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“What kind of a woman are you?”: Policing Femininity in Welsh Television Crime Narratives

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Abstract

The Welsh TV crime drama *Hidden/Craith* (2018-2022), one of many TV crime dramas set and produced in Wales to have come out in recent years, scrutinises socially constructed notions of femininity. It does so in a way that both appeals to a broad audience, ensuring its marketability across national borders, as well as by exploring culturally specific concerns of how Welsh notions of femininity are entangled with narratives of nation. This chapter examines the representation of constructs of Welsh femininity in the first season of *Hidden/Craith* on the level of characterisation, production, and reception and contextualises it within dominant narratives of nation and the current political representation of Wales as well as the phenomenon of transnational TV crime dramas. The cultural trope the series is engaging with most clearly is that of the ‘Welsh Mam’, showcasing both its enduring legacy in defining ‘acceptable femininity’ as well as subverting it in the portrayal of one of the central transgressors by means of grotesque exaggeration. The exaggeration of the trope in the ‘monstrous Mam’ of the series draws attention to its own artifice as well as questions its place in contemporary Wales.

Keywords

Welsh crime narratives, femininity, ‘Welsh Mam’, transnational crime television

The Gateway

Picture the following scene: Darkness. The rumbling of an engine. Then, blinding headlights, mounted on the roof of a pickup-truck piercing the darkness. Their light bouncing off trees as the car makes its way through a woodland road – fast. The eyes of the driver reflected in the rear-view-mirror. Then, the headlights catch onto something. Someone? A woman? Fleeing from their path. The driver gets out and pursues his prey on foot, by the light of his torch. Intense staccato music, the sound of leaves crushing under heels, then that of water falling. And then she is caught, in the beam of the torch, standing in front of a waterfall barring her way, wearing nothing but a thin white dress. She turns around, facing the camera, facing her attacker, tears running down her cheeks, looking almost resigned then, cut.

Sketched above is the opening scene of the first episode of the Welsh TV crime drama series *Hidden/Craith* (2018-2022), the first season of which will serve as the central case study of this chapter. The following pages examine the series’ scrutinisation of social constructions of femininity and the ways these are entwined with constructions of nation.

This very first scene must seem eerily familiar to anyone who has seen the Danish TV series *Forbrydelsen (The Killing)* (2007-2012), one of the classics of 'Nordic Noir', that widespread, transnational brand of crime narratives which has come to dominate TV screens in recent years. *Hidden/Craith* is only one of numerous widely received quality crime dramas set and produced in Wales to have come out over the past fifteen years, resulting in headlines such as: "From Hinterland to Hidden: Why We've All Fallen for Welsh Crime Dramas: Welsh Crime Series are the New Scandi Thrillers" (Bennion) and "Forget Scandi: The Natural Home of Dark Drama Is Wales Now" (Hughes). These recent Welsh TV crime dramas are discussed in the press, invariably it seems, in terms of similarity to Scandinavian formats which have travelled across national borders to great success. Understandably so, since *Hidden/Craith* indeed shares several characteristics with what has been termed 'Nordic Noir'. It does so aesthetically, such as in its dim lighting, and sprawling longshots of bleak yet beautiful landscapes, as well as in its slow, atmospheric pacing, and, albeit to a lesser degree, its troubled investigator. And yet, as this chapter will go on to show, discussing *Hidden/Craith* exclusively with regards to its similarities to other transnational crime dramas fails to grasp a crucial, culturally specific dimension. Next to the series' site-specific engagement with place, a characteristic it shares with the great majority of recent crime narratives from Wales, regardless of medium, this culturally specific dimension is clearly noticeable in its exploration of questions of gender.

Alongside and by means of the central criminal investigation within the narrative, *Hidden/Craith* manifestly investigates social constructions of femininity. Throughout the series, characters both male and female 'police' what they consider to be 'appropriately gendered' behaviour. Be that in the myriad of ways different characters respond violently to assertive women, of which *Hidden/Craith* boasts a considerable number, or more insidious ways in which women transgressing socially constructed boundaries are judged in a gendered way. Both crime and investigation in *Hidden/Craith* prove to be inextricably entangled with questions of gender which in turn show themselves to be entangled with Welsh cultural tropes.

There is a certain self-consciousness in *Hidden/Craith*'s use of Nordic Noir conventions. This is particularly apparent in the initial scene sketched above. By closely paralleling the opening credits of *Forbrydelsen*, *Hidden/Craith* already primes the knowing audience for its engagement with Nordic Noir tropes. Throughout the series, *Hidden/Craith* cleverly uses features of Nordic Noir and narrative patterns prevalent in other transnational TV crime dramas to explore Welsh concerns, including but not limited to gendered ideologies and the "particularities of women's experience in one minority culture" (Aaron and Rees xv), that of Wales. As the infamous 1888 *Encyclopedia Brittanica* entry "for Wales: see England" brutally demonstrates,

Welsh cultural specificity is not something that can be taken for granted. Its articulation is a constant political effort. *Hidden/Craith* asserts its cultural specificity and demands a closer look at a nation which is seldom afforded one; the previously hidden, forgotten, and neglected 'hinterland'(s) of Britain, to borrow the title of another recent Welsh TV crime drama. Women in Wales have, as this chapter will show, similarly been rendered 'invisible', been neglected from dominant narratives of nation for a long time. Moreover, Dawn Mannay asserts, "the lives of Welsh women have been shaped by Nonconformity, religion, industrialization and a virulent strain of patriarchy, which have meant that in Wales, more than in other parts of Britain, women have been denied access to the public sphere" (66).

Transnational Legibility vs. Welsh Cultural Specificity

In a special issue of *Television & New Media* titled "Broken Bodies/Inquiring Minds: Women in Contemporary Transnational TV Crime Drama" the editors Lisa Coulthard, Tanya Horeck, Barbara Klinger, and Kathleen McHugh establish "a dominant trend in contemporary transnational crime television: quality dramas featuring serial criminals who break the bodies/psyches of young women or children, thereby attracting the inquiries of female detectives who have suffered trauma themselves" (507). Coulthard et al. propose that the "intersection of formal and gendered conventions and their evocation of feminist concerns" in series like *Forbrydelsen*, *Bron/Broen (The Bridge)* (2011-2018) and *Top of the Lake* (2013-2017) is central to their "intelligibility . . . across borders" (508). They go on to delineate a number of shared aesthetic and storytelling elements, which they term "staples of transnational language" (507), in these and other series such as "an emotionally complex female detective and an abject female corpse, pervasive and brutal violence against women, and affectively charged investigative scenarios" (510). *Hidden/Craith* certainly fits well into this line-up.

However, despite clarifying their use of the term 'transnational' by referring to Michele Hilmes' definition as "constituted by both the demands of the nation and the equally compelling impulse to go beyond, to provide a conduit to speak to other nations and to let other influences stream into the national space" (Hilmes 2), the analysis of Coulthard et al. exclusively looks beyond. It is entirely concerned with the translatability of these series into other national contexts. The following pages will show that gendered ideologies in *Hidden/Craith*, apart from rendering the series legible across national borders in the ways delineated by Coulthard et al., also possess a distinctly Welsh dimension, speaking to the "demands of the nation" (Hilmes 2).

One of those shared patterns Coulthard et al. credit with the translatability of the transnational TV crime dramas is the initial discovery of what Klinger terms the "gateway body" (521) of a young, white, female victim that serves to "galvanize police

investigations, serve[s] as gothic spectacle . . ., and animate[s] family melodrama" (515). At the level of reception, Klinger argues, the "gateway body" "is a vehicle of commercial accessibility and meaning across borders – a coin of the realm" (518). In *Hidden/Craith*, it is the body of Mali Pryce, the young woman being chased in the opening scene, which is discovered. Her flight in nothing but a thin white dress can certainly be described as a gothic spectacle. The charge of "propagating the worst kinds of misogyny, as they revel in images of violated female bodies" (Coulthard et al. 509), which is often levelled at the TV series Coulthard et al. discuss, seems much less pertinent in the case of *Hidden/Craith*, where the victims' bodies are always almost chastely covered and the audience's gaze is limited to faces and wrists. Following the initial discovery of Mali Pryce's "gateway body", DI Cadi John and her colleagues start to investigate what turns out to be a number of previously dismissed and forgotten connected missing person cases spanning over fifteen years. The young women, hailing from council estates and foster families, were abducted, imprisoned in the cellar of a remote cottage, raped, and murdered by the quiet, unassuming Dylan Harris, with the help of his formidable mother.

What is it then about *Hidden/Craith* that is not quite represented in this approach of breaking down crime dramas to elements constituting their, to stick with Klinger's monetary language, cross-cultural 'currency'? How might one go on to examine the other side of the transnational coin, what Hilmes calls "the demands of the nation" (2)?

Welsh TV Crime Drama

Coulthard et al. pose the question: "how does crime TV designed for export become sufficiently deterritorialized in viewers' imaginations?" (509). Still, characterising *Hidden/Craith* as "designed for export" would be misleading – a half-truth. *Hidden/Craith* was shot twice, back-to-back, once entirely in Welsh and once in a bilingual version where those parts of dialogue that transpire in Welsh are subtitled for the non-Welsh speaking viewer. The Welsh language version was first broadcast in 2018 on the Welsh language channel S4C under the Welsh title *Craith*, which translates to 'scar' and the bilingual version on BBC One Wales and BBC 4 as *Hidden*. The series' third and final season aired just last year in 2022. Since it is the bilingual version this chapter is concerned with, the series will from now on be referred to as *Hidden*.

This two-pronged process of production and subsequent distribution is something *Hidden* shares with *Hinterland/Y Gwyll* (2013-2016), both created and produced by Mark Andrews and Ed Talfan. *Hinterland/Y Gwyll* was the first of these Welsh crime dramas to travel across national borders to great success, prompting headlines in the press as quoted above. The very fact that two distinct versions were produced speaks to a real need for the series at home in Wales as well as abroad. This need

being one of the Welsh-speaking minority in Wales to see themselves, or rather hear themselves, represented on national television. The cultural 'currency' of a Welsh television programme (partly) in Welsh is not on par with that of, for instance, a Danish one in Danish such as the aforementioned *Forbrydelsen* (*The Killing*), whose opening sequence *Hidden*'s first scene resembles so closely. They both may be marketed as 'exotically foreign' or "cosmopolitan-European" (126) outside of their national contexts, as Elke Weissman demonstrates in the case of *Hinterland* (119-37) which was broadcast on BBC Four alongside "international crime programming, including the Swedish Wallander (TV4, 2005–2013), The Killing (DR1, 2007–2012), Bron/Broen (SVT1, DR1, 2011–18), Inspector Montalbano (RAI, 1999–) and Engrenages (Canal+, 2005–)" (126) but that does not take into account how the spoken Welsh in the bilingual version serves as a clear, audible marker of difference inside Wales as well as outside. The Welsh dialogue puts non-Welsh-speaking audiences, regardless of nationality, in the position of the outsider and bears a potentially defamiliarising effect.

Currently, less than a third of the Welsh population are able to speak Welsh (Welsh Language Data). To take *Hinterland/Y Gwyll* as an example, since it pioneered this bilingual production process which has subsequently been taken up by other Welsh TV crime dramas such as *Hidden/Craith*, *Keeping Faith/Un Bore Mercher* (2017-2020), and *Y Golau/The Light in the Hall* (2022-), this foregrounding of the Welsh language can be seen as a conscious effort of nation-building. Ed Thomas, a producer of the series, explained his reasoning behind choosing Aberystwyth and surroundings as a setting as being down to the landscape and that "Welsh is spoken enough there" (Thomas qtd. in Weissmann 125) to justify an all-Welsh series as 'authentic'. The National Welsh Language Use Survey of 2013-14, when the first season of *Hinterland/Y Gwyll* aired, includes a census from 2011, which shows that in the mid-Ceredigion region, where Aberystwyth is situated, between 50% and 70% of the population (aged three and older) were able to speak Welsh. The survey also included questions about how comfortable people were speaking Welsh or English respectively and how regularly Welsh speakers were speaking Welsh at work. Only one third of the Welsh speakers replied that they always communicate in Welsh at work, one third sometimes used Welsh in the workplace and the last third never did (National Survey 9). So, in depicting the world of *Hinterland* as one where the police officers always communicate in Welsh, unless speaking to their only non-Welsh-speaking team member, and that of *Y Gwyll* as one where everyone speaks Welsh in every social context, the series "centrally takes part in the construction of Wales as a nation in which Welsh is a national and regional language" (Weissmann 125).

There is no clear correlation between language use and gender of the characters in *Hidden*. Both male and female characters code-switch between Welsh and English.

What does emerge as a pattern is that Welsh is predominantly spoken at home, English in the workplace. This bears further significance, given that one of the defining characteristics of the trope of the 'Welsh Mam', which will be dealt with in greater detail in the following subchapter on 'Welshness and Femininity', is the confinement to the domestic sphere. Cadi and her family, who speak English at home, are the exception to this rule. Possibly, this is a choice made by the production team in order not to alienate the non-Welsh speaking viewer from Cadi, the nexus-figure of the narrative.

Both *Hinterland/Y Gwyll* and *Hidden* are characterised by a strong sense of place, showcasing the beautiful, rugged landscape of Aberystwyth and surrounding Ceredigion and the North-Walian region of Snowdonia respectively. Numerous scenes show a small car making its way through the vast landscape, and geographical proximity or isolation as well as ownership over land often prove integral to solving cases. Furthermore, characters ponder questions such as 'when something evil happens somewhere, does it leave a mark on the place?'. The home of Dylan Harris, for instance, serves as a teenage hangout in the second season of *Hidden* for that very reason. Cast and crew of both series have stated in several interviews that the landscape is a character in its own right. The beauty of the landscape is contrasted with the poverty, lack of prospects, and crime dominating the lives of its inhabitants. As Dylan Harris, the main perpetrator of *Hidden*'s first season, states sourly to an affluent Welshman who moved to North Wales from an urban background, "A view doesn't pay the bills" (season 1, episode 7, 06:48).

Hidden significantly differs from its predecessor *Hinterland/Y Gwyll* structurally in its seriality, since it does not follow a case per episode format but rather one where one central case spans the entire eight-episode season arc. This format is another one of the familiar patterns assuring transnational legibility as delineated by Barbara Klinger, one of the editors of *Broken Bodies/Inquiring Minds: Women in Contemporary Transnational TV Crime Drama* in her contribution to the volume (Klinger 517). As producers and cast have repeatedly stated, *Hidden* is not a whodunit but a whydunit. Accordingly, the identity of Dylan Harris is revealed to the viewer from the start. In fact, in that opening scene so closely resembling that of *Forbrydelsen*, quite unlike the Danish point of reference, *Hidden* shows us the killer, or at least his eyes in the rear-view mirror, before we even see the victim. Another marked difference to *Hinterland/Y Gwyll* directly relates to questions of gender.

Masculinity and Femininity in *Hidden*

Whereas the world of *Hinterland/Y Gwyll* is dominated by a corrupt old-boys-network, *Hidden* puts female characters front and centre and presents viewers with a world populated by a surprising number of women in positions of power. In the

police department alone, DI Cadi John leads the investigation, reports to Superintendent Susan Lynn and counts on the expertise of a female medical examiner as well. The medical examiner does not appear on screen until season two, when she eventually becomes Cadi's love interest, but she is discussed in the very first episode between Cadi and her father. The father, himself the former chief of the police department, enquires about the ongoing investigation and whether the medical examiner is any good. The name of the medical examiner is unfamiliar to him, yet he nevertheless assumes them to be a man. Cadi quite pointedly replies "yes, *she* is" (season 1, episode 1, 40:04, emphasis added), drawing her father's and the viewers' attention to insidious ways in which gendered ideologies are naturalised and internalised. Given the great influence of *Hinterland/Y Gwyll* on subsequent Welsh TV crime dramas in general and the fact that *Hidden* in particular is produced by the same team, Cadi's father as the former chief of police can be read as a conscious reworking of the old-boys-network of *Hinterland/Y Gwyll*. An all-important gut-feeling of a female PC, who questioned Dylan Harris on routine house to house calls in the area, is initially dismissed by her male partner with the words "we're at the arse-end of nowhere, everybody is slightly off around here" (season 1, episode 4, 44:22), but ultimately leads to the investigative team connecting the dots and identifying Dylan Harris as the perpetrator. Beyond the investigative team, women are well represented in positions of power and previously male-dominated professions as well. For instance, Dylan Harris' boss at the slate quarry is a woman who reprimands him on several occasions and eventually fires him. The girlfriend of DS Owen Vaughan, DI Cadi John's partner, is an assertive, heavily pregnant lawyer. A circumstance, which leads a real estate agent, who briefly comes under suspicion, to hurl at Vaughan "You got a bitch at home telling you what to do and a bitch at work bossing you about. You oughta grow some balls, man!" (season 1, episode 3, 24:25). The shouty real-estate agent came under suspicion in the investigation because he aggressively stalked his ex-girlfriend who was then targeted by Dylan Harris. His outburst quoted above shows any 'policing' of socially acceptable boundaries of femininity to be inextricably linked to the 'policing' of borders of masculinity which is co-constitutively defined.

Putting women front and centre leaves men on the margins of *Hidden*'s world and the characters respond very differently to their individual feelings of powerlessness or being side-lined. Cadi's ill father is preparing for death, for passing on the torch to his three daughters, Cadi in particular, given their shared profession. This sense of being replaced is aggravated by the fact that Cadi is re-opening one of his old cases, where it turns out he got it wrong and arrested an innocent man for Dylan Harris' crime. The aggressive real-estate agent-cum-stalker violently lashes out against assertive women and against anyone preventing him from getting his way. DS Owen Vaughan deals with, or rather avoids dealing with, the feeling of important life decisions being made for rather than by him, "new house, new baby" (season 1,

episode 7, 36:29), by means of a flirtation at work. He, however, shows himself capable of reflecting on his irrational behaviour, reining it in before it goes any further. When Cadi calls him out on it, he self-ironically responds with the words "I don't know, I guess I'm feeling a bit ... hormonal" (season 1, episode 1, 25:27). The exchange between Cadi and Owen quoted above once again demonstrates how *Hidden* draws attention to the subtle and not so subtle ways in which behaviour is judged in a gendered way. And lastly, there is Dylan Harris, the character with the most extreme reaction to his individual feeling of powerlessness and, arguably, emasculation. Dylan Harris' characterisation blurs the boundary between victim and transgressor, a common characteristic of literary Welsh crime fiction, as delineated by Catherine Phelps (187). The examples Phelps bases that distinction on are, however, all of women who were subject to violence exercising some form of 'retributive justice' on their abusers, not a male victim of abuse attacking random women. Dylan Harris' childhood and ongoing trauma of living with his physically and mentally abusive mother led him to move quietly around the margins of his own home, trying not to cause offence. He is compensating for his lack of control in his relationship to his mother and over his own destiny, moving from one precarious employment to another, by imprisoning, raping, and murdering young women.

Where then, does *Hidden's* representation of North Wales, populated by a striking number of women in previously male-dominated professions and positions of authority and yet equally striking violence against women, fit into feminist discourse? This may not be a feature unique to *Hidden*. Coulthard et al., too, speak of "the paradoxical gender-based violence and female empowerment at their [i.e. the crime dramas'] core as crucial to their transnational legibility" (507), but I would nevertheless like to point to a particularly Welsh contextualisation. In 2003, the National Assembly for Wales, now Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament, set a world record by achieving perfect gender parity with its seats being evenly distributed among male and female representatives (Mannay 66). In 2006, the scales even briefly tipped towards a female majority of 52% (Aaron 24), a trend which has since been in decline. Currently 43% of the seats are filled by women (Thomas et al.). However, much has been made of women's greater political representation in post-devolution Wales. An overemphasis that, as Paul Chaney argues, has created the false impression that devolution has fundamentally transformed gender relations in Wales when this is, in fact, far from the case (220-38). It is my contention that, quite apart from the argument to be made about the importance of role models in feminist discourse, *Hidden* purposefully presents its audience with this world where women are well represented, analogously to their political representation in the Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament, in order to explore persistent gendered biases, systemic inequalities, and (un)conscious 'policing' of the borders of 'appropriately' gendered behaviour instead of being blinded by apparent parity.

On the subject of borders, Wales has still only relatively recently become a nation with a border in the sense that those living west of that demarcation are under the governance of the Welsh government and have a distinct civic identity. In all discussion of Welsh crime narratives following transnational patterns, it is worth remembering that from a Welsh perspective, a nation-state remains something aspirational, a hope to gain further decision-making powers in the ongoing process of devolution, not something to be overcome. As Kirsti Bohata has argued in her keynote titled "Wealish: Transcultural Experiments in Plurilingual Writing", which she gave at the conference of the European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies in 2021, "post-nationalism is the privilege of those who have a well-established nation state to reject". And there is a "danger of erasure in some transnational theory". For a nation that has never existed as an independent nation-state, imaginative narratives of nation carry particular weight. As the renowned Marxist historian Gwyn A. Williams so famously and polemically put it, "Wales . . . is a process . . . . Wales is an artefact which the Welsh produce; the Welsh make and remake Wales day by day and year after year. If they want to" (23). Gender ideologies are undoubtedly a part of constructing and maintaining a sense of Wales and Welshness.

Welshness and Femininity

Historically, dominant narratives of Wales and Welshness have been gendered in a decidedly male way. The national anthem's title "Hen Wlad Fyn Nhadau" ([Old] Land of My Fathers) is taking on emblematic significance in this context. In her influential 1987 essay on "Images of Welsh Women", Deirdre Beddoe went so far as to characterise Welsh women as "invisible" in narratives of nation or national character that centred around coal mining, rugby, and male voice choirs (227). Recent publications revisiting the subject keep referring to Welsh women as doubly under-represented within the dominant English and male-oriented culture (Mannay, "Introduction" 2-3). The roles that were available to women in these dominant narratives of nation are that of the woman in traditional Welsh costume and that of the 'Welsh Mam'. The first is heavily influenced by, and arguably constructed to oppose, the characterisation of Welsh women from an outsider's, a coloniser's gaze in the infamous *Reports of the Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales* (1847). Those nineteenth-century reports, commonly referred to as the Blue Books, not only revealed hostile prejudices against the Welsh language as degenerate and a hindrance to societal progress, but also painted a picture of Welsh women as inferior, immoral, licentious, lawless, and dirty. It is this image which the invented tradition of the Welsh national costume can be seen to be combatting with its emphasis on pious, chaste respectability, showing "pressures that circumscribed Welsh women's lives were not engendered solely from Welsh culture itself, but from

tensions between Wales and England" (Mannay, "Introduction" 5). The pervasive cultural trope of the matriarchal 'Welsh Mam', a nostalgic idealisation of the mother, is represented in *How Green Was My Valley*, the famous novel and its subsequent screen adaptations which were instrumental in reinforcing said stereotype (James 69), as hardworking, pious, and clean, a mother to her sons and responsible for the home. The notion of cleanliness is central to that of the 'Welsh Mam', indeed, the proverb 'cleanliness is next to godliness' is often quoted in this context (James 78; Amgueddfa Cymru). Likewise intrinsically linked to the stereotype is the "location . . . in the home" (James 78). It is the cultural trope of the 'Welsh Mam' which *Hidden* is negotiating and which this chapter examines at the level of characterisation.

True to *Hidden*'s oft-proclaimed format of the whydunit, the series does not end with the identification and apprehension of the Harrises. The penultimate episode ends with Iona Harris being led off her property in handcuffs and Dylan Harris on the run. The last episode is entirely concerned with the why. Again, indicative of the female-driven narrative of the series, it is not Dylan Harris who is confronted with their crimes and the faces of their victims, but it is Iona Harris sitting opposite Cadi John in the interrogation room, photographs of the young women violated between them. It is from this interrogation sequence this chapter gets its title and I will now go on to consider questions of policing femininity first in the figure of the investigator, then that of the perpetrator.

Policing Femininity – The Investigator

DI Cadi John only recently returned to her childhood home in North Wales from serving in the army to be with her ailing father. The main investigator coming to a rural part of Wales, mostly from an urban background, at the start of the narrative is a very common pattern in Welsh crime narratives on screen as well as on page which lends itself as a device to dispel common prejudices by charting a learning curve on the part of the investigator.

She also fits well into the line of "strong female leads" as Coulthard et al. put it in their analysis of contemporary transnational TV crime dramas, in reference to a sorting category on the streaming platform Netflix (509). Cadi calls people out on their casual misogyny, victim blaming, and trivialisation or naturalisation of predative behaviour such as when the scrapyard owner whom DS Vaughan and she question about the murder of one of the young women replies, "She was a pretty girl. If you bring a girl like that to a place like this, boys will be boys" (season 1, episode 7, 10:48). Cadi also shows herself perfectly capable of throwing the aggressive real-estate agent up against a wall when he takes a swing at her. One difference in the portrayal of Cadi John to most other 'strong female leads' that have come to populate crime dramas is at the level of production. In an interview, Sian Reese-Williams, the actress playing Cadi, revealed that a conscious decision was made to limit the time

she spent in the make-up trailer to twenty minutes in order to show a woman who looks "*actually* rough around the edges" (Reese-Williams, original emphasis), like she slept at the office. In contrast, when a female character does so in most other TV series, the actress portraying them nevertheless appears without a hair out of place, thereby implicitly 'policing' acceptable femininity along the lines of physical appearance and beauty.

A more subtle 'policing' of femininity takes place among Cadi and her two sisters, who accuse her of not showing enough interest in caring for their father. Since there is no brother in the family, it remains unclear, however, how much of that expectation to act as a caregiver is tied to notions of acceptable femininity. In Elin, one of Cadi's sisters, we can clearly see what Mannay diagnosed in her study of the division of household labour in south-Walian valleys in 2016, namely that the "legacy of the myth of the 'Welsh Mam' in maintaining acceptable feminine identities" ("Introduction" 7) still looms large and "in contemporary Wales, the domestic sphere remains a site of inequality, where women are negotiating the impossibility of being both in full-time employment and meeting the ideological tenets of the 'Welsh Mam'" (7-8). Elin, who works as a doctor at the local hospital is similarly struggling and facing divorce and resentment from her teenage daughter. Though the cultural trope of the 'Welsh Mam' is certainly not limited to working-class women, it is nevertheless most readily associated with them. The historical image of wives of miners in the valleys, as perpetuated by *How Green Was My Valley* in particular, is closely tied to the term. Mannay speaks of "the myth of the 'Welsh Mam' . . . alongside the bread-winning Mam" as "dual expectations of acceptable working-class femininity" ("Who Should" 81) specifically and the application of her findings to the portrayal of Elin, a highly educated and well-to-do doctor, presumably with the means to hire help, should be qualified correspondingly.

Policing Femininity – The Transgressor

The shadow of the cultural trope of the 'Welsh Mam' looms even larger in the characterisation of Iona Harris, who is in many respects a grotesque exaggeration of that very trope – a 'monstrous Mam'. Until she is forcibly removed from it during her arrest, we never see Iona Harris outside of the house or at least off the property, taking the "location . . . in the home" (James 78) to the extreme. She is most often found in the kitchen preparing meals for Dylan and Nia, the little girl Dylan had with one of his victims now buried on the property. She does so unfailingly. Such as when she wordlessly presents Dylan with a thermos and lunchbox to take to work after she brutally beat him and made him sleep outside with the dogs the night before (season 1, episode 2, 06:24-07:00). Iona Harris is berating her son, telling him she should have drowned him at birth in one breath, noticing a missing button on

his shirt and telling him to remind her to fix it for him in the next (season 1, episode 2, 09:21-09:42).

She too seems to consider cleanliness one of the highest virtues, repeatedly ordering others to scrub things clean, to wash themselves or to "clean up their filth" (season 1, episode 2, 08:52; episode 4, 29:19; episode 5, 40:48; episode 6, 37:59). Strikingly, it is the suggestion that the police might find a trace of Llinos Evans, Nia's mother, in the house that gets Iona Harris talking in the interrogation room, where she previously sat silent, refusing to co-operate. She breaks her silence to assert that they will most certainly not find any such trace, as if insulted by the suggestion of a less than spotless home (season 1, episode 8, 20:03-20:25).

This grotesque exaggeration of the trope of the 'Welsh Mam', the continuing pervasiveness of which has been demonstrated by Mannay, reveals it to be a cultural construct and questions both its essentialist claim and its place in contemporary Wales. Iona Harris' commitment to cleanliness extends to 'cleaning up' after her son's rape in the most horrific way, namely performing a forced late-term abortion on Mali Pryce, which leads Cadi to pose the question: "What kind of a woman are you?" (season 1, episode 8, 17:52). Cadi frames Iona Harris' crime not simply as a crime against humanity but as a crime against her femininity specifically. 'How could she – as a woman – do this to another woman?' 'How could she violate another woman's body in such a way?' Cadi, the character the audience is most clearly invited to identify with, thereby 'polices' acceptable femininity along the border of forming a united front against violence against women. The question "What kind of woman are you" almost denies Iona Harris womanhood altogether. Cadi implies Iona Harris is 'less of a woman' for her crimes.

Conclusion

Hidden is not a crime narrative that provides easy or satisfying answers; the crimes may be solved, one young woman recovered alive from the Harrises' clutches, Iona Harris incarcerated, and Dylan Harris dead by his own hands, but there is little sense of resolution. What *Hidden* does instead is raise uncomfortable questions, including such questions as what it is that makes people do unspeakable things to one another, about how notions of place are operational upon people, and about intersections of gendered ideologies and narratives of nation. The feminist discourse the series is engaging in both makes it legible beyond its national borders, in the ways delineated by Coulthard et al., and speaks to specifically Welsh contexts and concerns. These concerns include the cultural trope of the 'Welsh Mam' and its place in contemporary, 'post-devolution' Wales, the limited meaningfulness of gender parity in political representation in questions of gendered ideologies of the everyday and persisting systemic inequalities, and the role of the Welsh language itself. Reiterating the impression of a self-conscious employment of 'transnational' tropes in

Hidden to make Welsh concerns visible, and audible, beyond its national borders, the growing list of Welsh-set and -produced series in recent years ranging from *Hinterland/Y Gwyll* and *Hidden/Craith* to *Keeping Faith/Un Bore Mercher* (2017-2020), *Bang* (2017-), *Requiem (2018), The Pembrokeshire Murders* (2021), *The Pact* (2021-) and *The Light in the Hall/Y Golau* (2022-) certainly suggests it is working. At the start of the year 2023, news even broke of Netflix streaming its first Welsh-language-only drama, *Dal Y Mellt* (20-22-). In the world of TV crime dramas at least it seems, Wales is all around.

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