning both endeavours as instances of the extension of human influence over the boundaries of time and space. The heroic risks undertaken to land on and film the Moon using technology developed by a Welsh scientist is proof of the possibilities inherent in an independent and outward-looking Wales. The "desolate landscape" [olygfa ddiffaith] of the Moon, despite the expedition leader's familiarisation of it as "something like the temperature on a sunny day in Wales in the middle of winter" [rywbeth yn debyg i dymheredd diwrnod heulog yng Nghymru yng nghanol y gaeaf] (170; 164), is dramatically alien but holds out the promise of possible Welsh colonisation in the distant future. Powell reflects upon viewing the footage that "[w]ords haven't yet been invented to describe the colour, or the desolation, or the paralysing fear that stalked me" [Nid oes eiriau eto ar gael i ddisgrifio'r lliw, na'r diffeithdra, na'r arswyd parlysol a oedd yn fy ngherdded i] (171; 164). Yet as Powell's experience of free Wales shows, the future need not be met with a paralysing fear but with enthusiasm. Powell reflects early on his tour that "[i]t's like being in a foreign country, which isn't quite foreign either. It's like I've found a Welsh colony in a land far away" ['Rydw i fel petawn i mewn gwlad ddiarth, sy heb fod yn ddiarth chwaith. Fel petawn i wedi dod o hyd i wladfa o Gymry mewn gwlad dros y môr] (61; 59). Space travel figures Powell's own expedition through time and his experience of utopian Wales.

The Dystopian Counterpart to Utopian Wales

Equally, in its successive strand, the novel instead presents readers with a dystopian vision of Wales as future 'Western England.' Here the greatest fears of pro-Independence nationalists are realised; the Welsh language becomes extinct, funding for infrastructure, culture, and the arts is curtailed, free movement is abolished and labour exploited and alienated. England has furthermore displaced many rural communities to establish tracts of forest for logging. As Kirsti Bohata writes of Elis and other Welsh writers, "far from bolstering rural communities, as the Forestry Commission would have it, these writers perceive afforestation as contributing to the death of the nation by ousting the 'rightful owners' of the land and decimating the indigenous culture" (Bohata, 2004: 94-95). Elis' depiction of an afforested Wales erases

landscapes expressive of an authentic Welsh culture that has been linked to the image of the shepherd: "The battle between afforestation and agriculture (or 'Y Bugail a'r Coedwigwr' [The Shepherd and the Forester], as Richard Phillips put it in 1963) was to be a crucial chapter in the history of the Forestry Commission" (Bohata, 2004: 88). The close association between forests and imperialism in Wales and other key examples of the displacement of communities in Welsh history are subject to a cultural amnesia in this dystopian Wales, erasing possibilities for identification and the development of a distinct Welsh identity.

Landscape is crucial to depictions of a utopian Wales which acknowledge the pluriform identities constituting the nation. Elis' utopia rejects reification of Wales as sentimental, nostalgic and subject to a pastoralism that harks back to a vision rooted in archaism. Future technologies, new forms of cultural and artistic expression, new economic arrangements and national and international endeavour such as space exploration re-position the pastoral and agrarian Wales as future-oriented and oppositional relative to England's capitalist exploitation of the land. The dystopian vision opposes the agrarian and pastoral landscape with an afforested Wales that is rooted in activity conducted by England's Forestry Commission to forcibly re-shape the land. This factor draws attention to how contemporary approaches to climate change must be attuned to local views of the land, such that projected transformations do not impose landscapes that infringe on any historically informed sense of place. *A Week in Future Wales* does not offer a blueprint so much as a field of possibilities that are directly connected to Powell's contemporary moment. The first step on the route to utopia is the marshalling of support in the present for the establishment of a truly independent Wales.

Lloyd Jones' *Water*

Set on the small lakeside farm of Dolfrwynog, *Water* portrays the last year in the lives of a Welsh family after—to the reader's best knowledge—the collapse of the world's cities. Although vague about the narrative's timeframe, a partial date implies that it begins in 2010, a year after the Welsh-language novel's publication. Only when we read of the Extreme Heatwave of 2089 do readers discover that the novel is set in 2110—a revelation prefigured in the first chapter by a line from the Welsh folk classic *Pwy Fydd Yma 'Mhen Can Mlynedd?* ["*Who'll be here in a hundred years?*"] (Jones, 2014: 9). Although the decrepit farmer Wil has a lifelong connection to the farm at the centre of the novel, his sister's family only fled the city to return to their ancestral home amidst the breakdown of social order, and are thus newcomers unfamiliar with life's necessities on a farm.

Water begins with an invocation of the farm as a performative space that connects the present to an imagined deep past: "this is where the life of the farm is staged every day; the very first act began here many centuries ago" [Hwn oedd llwyfan y fferm, ac yma dechreuodd yr act gyntaf ganrifoedd maith yn ôl] (Jones, 2014: 5; Jones, 2009: 5). Continuity between past and present can likewise be discerned in the landscape's appearance, which has long been shaped by its inhabitants. The life now present stands as a legacy for how toil connects the landscape to those who shape it: "[t]he small flowers of the field are their remembrance now" [Blodau mân y llawr ydi eu cofiant heddiw] (5; 5). *Water* establishes its analysis of climate change and its disruption to the land upon this legacy of work; an originary and ongoing shaping and maintenance. Wil's experience with the land positions him as a witness to the farm's economic decline prior to the novel's diegesis:

> [W]hen he was a little boy, he'd seen a very different vista at the lower end of the farm: verdant green fields, rolling in graceful dips and curves toward the floor of the cwm. Dolfrwynog had been fecund and prosperous, thriving on grants and nitrates. But that had been replaced by failure and poverty and sadness. [A Wil yn fachgen ifanc, pan syllai i'r de, tuag at odre'r fferm, gallai weld caeau'n rowlio i lawr tuag at waelod y cwm. Bryd hynny roedd Dolfrwynog yn fferm fawr, sylweddol. Ond daeth methiant, tlodi, a thristwch.] (43; 36)

This passage is evocative of *hiraeth*, which Bohata explains is "the sense of a longing which it is impossible to assuage," and argues that it "reflects perhaps an inevitable response to the very literal loss of place, a response to the condition of exile from these home-places to which there is no possibility of return, except in memory" (2004: 102). In direct contrast to Elis' vision of a free Wales, the withdrawal of subsidies and nitrate fertilisers causes the landscape to deteriorate. Later, the collapse of a national infrastructure dooms Dolfrwynog to an entropy that constrains the lives of the family.

Water eschews romanticised portrayals of farming. Nico, a Polish stranger (and eventual lover to Wil's niece Mari) reflects on the Nazi slogan «Arbeit macht frei» when he exclaims "Does work make us free? Not bloody true! Hard work kill you if you're poor, kill you if you don't know how to get food" (113; 95). Amidst a changing landscape, the family struggles to survive as the stark realities involved in keeping themselves fed gradually come to command all their attention. Of the long-neglected countryside the narrator laments that "their only function today is to hold within their damaged folds all the spirits of the old kingdom" [a'u hunig swydd heddiw yw corlannu ysbrydion y deyrnas] (6; 5). *Water* insists that this historical neglect of the land is symptomatic of broader societal attitudes that have led to closures that forestall adequate responses to climate change. A vicious cycle is instigated by lifestyles that deprivilege the land, thus enabling the climate crisis to develop—the effects of which further alienates humankind from that land.

The psychic and agential contraction of the world to the farm encourages Wil and his young nephew Huw to romanticise their homestead in ways that position it as a microcosm of the world. Wil, who had suppressed his desire for a life at sea in favour of inheriting the family farm, imagines that it encompasses the entire world. Huw, a young boy familiar with (but long cut off from) the internet's instant access to information whets his appetite for other modes of living, for "strange and distant lands," [lefydd anghysbell] with old issues of *National Geographic* and outdated history books (7; 6). Huw progressively identifies with an imagined pre-digital, pre-industrial and pre-national way of life, eventually taking on the role of the discursively constructed 'savage' to his sister Mari's 'civilisation.' For Huw, the farm and its inhabitants, its geese and cows for instance, provide the only touchstones for imagining the stories that he encounters in his history books. The landscape therefore shapes Huw's ability to conceive of the otherness of space (distant lands) and time (historical events); landscape and storytelling are implicated in a reciprocal imagining that helps him make sense of his life.

The world's contraction to the farm is a consequence of the fragility of the global economy and the digital systems that have alienated populations from any direct experience of the land. The ageing and sickening Wil is the last survivor who retains a semblance of the traditional farming knowledges that have enabled his family to persist, yet he has

failed to teach this knowledge to the others. The contraction of society discloses to the reader how essential the non-human is for humankind and how such lives have habitually been acknowledged as such by those who work the land. Wil reflects that "[h]e was a friend and a brother to the dogs... but he had a special relationship with the hens, as if they were all members of the same congregation" [Roedd yn frawd ac yn ffrind i'r cwn, ond roedd ganddo berthynas arbennig efo'r ieir, perthynas oedd bron â bod yn gapelaidd ei naws] (11; 10). He imagines the flock's wanderings across the farm-as-world in terms of the Welsh diaspora and of the hens' return to the henhouse as "the far-flung people of Wales returning to their homeland for the great annual festival of song" [bydden nhw'n ymgasglu gogyfer â'r gymanfa fawr] (12; 11).[3] This daily cycle intersects in Wil's imagination with an annual cycle of exile and return, and with the seasonal cycle upon which farming is dependent.

Climate change's weird weather makes Wil's farming knowledge insufficient for sustaining the family, suggesting that traditional knowledge passed on orally and through practice within isolated families cannot adapt communities to the changing contexts that climate disruptions bring. Despite Wil's lifelong experience, he frankly admits that "I don't understand this weather at all" ['Fedra i ddim deall y tywydd 'ma o gwbwl'] (42; 36) and reflects on the proverb "March kills you, April skins you"[4] which, "[l]ike so many other old sayings, he'd never thought about its meaning, not properly anyway" [roedd o wedi adrodd y ddihareb droeon heb feddwl yn iawn am ei hystyr] (100; 85). As March turns "unnaturally hot" [yn gynnes tu hwnt] (101; 86), Wil's reflection on the aphorism prefigures the storm and heatwave that ruins the family's harvest. During the heatwave Mari and Elin see the farm as a foreign landscape:

> The pastures had been badly affected by the heatwave and they were turning a sandy yellow; the traditional greens of Wales had been blowtorched, and the family could be living in the scrublands of Mexico or Africa. [Roedd y borfa wedi crino, ac roedd y caeau'n edrych fel rhywle ym Mecsico; roedd hen lesni Cymru wedi'i losgi i ffwrdd fel côt o baent yn cael ei ddileu gan chwythlamp.] (207; 170)

The effects of climate change starkly bring home Wil's and Huw's romantic daydreams of distant lands. The proximity of these landscape analogues, now no longer distant through this transformation, and thus no longer a source of daydreaming and utopian speculation, provokes a sense of *hiraeth* for the family. This transformation highlights how central landscape is to constructing a sense of identity and belonging.

Water presents us with individuals who tell stories about themselves and others as a crucial survival strategy. Their stories represent different ways of coping and living with change. Wil's sister Elin lives in her memories of her pre-apocalypse life and so fails to adapt to her new context. Elin's partner Jack is unable to transition from IT specialist to subsistence farmer and goes mad. The screen-world and the stories that are associated with the pre-

[3] Jones' English translation of the novel makes the reference to the National Eisteddfod more direct, whereas the Welsh original instead merely refers to a "great assembly".

[4] 'Mawrth a ladd, Ebrill a fling' (March slays, April flays) is the Welsh-language expression from which this translation is made (Jones, 2009: 85).

apocalypse are contingent and insufficient for the realities of a changing climate and the transformations to the landscape that it brings. The power of storytelling is forcefully conveyed through Mari, who takes on Scheherazade's role. Mari invents new stories about the past and her family to keep Nico on the farm and—at Nico's insistence—to captivate and thus win the favour of a group of power-brokers from a nearby slum. For Mari these stories are a way to invest traumatic events with utopian significance. Yet they are also ways to affirm imagined bonds and to captivate and persuade. Stories, then, tempt their listeners in various ways and have a mysterious power to reveal, conceal and inspire.

Lloyd Jones describes how *Water* speaks to and is informed by traditions in Welsh writing—*The Mabinogion*, for instance, and its tales of sailing and the sea. It is also a transplantation of elements of Wang Anyi's 1985 novella *Baotown* for the Welsh context (Jones, 12 September 2009). *Baotown* concerns a provincial Chinese town located near an ill-conceived dam subject to flooding. One of Mari's stories mirrors the tragic flood depicted in *Baotown* which drowns a village elder and a young boy, who is later positioned as the best that the new age has to offer. Nicknamed Dregs, his attempt to save Grandfather Bao during the flood is memorialised by a village writer and leads Dregs to being nominated as a Youth Hero by the Communist Youth League—a degree of attention that stands in stark contrast to the attention he received as a starving child when alive. Lloyd Jones uses *Baotown*'s story of flooding as a frame for his portrayal of the flooding of Dolfrwynog's lake in the post-apocalyptic Welsh future depicted in *Water*. The story of the flooding of Dolfrwynog's lake works at one level as a powerful tale about how climate change submerges connections between generations, overcoming both the best of the old and new; tradition and innovation, community and concord have no place in the future portrayed in *Water*.

A specifically Welsh focus on rural change need not exclude connections to other locales. Mari's and Nico's sharing of the customs and traditions of their respective Welsh and Polish cultures affirm possibilities for meaningful exchange and understanding. By privileging story and the resonances between different places, *Water* reaffirms the importance of the stories emerging from Wales for a wider international context. *Water* underscores how climate change speaks to all communities and how one community's experience functions synecdochally for communities across the globe. This microcosmos is not meant to be taken too far, however, as the novel's record of the dangers of storytelling indicates, but it is meant to show how a changing landscape necessarily involves processes of storying to respond to those transformations.

Cynan Jones' *Stillicide*

Cynan Jones likewise envisions water as central to the climate-wracked future of *Stillicide*. Having been initially shaped by the formal constraints of the radio production, the short stories of this collection recall its title; each is a drop that pools to converge on a fuller picture of the future of Wales and England. The stories making up *Stillicide* offer a window onto the lives of interconnected characters, and echo Paolo Bacigalupi's portrayal of drought in the Southwestern United States in works such as "The Tamarisk Hunter" (2006) and *The Water Knife* (2015), though Cynan Jones' style is far more elliptical and perspectival. *Stillicide* reflects on the utopian form of storytelling as a dangerous concept; Cynan Jones is more interested in how people adapt to life in a

changed context. Throughout the text's future landscape, individuals and groups cope as best they can, some with a lively inventiveness and others through hardship and struggle. These stories point toward the duties individuals bear to one another, duties of care within families, toward strangers, and to the wider world and its inhabitants. The central story sequence is a love story concerning John Branner, a soldier turned police officer who guards a water trainline to London. The militarisation of the rural—echoing England's Ministry of Defence's acquirement of Welsh land for army bases (Bohata, 2004: 82)—transforms the landscape and the lives of the rural communities of Wales. Branner struggles to perform the duty to kill that he insists on maintaining despite his wife's terminal illness. Branner's personal tragedy coheres with the loss of place, the sense of *hiraeth*, experienced by other characters in the accompanying tales, many of which explore the loss associated with the demand for new ways of living. These tales examine the reconfiguring of relationships to write the future of place in the Welsh context.

Hydropolitics in 'The Water Train'

'The Water Train' connects a series of motifs: dreams, the kinetic trajectory of a bullet, rain and the dripping of water, the interiority of an individual's mind and the exterior perception of that individual's emotional and psychological state, explosive forces, birds and verticality, to name a few. Branner lives in an ongoing dream that enables the past to bleed into the present, and which orients him fearfully toward a future of pain. The story's images connect Branner's present to his past: Branner's first unforeseen meeting with his eventual wife after a calamitous bombing that leaves him one of only a few survivors is juxtaposed with images of an explosive force, which in turn is connected to that of a train. A key dream in this story, of Branner and his wife looking toward a treeline facing the sea before it "explode[s] with silence" and the sight of a lone black bird that disintegrates into ash (Jones, 2019: 3) is an emblem for Branner's trauma: "Branner was not connected properly to himself. He could not step out of the moment with her in his dream just before the trees exploded" (9). Branner's adherence to duty at this story's end and at the end of 'Patrol,' the collection's final story, connects the images that structure the collection: "[t]he bullet's path, a dream burst into flame and char, disintegrate to ash. The train some crashing wave" (13, 174). The bullet, the unstoppable force of the train and rain stand as figures for an approaching future: "[t]he future now, a drop from a high building" (12).

The political undercurrent to Branner's story is the contested management of water and how London has begun to consolidate this resource. The water train—easier to guard than a pipeline from sabotage—is an extractive infrastructure embedding a mode of centralisation which fails to address the needs of dispersed rural communities. Sabotage by activists has encouraged security measures that make proximity to the train a death sentence. Branner's duty is to guard the train from the anonymous red blips that signal a presence, whether animal or human, a threat, or otherwise. While Branner's role is to identify and to confirm or reject such targets for the automatic weapons systems, or to make the kill himself, his captivation by the dream of the past as it meets the future makes his superiors uncertain as to whether he can maintain his commitment to this duty. Branner's own struggle is one between a closure of the future through a potential suicidal act or a strengthening commitment to his duty as an officer.

'The Water Train' opens with one such kill as Branner stands over the body of a boy he shot. His personal trauma is also implicated with the conflict of duty that these security measures create. Although "[t]hey weren't taking any chances now. Attacks on the line had increased," Branner's delay in responding to the target speaks to another duty that conflicts with this narrowing of possibility (5). Branner reflects on how the anonymous red blip identified by the train's digital systems could be an animal, and that "[t]here's no need for it to pointlessly die" (5). In 'Patrol,' Branner thinks that "[t]hey should not be here, in this place. Deer, dog, or man" (174). This ambiguous statement could be taken to refer to the interlopers approaching the water train but could also be universally inclusive and taken to refer to this moment in time and the complete context portrayed throughout the collection.

This 'place' is a moment in space and time that is textured by the values and systems that organise the communities around the water train. The water train is a symbol for the whole system of water management and the social organisation that coalesces around the new economic infrastructure of this climate-wracked future. Taken as a whole this water infrastructure figures an existence that excludes what cannot be looked at squarely (much as Branner cannot look toward the hospital where his wife is dying). The values and systems that texture this 'place' are established by those with the power to exclude but, as *Stillicide* shows, such exclusions are contingent and their re-emergence has the potential to contest dominant ideologies. Other stories in the collection draw attention to the exclusions that are necessary to maintain the fiction of a functioning society, each of which are associated with specific traumas; dispersed rural communities that no longer have a place in the wider national infrastructure, homeless children, exploited migrant workers and animals endangered by a mode of development that extends historical urbanisation and which simply exacerbates climate change. The effect of the concatenation of images in 'The Water Train' and 'Patrol' is to draw connections between disparate phenomena that are implicated in an overarching social and economic outlook. This context, one in which the material and social framework of Wales has been transformed by measures to manage water throughout England and Wales, underscores the far-reaching ramifications of economic decisions that exclude many, with lethal consequences.

Developmentalism in 'Paper Flowers'

If this scenario recalls the displacement of rural communities such as that of Capel Celyn, then Cynan Jones ensures that land claims and displacement beyond the imperial centre are echoed by similar urban displacements. The stories unfold against the backdrop of an engineering scheme of great ambition and yet also of desperate folly and short-termism. To sustain London, a plan is conceived to tow icebergs from the Arctic Circle to England to meet the capital's demand for water. Yet an infrastructure commensurate with the feat becomes necessary to ensure that icebergs can successfully dock, and the development of this infrastructure necessitates the displacement of many urban families, who are simply offered housing in converted shipping containers in a move much spun for its cost-effectiveness. As the narrator of 'Paper Flowers' notes, "the mayor has announced that far more families will be moved from their homes than the water company first said," reflecting "[h]ow often the process of construction starts with destruction" (19). Indeed, the narrator thinks of how "[t]he city was full of streams and rivers, centuries

ago. But they covered them with tunnels and built houses over them" (22). Cynan Jones thus draws parallels between rural displacement and urban displacement at the hands of a short-term developmentalism organised around the needs of the elites of the imperial centre.

The dock's construction, as an exemplar of the ideology of developmentalism, is paralleled by acts of creation conducted at the margins, with individuals making use of scant resources to enhance rather than replace the spaces that environ them. In 'Paper Flowers' the narrator's lover and her child create artificial blooms from the detritus that is washed up along the banks of a desiccated river. The narrator concludes the story with a vision of hope: "I will imagine them filling the city with blooms. Dancing over the streets. Planting flowers in the cracks of the kerbs" (26), and indeed, we see these paper flowers again on hospital patients' tables in the story 'Butterflies.' These two practices, that of the large-scale dock construction that the section's narrator—a migrant worker—is engaged in, and the small-scale enhancements that are pushed into the future, are expressive of a utopian hope that emerges despite the anti-utopian perspective that undergirds the collection. In contrast to an ill-defined utopian dreaming that fails to address the present context, "[i]nstead of make-believing the big wide world, here she was. Building flowers" (18).

Ways of Life at the Edge in 'Coast'

Water infrastructures are not the only forms of rural change that have caused dislocations to a sense of place. Wind turbines, too, have previously transformed the landscape and the inhabitants' relationship to that landscape, and are positioned as part of a cascade of change of which the water train and the scheme to tow icebergs are only the most recent. In 'Coast' and 'Oxen' (the latter a short story rejected for the radio play series), Jones positions wind turbines as a short-sighted and futile imposition enacted upon the landscape. 'Coast' is positioned at the 'edge' and is the site of the emergence of Bronze Age artefacts unearthed by the encroaching coastline. In theoretical terms, the edge refers to Homi K. Bhabha's concept, which Chris Williams describes as a perspective "celebrating the ambivalent, the fractured identity and giving voice to those positions in the interstices of nationhood, those on the margins of the 'nation-space'" (2005: 13). Williams applies this concept to the Welsh borderland, both geographical and affective, and cites Laura di Michele's argument that "the border may offer 'a privileged angle of observation, a place from where one can relate Wales to England and Wales to its own history and myth, to the various "imagined communities" which constitute the idea of "Wales" as the nation experienced by different people at different times'" (Williams, 2005: 13-14; di Michele, 1993: 30). In 'Coast' the edge is the Western Welsh coastline. The unearthed artefacts, in contrast to the landscape of wind turbines and that of the water train, along with the reader's sense of Wales' landscape, generate a palimpsest of habitation and rural change that stretches into antiquity.

In the context of engineering solutions, 'Coast' insists on the transience of ways of life for which the Bronze Age artefacts operate in part as a synecdoche, just as much as large-scale engineering projects comprise a synecdoche for the capitalist economy and the pattern of developmentalism that functions as its support. David, the protagonist of 'Coast' was an engineer involved in the construction of a water pipeline prior to the institution of the water train. Reflecting on the encroaching shoreline, David thinks of his work as "[t]he engineering

of support. Holding things back. Or holding things up" (41). The sight of wind turbines that have been repurposed as flood defence systems prompts David to think of them as "a myopic attempt to harness Nature, now a hopeful bid to hold her back" (42). Yet the grandeur of the scheme to capture icebergs for water captivates his imagination:

> There is a magnificence to the idea, he thinks. They're breaking from the ice cap anyway. Why let them melt into the sea? Like limpets, they're a ready crop. With a bit of effort. (44)

Animality in *Stillicide* offers another standpoint from which to understand the significance of human interventions into the landscape. Limpets form the basis of David's and his wife Helen's diet in a world in which food culture is undergoing change relative to the scarcity brought on by mismanagement, itself exacerbated by the changing climate. David's son Leo visits with a gift of lamb chops brought from the communal farm, which grows food of a quality starkly contrasting that produced by the superfarms of the city—which Helen considers inferior because of the poor quality of their soil. Yet the limpets also structure an analogy that speaks to David's attachment to place: "they barely move more than a metre from their home scar all their lives. They have a home scar" (52). The landscape thus provides a system of signification that helps David to situate himself and to explain his deep attachment to the place of his memory, a place that is visibly and progressively estranged. It is not so much the signs of human dwelling that anchor him to this place, but the persistence of other lives beyond the human that connect the transience of human endeavour to a longer timescale.

Leo works as a mechanic for the water train, which is an engineering feat aligned with that of the iceberg scheme: "[t]he scale of the thing, the awesomeness of transporting that much water; the science of it! Leo looked strong, like he was stepping towards a life he understood" (46). Underpinning these solutions to water scarcity is a feeling for the technological sublime that has embedded within it a utopian impulse. Yet the confidence these technological solutions encourage is undermined throughout the story. The encroaching shoreline, which submerges structures that formed an essential part of David's sense of place throughout his life, is eerily mirrored by the view from Leo's residence of a farmhouse, flooded by a reservoir which provides water for the water train. Echoes of the Tryweryn Valley are mediated in this representation of an exploitative future water infrastructure.

Politics and Utopia in 'Chaffinch'

The economics and politics of the iceberg scheme is addressed during a press conference in the story 'Chaffinch.' This story counterpoises the journalist Colin's questions regarding the social and economic implications of the project with the political spin placed on these implications by the story's narrator, Steven—a representative for the project. Key to the struggle over framing the project's outcomes and entailments is an attribution of ownership and control that positions it as either a project driven by the profit-interest of a private corporation or as the inevitable consequence of the necessity to provide water to London's population. One Westminster representative (Williams) asserts that "there's only going to be more of us" (67). Given this assumption, projections indicate that the Ice Dock project is the best solution to the issue not only of water scarcity but also of agricultural production. If this leaves the needs of rural communities unaddressed, then "[i]t's

a case, for the smaller communities, of properly managing the water they *do* have" (59). While rural communities are ostensibly excluded from the benefits of such plans, Williams insists that "Government *is* supporting smaller cities, as well as here [...] Plans for extra reservoirs are already significantly progressed" (61).

Political manoeuvring aside, the central repercussion of the project is ultimately the displacement of communities. Colin directly connects these future displacements with historical parallels: "[a]nd people displaced, again [...] As in the 1950s and 60s. Whole communities" (61). Although alternative housing has been provided, Colin notes that these new communities are effectively "[s]hanty towns! [Made o]ut of rusty metal boxes" (62), to which Williams counters that "[t]he re-use of containers from the decommissioned shipping yards provides a cost-effective and flexible solution with low eco-impact" (63). Yet it is Steven's argument that shifts the locus of responsibility for bearing the consequences of the iceberg scheme from the rural to the urban:

> It will serve the city from *within* the city. This won't mean a community of farmers having their way of life destroyed so a distant town can have water. The people affected are from within the community that will benefit. It's time for the city to take responsibility for itself. (63)

The outcome of a debate organised around the responsibilities and duties of rural versus urban communities diverts attention from the overarching system of exploitation to which both groups are subjected. Conceptualising the city itself as an entity strips agency from the groups who are subjected to these displacements. During a press conference which takes place during a protest against the dock's construction, conference attendees and speakers convene on the building's rooftop where the protestors' chants become indiscernible and their placards unreadable. Verticality dissociates these planners from the voices and experiences of the people they argue that they are serving. This failure to respond to the needs of the entire community is symptomatic of the attempt to re-shape conceptions of reality to enable the institution of a new infrastructure that excludes many: "[o]nce you change the idea of what constitutes the ground, we have so much space. You just can't see it from below" (69).

It is notable that Steven's internal response to Colin's criticisms is to reflect that "[c]learly he has no sense of wonder" (67), a stance which positions the technological sublime as innately capable of evacuating a critical stance toward the proposed projects. This sense of a critical, scrutinising glance is wrapped up with a rejection of utopian modes of thought. Steven explains that "[p]eople get on with it. People have always got on with it. Dystopia is as ridiculous a concept as Utopia. Ultimately we're animals, [... a]nd animals find ways" (68). In a collection that acknowledges animal extinction—and particularly given Steven's own reflection upon how "ninety-nine per cent of species that have ever lived have gone extinct" (57)—this conviction is qualified. Generalising particular communities or individuals in this manner enables an erasure of the distinctiveness of these groups and justifies decisions to displace or destroy them for the benefit of others.

Conclusion

The three works considered in this article narrate aspects of rural change which centre on attachments to landscape, economic and cultural confidence, along with the equitable management of resources. While agrarian and pastoral landscapes are critical to the

establishment of a distinct Welsh identity that maintains a continuity with the past, these works situate rural change in relation to broader urban and infrastructural change to show the interconnections and dependencies between these different landscapes. Time-travel, post-apocalyptic, utopian, and dystopian forms are leveraged to critique stereotypes that characterise Welshness as insular, archaic and backward-looking and to imagine future possibilities rooted in conceptions of distinct Welsh identities. Such portrayals of pluriform Welsh identities challenge the values and assumptions embedded in English supremacy and capitalism. Key to the depiction of the future of the Welsh landscape is the patterning of the politics of landscape against the historical touchstone of the drowning of the Tryweryn Valley. As a form of prosthetic memory, narratives about the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley offer a strategy for how the works examined in this article use sf to think through what Welshness might mean for the future. Portrayals of futurity function as a form of speculative prosthetic memory which invites readers to entertain future possibilities as vicariously experienced stories. These works thus use landscape to mediate between contemporary conceptions of the past and future to critique, extend, and speculate on Welsh identities as they are projected into an imagined future.

The portrayal of ways of life that develop in relation to the lived experience of a landscape is fundamental to how these works address aspects of change and—in the twenty-first century—climate change. *A Week in Future Wales* proposes different configurations of farming systems, from traditional family-based smallholdings to co-operatively run farms, the plurality of which—the text insists—speaks to the lived variety of Welsh identities. Utopian rural change is anticipated with enthusiasm and shown to be continuous with conceptions of an outwardly-oriented Welshness. Yet this utopian view of the future is contingent on activity in the present to realise these possibilities. Lloyd Jones rejects the romanticism of the isolated family farm in *Water* by portraying how fraught such systems are, and will continue to be as climate change transforms the landscape. Given *Water*'s analysis of the causes of climate change, which it grounds in an axiomatic refusal to engage with and form connections to the landscape, the text insists on the importance of human storytelling about the world as a crucial way to forge identities capable of addressing the attitudes and stances that undergird environmental change.

The farm is critical to the invention and maintenance of identities and ways of life that can lead to a flourishing of human and non-human agents, though in *Water* the obverse is demonstrated; rural landscapes are progressively estranged as climate change makes exiles of its dwellers. Cynan Jones in *Stillicide* draws attention to the longstanding neglect of the rural in favour of the interests of an urban elite, but shows how such groups nevertheless adapt to the climate change context. Rural and urban displacements caused by transformations to the landscape are shown to be driven by a short-term developmentalism that fails to tackle the drivers of climate change. Rather, the past is extended into the future, despite the historical record evident in the landscape, which can be read as a palimpsest of rural and urban change. The marginalised voices of the excluded nonetheless provide alternative views of the landscape that offer contestations to the dominant ideology of progress and developmentalism depicted in this collection of short stories.

A key aspect of these works is the connections they disclose between the rural and the urban, the agricultural and industrial, and the global systems within which Welsh industry

and agriculture are implicated. For Lloyd Jones and Cynan Jones, climate change is productive of *hiraeth*, a feeling of loss and exile brought about by disruptions to a sense of place, which these writers connect to a history of transformation to the Welsh landscape—such as that of the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley. *Hiraeth* is likewise fundamental to Elis' utopia, which for Powell once again becomes a 'no-place' after he becomes an exile. Thus the etymological ambiguity of More's original coining of utopia—as a pun that plays on the meanings of *ou-topos* (no-place) and *eu-topos* (good place)—is connected to the sense of loss and exile from a future Wales that is simultaneously good and non-existent (Ferns, 1999: 4). All three writers explore how Wales' changing landscapes speak to different conceptions of Welsh identity. They use utopia and sf to construct identities rooted in national, family-based, and communal modes of connectedness that attempt, and sometimes fail, to resist the closure of the future.

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