



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

Master's Degree in
European, American
and Postcolonial
Languages and
Literatures
English Studies

Final Thesis

***Pigeon* by Alys Conran: a Journey
through History, Language and
Identity**

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Matriculation Number

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Academic Year

2021 / 2022

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Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate how Alys Conran, a contemporary writer and Welsh native speaker from north Wales, commits to representing and celebrating the history of Wales and the Welsh language through her debut novel *Pigeon*, around which the main focus of this dissertation is developed. The dissertation also aims to show that, despite the fact that the English conquerors devastated Wales and suppressed the Welsh language and culture for many years, Conran, like many bilingual writers of the twenty-first century generation to which she belongs, chooses English as a means of artistic expression and communication, without representing a betrayal of her country as in the past, but an enhancement of the Welsh language and culture. By analysing Conran's novel, this dissertation also evokes the idea of a journey: Pigeon's journey with the Welsh language becomes a metaphor representing the history of the Welsh language along with the many efforts and struggles that have been made through the years to keep the Welsh language and identity alive.

Starting from the first chapter, the dissertation provides a brief history of Wales and the Welsh language, beginning from the origins of Welsh, which developed from a Celtic language known as Brythonic, and proceeding with the description of the main events that marked the history of Wales. These events include the 1536 Act of Union, according to which Wales came under English law and its only official language became English, the influx of English during the Industrial Revolution, and the 1847 Treachery of the Blue Books, which blamed all of Wales' ills, real or imaginary, on the Welsh language. The chapter concludes with the presentation of efforts and commitments in recent years to preserve the future of the Welsh language, such as the promotion of Welsh on the Duolingo language learning platform and the Welsh government's current aim to reach a million Welsh speakers and to double the daily use of Welsh by 2050.

The second chapter follows with the literary and cultural development of the Welsh language in the twentieth century, with a particular focus on Welsh writers in English, such as the Welsh writer and poet Dylan Thomas, renowned for his emotional and lyrical poetry, and the Welsh poet and zealous nationalist R. S. Thomas; furthermore, the chapter presents the promotion of Welsh

through the launch of BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Cymru, as well as the establishment of Sianel Pedwar Cymru (S4C) and Welsh-medium/bilingual education in Wales.

The third and last chapter presents a general overview of bilingual writers in contemporary times, of which Alys Conran is an excellent example, and a comprehensive plot of her novel is provided. Furthermore, the chapter continues with a thematic and symbolic analysis of Conran's novel, where some of its characters and occurrences are presented as embodying significant events in the history of Wales and its language. Finally, the dissertation concludes with a detailed linguistic analysis investigating a large number of Welsh dialogues among the characters which are taken one by one from the novel, and which, along with the large amount of information that the author provides on the traditions and rural surroundings of her hometown Bethesda (which is also the town where Pigeon comes from), further highlight the author's willingness and commitment to celebrate and introduce the Welsh language to her readers.

1

A Brief History of Wales and the Welsh Language

Wales, one of the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom, home to many wild, distinctive, and peaceful landscapes, is today officially, legally, and proudly a bilingual country, where “Cymraeg” or Welsh as it is known in English, is at the heart of the culture, heritage, and identity of the region. Welsh is the major language spoken in some Welsh communities and has a meaningful presence in many working places, educational institutions, and town and village streets throughout Wales, as well as being an essential part of the community well being. However, throughout history, the Welsh language has faced many challenges to its existence, and despite its proximity to English, which continues to prevail as a dominant world language, Welsh has survived, becoming one of the strongest minority languages in Europe, whose current and increasing use among people, especially the young, is providing a great contribution to the survival of the language today and in the future

1.1 The Origins of Welsh

Like the majority of European and many Asian languages, Welsh has evolved from what linguists call Indoeuropean, a family of languages spoken by semi-nomadic people inhabiting the southern Russian steppes, northern Turkey, and northern Iran, during the millennium between 7,000 and 5,000 BC. Speakers of Indoeuropean migrated westwards and eastwards and reached the Danube valley by 3500 BC and India by 2500 BC. As a result of migration, Indoeuropean dialects became much diversified and developed into a wide variety of languages, whose existence as a family of Indo-European languages was recognised not before 1786. (Davies, 2014). The Indo-European family is generally thought to consist of nine different branches, which in turn gave origin to different daughter languages: Welsh has evolved from Proto-Celtic, or Common Celtic, as did its sister languages Breton, Irish, Cornish, Scottish Gaelic, and Manx (Ternes, 1980).

Originating in the Danube area, the Celts were regarded as curious and audacious people, who gradually moved northwards, a migration process that took hundreds of years. They arrived in Britain first as explorers, sailing their infirm coracle craft through the waters of what would later become known as the English Channel, and landed on the island's southern shores, where they settled approximately over the next two years, and where they mastered their skills with metals like bronze (Carradice, 2011).

In AD 43, the Romans invaded Britain under the command of the general Aulus Plautus, and by about AD 70, those parts of the island that were to be Wales, England, and southern Scotland, formed the Roman province of Britannia. With the coming of the Romans, Latin became the language of law and administration, and the Christian Church established its hold over the Britons. Celtic native language, known to the scholars as Brythonic or Brittonic, was therefore fused with many Latin terms which later became an integral part of the Welsh vocabulary, such as “eglwys” (church) “ysgol” (school) “gwin” (wine) and “llyfr” (book), but Brythonic continued to be spoken by the mass population, in particular in the western parts of the island (Davies, 2006). Despite the numerous bloody struggles and campaigns, such as the Roman massacre of Druids on the island of Anglesey in 61 AD, the Roman occupation of Britain didn't produce long-lasting effects on the Celtic language, art, and culture (Carradice, 2011).

Around 410 AD, Roman power collapsed, and Britannia ceased to be a part of the Roman Empire. At the time, the Celts people spoke what today is known as Common Celtic, a language that was split into two branches: the above-mentioned Brythonic, which was spoken in Wales and Cornwall, and Goidelic, the language in northern Scotland and Ireland (Hurtado, 2016). Brythonic was spoken daily across the major part of the island, and Latin was used only in the church, schools, and monasteries. In the next century, it was possible to travel from Edinburgh to Cornwall, with the assurance that Brythonic would be understood all along the path, and in a time when Brythonic kingdoms were dominant in Britain. Nevertheless, the existence of these kingdoms was threatened (Davies, 2014).

With the end of Roman rule in Britain, settlers from Ireland started creating colonies in

western Britain, thus further affecting the language, an influence that is still evident in a number of place names, such as Gwynedd, which today denominates a county in northwestern Wales, but also in thirty memorial stones which bear inscriptions in Ogham script, a particular writing system created to write the primitive Irish language (Stifter, 2020). In the century following the fall of the Roman Empire, Irish was widely spoken in Wales, however, the Irish element in northwest Wales rapidly declined, probably as a result of Brythonic speakers' immigration from Southern Scotland to Wales (Mercer, 2004).

By 500 AD Anglo-Saxons had created their kingdoms in eastern Britain, where their language, Anglo-Saxon or Old English, was dominant. They had reached the Severn Estuary in 577 AD and the Dee Estuary by 616 AD, thus dividing the native population into three different groups: one in northern England, one in Wales, and the last one in Cornwall. With the passage of time, four different languages evolved from the Brythonic of these groups: Cumbric in northwest England and southern Scotland, Welsh in Wales, Breton in Brittany, and Cornish in southwest Britain (Davies, 2006). “Wealas”, later Welsh, was the name by which the Anglo-Saxons would refer to their Brythonic neighbours, and its meaning was “foreigner”. On the other hand, the Welsh and the Cumbric speakers identified themselves as “Cymry”, which means “compatriots” or “fellow-countrymen”, and called their language “Cymraeg”, a choice marking a profound sense of identity, which necessarily arose in the wake of the Anglo-Saxons divisions (Britannica, n.d.). Offa's Dyke, a great linear earthwork which extends from the shores of the Dee estuary in the north to Severn Estuary in the south, was built in about 785 AD at the commands of the Anglo-Saxon king Offa of Mercia, in order to define the boundary between his kingdom and the Welsh lands, thus marking for centuries the demarcation line between England and Wales; today, Offa's Dyke remains one of the most significant as well as longest and ancient structures in Britain (History Extra website, 2016).

As opposed to the Cumbric and Cornish languages, which went extinct following the collapse of the Cumbric-speaking kingdom of Strathclyde in 1018 (Omniglot website, 2021), and the fall of the kingdom of Cornwall in c. 877 AD (although Cornish officially survived until the death of the

last Cornish native speaker in 1777) (Cornwall Guide website, 2016), Welsh is the only Brythonic language that had an interrupted history until the twenty-first century, whose roots in the island trace back somewhere between 2,500 and 4,000 years, compared with few more than 1,500 years in the cases of English and Scottish Gaelic. As J. R. R. Tolkien once remarked “Welsh is the senior language of the men of Britain” (Davies, 2014).

The development from Brythonic to Welsh is believed to have taken place somewhere between 400 AD and 700 AD, though it might have taken place earlier in the spoken language. Brythonic, like Latin, was a synthetic language, signifying that most of its meaning was conveyed through the change in word endings, while in analytic languages, such as modern English and Welsh, the meaning is communicated by prepositions or particular words order. Despite the paucity of written evidence stating the exact time in which this gradual change occurred, such distinction is what marks the birth of the Welsh language and its separation from the Brythonic dialect (Gęsikiewicz, 2021).

1.2 Early, Old and Middle Welsh

With the transition from Brythonic to Welsh, the historical phase known as Early Welsh began, and lasted from its beginnings to 850. The only Welsh surviving from this period lies in a seventh-century inscription on a tombstone in Tywyn Church, in the region of Meirionnydd, some place names, and marginal notes or glosses. Old Welsh, the subsequent phase in the history of the language, extended from c. 850 to 1100. Again, little evidence exists; of the material that has survived unaltered from this period, only marginal notes and brief texts and poems are left. The “Surrexit Memorandum”, an account of the settlement of a territorial dispute written in the margin of an eighth-century gospel book, is often considered to be the oldest Welsh-language text. In addition, two series of three-line poems written in c. 880 are kept safe as marginal notes within the “Juvenius manuscript”, the earliest surviving literary text in Old Welsh, which is now preserved in the University of Cambridge Library (Davies, 2006). Despite scarce evidence of Welsh literary

manuscripts before Old Welsh evolved into Middle Welsh, a period extending from 1100 to 1400, much of Welsh literature was most certainly composed in both Early and Old Welsh.

The Old Welsh period coincided with the further English invasions in the eastern part of Wales kingdoms, thus causing the Brythonic people to retreat from the area. But while Welsh patriots and poets were hoping to reappropriate their lands and repel the invaders, the Welsh language was threatened by a major danger, which was represented by the invasion of the Norsemen and the Norse language, the most powerful vernacular of medieval Europe. In order to resist the Norseman enemy, Hywel Dda (Howel the Good), a tenth-century leading Welsh ruler, had started a cooperation with the English, which, however, proved to be ineffective to keep the Norse entirely off the island (Mercer, 2004); before the threat was over, Welsh had acquired some Scandinavian place-names such as Swansea, Anglesey, Bardsey, Milford, and Fishguard (BBC Wales, n.d.).

Hywel Dda is also credited for his codification in the mid-tenth century of the Laws of Hywel Dda, a system of native Welsh legal texts that represented a long-lasting Celtic law tradition which survived for centuries through oral transmission (Ross, 2010), and which provided a precious example of Welsh as a language rich in vocabulary and capable of dealing with very complex matters (Davies, 2006). Nevertheless, the surviving Welsh law manuscripts are not earlier than the thirteenth-century; they were written in Latin and became central in determining Welsh identity and unity in Medieval Wales (The National Library of Wales website, n.d.). A Surviving treasure from this period is also the “Mabinogion”, a collection of eleven stories of early Welsh literature written in Middle Welsh around the twelfth and thirteen-centuries from earlier oral traditions, which depict the mystical world of the Celtic people intertwining myths, tradition, folklore, and history (Johnson, n.d.). Further masterpieces belonging to the Medieval Welsh literary corpus are the “Red Book of Hergest”, which includes a mixture of prose and poetry (BBC Wales, n.d.), the “Book of Aneirin”, a thirteen-century manuscript which commemorates the warriors who died in battle at Catraeth against the Saxons around 600 AD (BBC News, 2013), and the “Book of Taliesin”; Taliesin, along with Aneirin, were the first members of the “Cynfeirdd” (the Early Poets), and are believed to be the founders of the Welsh poetic tradition, although they were probably Cumbrian.

Medieval Wales was also marked by a great appreciation for poetry; the greatest poets were recognised as the “bards”, and were often regarded as possessors of all knowledge about Welsh culture, who preserved old traditions orally, and instilled a national pride in their culture and language. Furthermore, poetry was celebrated through the Eisteddfod, a festival based on poetry competitions dating back to 1176, which was one of the major gatherings among any Welsh communities at the time (Mercer, 2004) and which is still celebrated today as a key component of the Welsh culture with its competitions and performances held entirely in Welsh.

1.3 From the Norman Invasion to the Acts of Union (1536-43)

In the wake of the Norman conquest in 1066, Wales and the Welsh language endured a profound impact: by 1100 AD, Normans owned much of the border and the southern shores of the country, and had organised their territories into almost-independent marcher lordships, each centered on a castle and a borough. Therefore, Wales was divided between the Norman-dominated Marchia Wallie, and the independent Pura Wallia, a division that lasted until the 1536 Act of Union. Norman-French, the language of the Norman leaders, was established within the lordships, and Welsh literature was influenced by French forms and conventions. In addition, French words and names were assimilated into the Welsh language, and even today personal names such as William, Richard, and Robert are popular among the Welsh. Southern and eastern Wales was extensively colonised by Normans and their Flemish and English followers, to such an extent that in some areas Welsh had been eliminated, causing some of the cities to become English-speaking for more than 800 years. Nevertheless, Welsh remained dominant in rural areas and to the north, where several dialects developed, and where most of the people were Welsh-speaking (Britannica, n.d.).

In the fifteenth-century, English came to replace French and Latin in the fields of law, administration, and the social life of the upper classes. Welsh official documents started to imitate English documents both in language and content, and English became the language used for legal transactions, thus obliging the Welsh gentry, even in the most remote parts of the country, to learn

English, and depriving Welsh of its value in favour of English (Gęsikiewicz, 2021). This tendency was later made official by King Henry VIII and his advisor Thomas Cromwell with the Act of Union in 1536 and later in 1542; these superseded the Statute of Rhuddlan, also known as the Statute of Wales, a royal ordinance enacted by Edward I in 1284, which had provided the constitutional basis for the government of Wales Principality after the execution of the Welsh Prince Dafydd ap Gruffydd in 1283, and had introduced the English common law system in Wales, yet allowing the continuance of Welsh legal proceedings within the Principality (Cannon, 2009).

The 1536 Act of Union, provided for the annexation of Wales into England, forbidding the use of Welsh in public administration and the legal system, and making the inhabitants of Wales subjects to the English crown in the same manner as were the inhabitants of England. The Act also established English as the only language of the courts of Wales, and Welsh monoglot speakers were prevented from receiving public office in the territory of the king of England (Academic Kids website, n.d.). This gave birth to the English-speaking Welsh gentry, who had started to send their children to English public schools, and to the belief that not knowing Welsh was considered a sign of high status, which put the Welsh language in a low position, as opposed to English, which was regarded as the language of prestige. It was a process that took at least 250 years and was essentially complete by the end of the eighteenth century, when the Welsh aristocracy had utterly ceased to speak Welsh, and when even lesser gentry throughout Wales had sometimes abandoned Welsh (Procházka, 2014). Therefore, Welsh culture, which had been mainly aristocratic, came into the protection of the peasant class and the middling sort of people, such as artisans, craftsmen, and the lower clergy (Davies, 1999).

It should be noted that the obliteration of the Welsh language was not Henry VIII and Cromwell's real aim; what they had sought to do was to unify all parts of the kingdom, bringing the many marcher lordships in a comprehensive system of counties (Britannica, n.d.), and make sure that every region was governed and administrated in the same way, and implicit in the act was the establishment of a Welsh ruling class proficient in English (BBC Wales,

n.d.). However, the passing of these parliamentary measures proved to be deeply damaging to the Welsh identity, economy, and culture, causing Welsh to lose its own status in its own country.

In the wake of such conditions, the danger posed to Welsh was averted by the Protestant Reformation, which contributed to countering the abandonment of Welsh by the upper class by elevating the Welsh language in church worship, which before the Reformation was English (Davies, 2014). Another contribution came from the spread of the printing press when Sir John Price of Brecon published the first book printed in Welsh in 1547, which reflected his desire for reform in religion and for ordinary people to learn the basic principles of the Christian faith. The book contained the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, including instructions on how to read Welsh (Archer & Peters, 2015).

1.4 The Translation of the Bible and the Establishment of the Educational Movements

In 1563 the English Parliament passed a law, ordering the bishops of Wales and Hereford to guarantee that Welsh translations of the Bible and the Prayer Book were available by 1567, and provided for Anglican church services to be held in the Welsh language as far as possible. It was also hoped that the placement of a Welsh version of the Bible close to its English equivalent in every church would have helped monoglot Welsh speakers to learn English (Parina & Poppe, 2021). The translation of the Bible was first carried out by the Welsh writer William Salesbury, and then completed by the Anglican bishop William Morgan, whose publication in 1588 provided the classical literary language of the poets; Morgan's publication marked a crucial moment in the history of the Welsh language and culture, and helped standardise the literary language of the country (Britannica, n.d.).

In spite of these efforts, by the seventeenth-century, Welsh had lost its standing as a language of high culture. New poets of humble social conditions sought to emulate the ancient greats and produced works to be read by the masses rather than the small elite. Welsh folk literature began to

be published, and from the eighteenth-century onwards, the tradition of the Eisteddfod, was revived. (Mercer, 2004). The Eisteddfodau (plural form) were advertised by Thomas Jones' almanacs, and by the 1730s they became fairly numerous, especially in the north. In them, poets put their skills to the test, and the winner was chaired and his health toasted. Often, the meetings were drunken and boisterous, but by the end of the eighteenth-century, they were turned into more decorous assemblies, which became crucial to Welsh cultural life (Davies, 2014). Religion became a major contribution to the promotion of Welsh; the Welsh Trust educational movement, founded by Thomas Gouge, and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) were established in 1699 and provided books and Welsh-medium schools. Thus, about 545 books in Welsh were published between 1660 and 1730, which included eleven editions of the Bible, fourteen editions of “Canwyll y Cymru” (The Welshman's Candle), and Ellis Wynne's “Gweledigaethu y Bardd Cwsc” (The Visions of the Sleeping Bard), the finest literary opus of the period (Archer, 2015).

In 1731, Griffith Jones, cleric and teacher in the SPCK school in Laugharne, began opening schools with the aim of teaching people of all ages to read the Bible and to learn the Anglican Church catechism. Classes were mainly held during the winter when there were minor agricultural work demands, and when pupils had comprehended the essential concepts of reading and had learned the catechism, the teacher moved towards another school. This was the beginning of the church-based “circulating schools” in Wales, which were cheap, efficient, and flexible, and above all, they were held in Welsh. When Griffith Jones died in 1761, he had founded about 3,325 schools in almost 1,600 different sites, attended by 200,000 adults and children. Literacy gave Welsh a new prominence and highly promoted publications in the language: more than 2,500 Welsh books were published in the eighteenth-century (Davies, 2006). In the period between the translation of the Bible and the Industrial Revolution, the circulating schools were certainly the most pivotal event in the history of the Welsh language (Davies, 2014).

The influence of the church continued with the Nonconformist Methodists' secession in 1811 from the Church of England, and in the aftermath of the Methodist revival, the Calvinist Methodists in Wales were the majority, a fact promoting the Welsh language since Methodist preachers who

spoke Welsh were present in a greater number than Anglicans. Calvinist Methodists were the pioneers of “Sunday Schools”, which, like the circulating schools, were attended by both adults and children, and helped to maintain the levels of literacy in Welsh accomplished by Griffith Jones. This way of using Welsh was not only important at home or among friends, but also in public, and gradually, it became clear that the Anglican church did not support the Welsh language. There were several examples of Anglican priests who were unable or reluctant to preach in their parishioners' native language, and sometimes, monolingual English clergy were promoted more rapidly than their bilingual counterparts, whose sermons could be understood by their flocks (Mercer, 2004).

1.5 Wales in the Era of Industrialisation

During the Industrial Revolution, there was a remarkable development of the coalfield in northeastern Wales and the copper melting in the southwest, particularly in Swansea. Also, there was a considerable growth of the ironworks in the South Wales Coalfield (Britannica, n.d.). The slate industry in Wales, which had grown slowly until the early eighteenth-century, started to expand rapidly until the late nineteenth-century, becoming one of Wales' most important industries. Its major slate-producing areas could be found in northwest Wales, including the Dinorwic Quarry near Llanberis and the Penrhyn Quarry near Bethesda (Jones & Richards, 2004). Hence, new opportunities for the spread of Welsh took place: job openings brought Welsh speakers from rural areas to the towns, as a result of which, a natural and significant increase in population took place by the late eighteenth-century (Britannica, n.d.). In addition, Welsh cultural activities, such as the Eisteddfodau, flourished, and between 1800 and 1850, about three thousand Welsh books and dozen of periodicals were published, of which, the first weekly newspaper was entitled “Seren Gomer” and was founded by Joseph Harris in Swansea in 1814 (The National Library of Wales website, n.d.). In addition, the introduction of inventions and social changes implied the necessity of introducing new words into the Welsh vocabulary; between 1770 and 1794 the Cleric and

lexicographer John Walters published his English-Welsh dictionary containing many useful phrases and idioms, which were later introduced into the written and spoken Welsh vocabulary. In 1803, the antiquarian and grammarian William Owen Pughe published “A Dictionary of the Welsh Language”, which was richer in terms of new vocabulary items. Among Walters and Pughe's Welsh coinages were “geiriadur”- dictionary, “cyngerd”- concert, and “pwyllgor”- committee, which had not formerly been included in the traditional Welsh life (Procházka, 2014).

Some Welsh immigrants were assimilated into the language, but most of them kept their language, thus creating bilingual communities where eventually Welsh declined. Even the Eisteddfod started to give priority to English in order to promote participation, even though the smaller ones were entirely performed in Welsh. Also, public and private schools started to normally use English as a means of instruction, rationalising that children could learn Welsh at home and in the chapel, and reserving English for religious matters, while relegating Welsh to the sacred but easily neglected fields (Mercer, 2004). It was in this period that the infamous “Welsh Not” policy was introduced at school, which provided any pupil who was caught speaking Welsh in class with a wooden board with the engraved letters “WN” to wear around the neck, which would then be given and passed to another possible offender. According to this campaign, the pupil wearing the wooden board at the end of the school day was punished and beaten (Procházka, 2014); it was a practice that left “emotional scars” among the Welsh people and which was painfully remembered for generations (Khleif, 1976).

1.6 The Treachery of the Blue Books and the Introduction of the Education Act

In the wake of a speech in the House of Commons in 1846 by William Williams, a native from Llanpumsaint, Carmarthenshire, a commission was formed to inquire into the state of education in Wales, and in particular, the opportunities afforded to the labouring classes to learn English. By 1 April 1847, the commission, which was composed of three young English barristers who spoke no

Welsh, had compiled a report of 1,252 pages, which was published in three volumes. Its content resulted in a multitude of protests in Wales, and over time this event was referred to as the “Treachery of the Blue Books”, which was named after the binding color used for the final report (Davies, 2006). The latter painted a dark picture of the Welsh society, highlighting the vast divide separating the almost entirely English-speaking affluent classes from the monoglot Welsh poorer classes. Moreover, the report portrayed the Welsh people as dirty, drunk, lazy, ignorant and immoral, and ascribed this to two factors, that is the Welsh language and the chapel (Roberts, 2011). The Blue Books affair had certainly a great effect on the Welsh people's attitude, especially among the young, who started to wish to be more like the English and prefer not to deal with their own language and culture. It also gave voice to a new linguistic nationalism and inspired most of the country's leaders to demonstrate that the Welsh were respectable, honest, and moral people (Davies, 2006).

The Treachery of the Blue Books in the nineteenth-century along with the Darwinian theory regarding the “survival of the fittest”, contributed to a widespread acceptance in Wales that the natural death of Welsh was inevitable when competing with the English language. However, the main reason for this belief was represented by the rise of railway networks, which on the one hand, enabled the Welsh travelings and facilitated the circulation of Welsh publications, but on the other hand, increased the English influx in Wales. As a result, large groups of Welsh people started to emigrate to North America, especially to Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Patagonia, where they established a self-governing community whose descendants still speak Welsh today. Welsh communities also settled themselves throughout England, especially in Liverpool, thus founding a Welsh-speaking urban elite (Mercer, 2004).

A further complicating issue was the introduction of the Education Act, known also as the Forster Act after its sponsor William Forster, the first of several acts which were passed by the Parliament between 1870 and 1893, and which established compulsory English education for children aged between five and thirteen, both in England and Wales (British Library website, n.d.). The Act's effects differed from the practices of the “Revised Code”, which in 1862 had introduced

the harmful “payment by results”, according to which, the teachers' pay depended on their pupils' success in examinations, and whether they could prove to teach both English and mathematics. This shift brought a reinforcement of class differences, and while English was connected to academic successes, Welsh was linked to failures (Thomas, n.d.).

1.7 Welsh in the Twentieth Century

In 1962 the Welsh Language Society (Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg), a pressure group that aimed to oppose the domination of English in Wales public life (Newbold, 2011), was established in South Wales (Cymdeithas website), and was committed to supporting bilingualism in class rather than advocating only English or Welsh teaching. The Society also managed to convince the government to promote Welsh history and geography through the medium of Welsh and to allow the use of bilingual books. Nevertheless, law, commerce and administration became increasingly dominated by the English language; according to the first accurate census that collected such data, the amount of Welsh speakers in 1891 was rising considerably, but the percentage of the Welsh-speaking population was dropping due to the migration process, which was occurring too fast for the Welsh-speaking community to assimilate the incomers (Procházka, 2014). Moreover, generational data showed how bilingual parents preferred having monolingual English-speaking children, a tendency which was much criticised since parents would rather teach their children bad English than proper Welsh. (Mercer, 2004).

In 1893 the University of Wales, consisting of three constituent colleges- Cardiff, Bangor, and Aberystwyth- had been established by Royal Charter in Cardiff as an official attempt to prevent the Welsh language loss. Originally meant to be a Welsh institution, the University of Wales was regarded as one of the most important social and political developments in the nineteenth-century, and today Welsh is only one of the different departments at each campus (University of Wales website). The graduates' success in the language contributed to its prestige, and in the twentieth

century, students of and graduates in Welsh constituted a large percentage of the Welsh literature's practitioners (Davies, 2014).

Despite such awareness and contributions to the Welsh language, the First World War was a huge factor for the language decline in the twentieth century: at least thirty-five thousand Welsh men died, thus causing a lost generation of Welsh speakers. Furthermore, as a result of the Great Depression which devastated Wales during the 1930s, 390,000 people left Wales between 1925 and 1939 in order to seek better life opportunities. During this time, there was a lack of organisation for cultural activities, including the Eisteddfod, and English increasingly became an integral part of life in Wales, where English daily newspapers became more popular, especially during the war, when people wanted to keep updated on the latest news; even once the war was over, many people kept reading English-language newspapers instead of Welsh publications. Radio containing little Welsh began broadcasting from the local BBC offices in Cardiff and Swansea, and popular culture started to show talkies, as well as films from America (BBC Wales, 2014).

Under these circumstances, a further effort was made to save the language, namely the establishment of the Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Welsh League of Youth), and Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru (National Party of Wales), which were respectively founded in 1922 and 1925 to promote the Welsh language and culture. In 1927 W. J. Gruffydd, professor of Welsh at Cardiff, was responsible for the drafting of the Parliamentary report "Welsh in Education and Life", which as opposed to the "Blue Books" in the previous century, presented a vastly different tone and promoted Welsh-medium schools for Welsh speakers (Davies, 2014). Moreover, The Welsh Courts Act of 1942, which was passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom, repealed the language clause of the 1536 Act, and provided that "the Welsh language may be used in any court in Wales by any party or witness who considers that he would otherwise be at any disadvantage by reason of his natural language of communication being Welsh". The Act was in turn repealed by the Welsh Language Act 1967, which expanded the right to use Welsh in legal prosecution to any person, party, or witness who wished to do so (Welsh Language Commissioners, 2017).

As opposed to what was feared by most of the population, World war II did not prove too damaging to the Welsh language; despite the large presence of English refugees within Wales, the latter returned to their homeland shortly after the Victory in Europe day, which was celebrated in 1945, and the major part of those who had remained in Wales, merged with the families that they had joined. Nonetheless, Welsh monoglot communities officially ceased to exist after the 1950s, when, as a result of immigration, the influence of popular culture and rural depopulation, English had reached any Welsh area, thus lowering the probability for the Welsh language to survive (Mercer, 2004).

1.8 The Promotion of Welsh in Recent Times

In the last fifty years, many efforts have been conducted in order to promote and preserve the future of Welsh, such as the launch of S4C (Sianel Pedwar Cymru), and the Welsh-language service BBC Radio Cymru. Of great importance was the establishment in May 1999 of the National Welsh Assembly in Cardiff, today known as Senedd Cymru (Welsh Parliament), which was part of the Labour UK government's plans to devolve power to Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland (Shuttleworth, 2021), and which among its aims are the passing of laws over many key areas of Welsh life, and the promotion and representation of Wales and its people. Furthermore, the Welsh language gained equal status with English by the Welsh Language Act of 1993, and subsequently, it was officially formalised by the Welsh Language Measure 2011, which provided the language with official status, thus obtaining equal status to English (North Wales Police Website, n.d.).

Today, according to the Welsh language data from the Annual Population Survey 2021, there are around 892,200 Welsh speakers in Wales, that is 29.5% of the population aged three or older, including both the native speakers and people who speak Welsh as a second language. The data collected reported a gradual increase per year in terms of the Welsh-speaking population in Wales since March 2010 (25.2%, 731,000) after a gradual decline from 2001 to 2007. Also, there was a

decreasing number of people able to speak Welsh from December 2018 to March 2020 before increasing again since then. According to data, the highest number of Welsh speakers today can be found in Gwynedd (90,700) and Carmarthenshire (94,600) (Annual Population Survey, 2021).

Today, there seem to be many commitments that are contributing to the preservation of the future of the Welsh language, which, according to the Duolingo language learning platform, is now the fastest-growing language in the UK, whose new Welsh learners, according to the firm, have risen by 44% in 2020 for many different reasons, such as education, an interest in Welsh culture and heritage, and a desire to "brain train", especially when considering very long Welsh village names (BBC News, 2020). Among the other factors that now seem to promote the language are a gradual increase in the education sector of Welsh-medium schools, as well as national pride, which although having been suffocated by English for too much time, is now celebrating and emphasising the uniqueness of the Welsh language and culture. The survival of Welsh strongly relies on the Welsh people's willingness to make the language an integral part of everyday life, a vision that is highlighted by the Welsh government, whose current goal consists in reviving and promoting Welsh and reaching by 2050 a million Welsh speakers who have both the opportunity and the competence to use Welsh in all aspects in their daily life. In 2017 the government declared that "this is certainly a challenging ambition, but a challenge we believe is worthwhile and necessary if we are to secure the vitality of the language for future generations" and added that it is not possible "to insist that parents and carers use the Welsh language with their children, that children play together in Welsh or that someone uses Welsh socially. We can, however, work to provide the conditions to facilitate an increase in the number of Welsh speakers and an increase in the use of Welsh...If we want to achieve this, the whole nation has to be part of the journey – fluent Welsh speakers, Welsh speakers who are reluctant to use the language, new speakers who have learned the language, and also those who do not consider themselves to be Welsh speakers. Everyone has a part to play, and we want everyone to contribute to realising our ambition...Together, we can enable the Welsh language to grow, and create a truly bilingual Wales with a living language for all" (Welsh Government, 2017). According to new research which was published by The Royal Society, and which was carried out

by scientists at Canterbury University in New Zealand, Welsh would not be at risk of disappearing, and 74% of the population will be proficient Welsh speakers by the year 2300. After looking at the future of endangered languages, researchers at Canterbury University declared that despite the future of Welsh would remain "relatively fragile" for the next 50-100 years, the Welsh language, which was declared "dead" by the Times newspaper in 1866, would thrive in the next 300 years (Nation Cymru website, 2020).

2

The Literary and Cultural Development of Welsh in the Twentieth Century

By the early decades of the twentieth century, Wales witnessed the emergence of both Welsh men and women writing in English, especially in the south of Wales, who gave birth to new literature. Originally, this new way of writing had been defined as “Anglo-Welsh literature”; however, over time, the term was replaced by “Welsh Writing in English”, which soon became the subject of debate in Wales.

Twentieth century Wales also saw the establishment of BBC Radio Wales, a Welsh Radio station, and BBC Radio Cymru, a Welsh-language radio network; S4C (Sianel Pedwar Cymru), the first television channel purposely designated for a Welsh-speaking audience, was also established in this time, and its creation was essential for the preservation of the Welsh language.

Furthermore, the introduction of Welsh-medium education aiming at promoting Welsh and English equally was another commitment in the twentieth century to preserving the language and attempting to develop the students' self-confidence and respect for their language and culture, as well as increasing their awareness of their cultural heritage.

2.1 Welsh Writing in English in the Twentieth Century

“Welsh writing in English” is a term used today to describe those works written in English by Welsh authors, especially if the latter have subject matters which are related to Wales (particularly in the case of Anglo-Welsh poetry), or if they present a Welsh influence in terms of language usage or syntax (Academic Kids website, n.d.). The term, which reflects the complexities of cultural and literary identity in Wales, has replaced the former term “Anglo-Welsh literature”, which was coined in 1922 by the Welsh translator and poet Harold Idris Bell, (Aaron, 2017), and which was

commonly used by the 1930s and actively promoted in the 1950s and 1960s to distinguish Anglo-Welsh literature from Welsh-language literature. However, the term “Anglo-Welsh” was rejected by many critics and writers who disliked its connotations of separated national allegiance or saw in the term an acceptance of colonial bond to England, a political vision that led many writers in Wales to prefer the phrase “Welsh writer in English” rather than “Anglo-Welsh writer” (Lloyd, 1992).

As a result of rapid industrialisation in Wales in the nineteenth-century, and the arrival in the south of the country of many settlers from England and Ireland, Wales in the twentieth century was divided into two parts: Welsh-speaking Wales, which included the mountainous north-west and the agricultural west, and industrial South Wales, which constituted most of the population. In the latter half of the twentieth century, there was a decline of Welsh speakers to around 20%, and when the steel and coal industries took over, much of the population in the South, which was centred in Cardiff and Swansea, had been speaking English for over a century (Newbold, 2011). Such division gave birth to two different kinds of literature in Wales: Welsh-language literature, which apart from Latin and Greek is regarded as the oldest literature in Europe, its rich history continuing since the sixth century to the present (Britannica, 2015), and the above-mentioned writing in English in South Wales, especially in the mining valleys, which has become world-wide renowned through the literary contributions of many poets, such as R.S Thomas, Dylan Thomas, Alun Lewis, and David Jones.

Despite the small amount of English fiction and poetry in Wales before the twentieth century, several authors, such as the poets and critics Raymond Garlick and Roland Mathias, proved that some English-language works written in Wales dated back to the fifteenth-century (Lloyd, 1992). In his anthology “An Introduction to Anglo-Welsh Literature”, Garlick suggested that the first Anglo-Welsh poem might have been written in 1470 by a Welsh student at Oxford; the poem, named “Hymn to the Virgin”, had been written in English, and internal rhyme, as well as alliteration patterns originating from traditional Welsh poetic forms, had been employed. Nevertheless, it is in the twentieth century that most critics place the beginnings of Welsh writing in English (Collins, 1982).

Welsh writing in English has sometimes been a matter of fierce discussion among critics in Wales, who couldn't agree on the future prospects for such literature, as well as on the definition to give to it (Lloyd, 1992). However, it is important to make a distinction between writing in English, which as mentioned above, is about or related to Wales, and writers who might be of Welsh origin, but who are English-language mainstream writers, such as Richard Hughes and Edward Thomas (Newbold, 2011).

In December 1938, Saunders Lewis, a Welsh poet and leading Welsh dramatist of the twentieth century, delivered to the Cardiff branch of the Guild of Graduates of the University of Wales a lecture named “Is There an Anglo-Welsh Literature?” an event that, according to Raymond Garlick, marked “the beginning of serious Anglo-Welsh studies” (Aaron, 2017). Lewis gave his question a negative answer, as he argued that only Welsh-language literature could appropriately express the experience of history in Wales, since English-language writers had abandoned their Welsh identity and culture, and sought an English audience (Howells, 2020). Whereas, in his 1968 study of the genre entitled “The Dragon Has Two Tongues”, the novelist and poet Glyn Jones, defined Welsh literature written in English as the literary production of “Welsh men and women who write in English about Wales” (Fear, 2018).

While there were many disagreements on Lewis' judgment concerning the English-speaking community of Wales, at the time of his lecture, Welsh writing in English was mainly based on poetry and short stories and was written for England since the main market was led by London publishers (Collins, 1982). Regardless of whether Welsh writers in English of the 1930s and 1940s deemed it preferable to pursue a literary career in London rather than in Wales, they had not much choice but to send their works to English publishing houses and magazines in order to be published, and therefore write for an English audience. For instance, although R. S. Thomas published his first poems in the “Dublin magazine” with Druid's Press, a small press in west Wales, he was given critical attention only when his later works were run by English publishers, starting with Hart-Davis and then Macmillan. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, two important literary magazines were founded in Wales: “Wales”, which was edited by Keidrych Rhys, and the “Welsh Review”, under

Gwyn Jones. However, it was not until the mid-1960s that an appropriate amount of literary magazines existed, together with book publishers sustaining flowering literature and audience in Wales (Lloyd, 1992).

Different complex and questionable issues contributed to shaping Welsh writing in English since the 1920s, among which some Welsh writers' demand to depict only authentic literature of Wales, the birth of a Welsh nationalism engaged in preserving Welsh, the doubts on whether literature in English might be properly distinguished from English literature, and whether a long-established English literary tradition could have existed in Wales. Twentieth century-Welsh and Welsh writers using English had a wide consciousness of the conflicts and tensions resulting from the existence of two distinct language communities and literatures within the same nation, and such awareness strongly influenced the evolution of Welsh writing in English. (Lloyd, 1992).

Some Anglo-Welsh writers in the twentieth century had been living in Welsh-speaking families, such as Dylan Thomas, Caradoc Evans, Siân James, and Glyn Jones. Others had acquired Welsh once adults, such as R.S. Thomas, Raymond Garlick, and Gillian Clarke, while some writers had little or no knowledge of Welsh, as in the case of Robert Minhinnick and Tony Curtis (Lloyd, 1992). However, in each of these cases, Welsh had always been present in the awareness of these people (Newbold, 2011), and regardless of their relation to the Welsh language and literature, and since Welsh had been a political issue in Wales, all Welsh writers in the twentieth century would feel the tension between the two cultures and languages. Many argued that the sensibility of Welsh writers in English has been essentially shaped by the Welsh culture, language, and landscapes, and that Welsh would continue to shape Welsh writing in English and attitudes towards the latter. For instance, Tony Conran, a Welsh poet and translator who, with his flourishing career as a writer for more than fifty years, provided Wales' literary life with a great and intelligent contribution (Hughes, 2021), claimed that interaction “between the two language-groups of Wales occur on all cultural levels” (Lloyd, 1992).

Among the many Welsh writers in English, Caradoc Evans, Dylan Thomas, and Idris Davies are regarded as the representatives of the first phase of Welsh writing in English in the twentieth

century, who attracted the English readers by depicting Wales as a different, strange, and exotic country (Collins, 1982).

In 1915 Caradoc Evans published “My People: Stories of the Peasantry of West Wales”, a collection of short stories which is generally considered the beginning of Welsh writing in English (New Directions Publishing website, 2011). Set in rural Welsh-speaking Cardiganshire, the collection, which according to the author, was inspired by real stories he had heard and events he had witnessed during his sad and impoverished childhood, immediately brought him much notoriety. However, his work also provoked a significant manifestation, his view of Wales appearing to the Welsh people as odd, dismissive, and misrepresented, and the kind of language used felt like a betrayal of Welsh culture; in England, Evans' work was much lauded for its realism and satire, as well as for its artistic style, but in Wales “the knives were out for its author, with the Western Mail branding him the "best hated man" in the country” (BBC News, 2015). Moreover, Evans was much criticised as a result of his declared reasons for writing in English, that is to reach a wide audience and to earn money. Since his focus was Wales, the “My People” author could have used Welsh, his mother tongue, to write, but there is no doubt that Evans' decision to convey his subject through English, was an essential element of his artistic view (Newbold, 2016).

In a similar way, Dylan Thomas, who, despite his choice to write only in English is regarded as one of the greatest and most talented Welsh poets of all time (Poetry Foundation website, 2022), would take his inspiration from his childhood experiences of the rural Welsh countryside, which are reflected in many of his poems that he began writing in his notebooks at the age of fifteen; from these poems, he drew his first and second collections of poems, entitled “18 poems” and “25 poems”. Like many Welsh writers in English of the day, Thomas moved to London seeking literary success, and with the publication of “18 Poems” in 1934, he began to draw the attention of successful and distinguished poets, such as T.S. Eliot and Edith Sitwell (Johnson, n.d.).

Much of Dylan’s popularity relied on his descriptive lyrical prose and his ability to portray Wales in a way that Welsh people in the industrial age had never seen before. However, his depiction of ‘Welshness’ was held dear to many Welsh men and women's hearts. Differently from

many of his contemporaries, Thomas' poetry was not focused on the gloomy images of the industrial depression; when he would refer to industrial terminologies, such as in the poem “All All And All”, he indeed merged it with the beauty of nature (Johnson, n.d.). One of Thomas' best-known works is “Under Milk Wood”, which was originally written as a radio play and then adapted as a stage play, and which was published in 1954 (Britannica, 2015). Presenting a rich imagination both in language and characterisation, the play relates a day in the lives of the inhabitants of an imaginary Welsh coastal village of Llareggub in Wales, which presents similarities with New Quay people and locations; through this work, Thomas fully managed to express his sense of the wonderful flavor and variety of life (Discover Ceredigion website, n.d.).

Thomas much admired the work of Idris Davies, one of the leading working-class poets to have written in English, and a drinking companion of the young Dylan Thomas. Davies wrote from a Socialist perspective and became the archetypal poet of the mining valleys in south Wales in the first half of the twentieth century. Among his best-known works is “The Bells of Rhymney” (from his 1938 debut collection “Gwalia Deserta”), a ballad recounting the story of a mining accident in the town, that was later adapted into music and recorded by many famous folk singers such as Pete Seeger and Judy Collins (Caerphilly County Borough website, n.d.). “Angry Summer” is another of Davies' renowned works, which is considered to be the author's finest poem, while “Selected Poems” is Davies' last volume produced a month before his death in 1953 (Archives Hub website, n.d.), the same year as Dylan Thomas.

In 1937, the Welsh poet and painter David Jones published “In Parenthesis”, an epic poem based on Jones' experiences in World War I (Faber website, n.d.), which marked the first evidence of a different approach towards Wales in Welsh writing in English. This approach was basically a new and sensitive concern for the historic and cultural heritage of Wales and was reflected in the poetic works by David Jones and R.S Thomas, who had respectively published “The Stones of the Field” in 1946 and “An Acre of Land” in 1952. As Roland Mathias argued, these new writers, who although were occasionally considered a group, worked independently of one another, "were aware of the degree of exploitation that English-speaking Wales had suffered at the hands of some of their

predecessors and were determined to offer themselves as part of a continuing tradition, one which had its roots in the history of Wales and its culture in the Welsh language”. Therefore, as opposed to their predecessors, these writers were keen to preserve Wales traditions and culture, and as Raymond Garlick put it in “An Introduction to Anglo-Welsh Literature”, they wrote: “in English, but out of the experience of being Welsh.” They wrote about the distinguished characteristics of Wales and did not write for England but for Wales, hoping to interpret the Welsh experience for its English-speaking people (Collins, 1982).

The poetry of R. S. Thomas, a Welsh nationalist poet and Anglican priest who was nominated in 1995 for the Nobel Prize for Literature by the Arts Council of England and the Welsh Academy, is renowned for presenting political, cultural, and spiritual issues in the twentieth century Wales, which were inspired by the Welsh landscapes and its relation to the people living there, as well as the tough lives of farm labourers, who are embodied by the author's main protagonist Iago Prydderch (Discover Ceredigion website, n.d.). For R. S. Thomas, Iago represented the archetype of the rural Welshman, a symbol of man’s predicament and strength, and his poems would often present gloomy landscapes of a dead nation that the Welsh people allowed the English conquerors to plunder and destroy (My Poetic Side website, n.d.).

Despite an initial inclination to support the idea of Welsh writers producing English-language literature “compatible with the literary tradition in Welsh”, thus originally contributing to a slow acceptance of Welsh writing in English in Wales and abroad, R. S. Thomas growing political convictions to conserve a distinct culture in Welsh led him to change his mind (Lloyd, 1992). In an interview given in 1990, he stated “What is written in Welsh is Welsh literature of varying quality. What is written in English has to strain very hard indeed to merit the description of Welsh writing in English, which is nonsense anyway” (Krischak et al., 2013). Furthermore, in his 1978 essay “The Creative Writer's Suicide” (from Selected Prose), R. S. Thomas described his anguished struggle with the contradiction between writing in English and remaining politically faithful to the Welsh language and culture (Lloyd, 1992). R. S. Thomas is not the only writer to have initially supported the development of English-language literature to then disown and attack it: in 1985 Harri Webb, an

English poet and political nationalist, claimed that he would no longer support Anglo-Welsh literature, which he defined as “a load of rubbish” that has “only marginal relevance to Wales” (Marcus et al., 2004).

In 1996 R. S. Thomas gave a lecture at Kings College London, whose title was “a Problem of Translation” stating that “My country, Cymru, to be understood presents a problem of translation, and, if it is to maintain a separate and valuable identity, it must continue to do so.” In addition, the poet expressed his loathing for the term “United Kingdom” and added that “no-one who cannot read and speak Welsh fluently, and is unfamiliar with our history, our intimate life, our mythology and secret places, (should) boast that he knows this land and its people” (Pearce, 2015). According to the author, the translation process represented a threat since it provided the systematic removal of the source language, thus rendering it unnecessary, something optional (Newbold, 2011).

However, by the time R. S. Thomas delivered the lecture in 1996, it had become clear that the Welsh language was experiencing a revival, especially by the 1980s with the establishment of the Welsh television channel Sianel Pedwar Cymru (S4C), which quickly gained a reputation for its high-quality programmes, and the launch of the Welsh station BBC Radio Wales. At the time, parents had also earned the right to send their children to Welsh language schools in every part of Wales, thus leading to a flowering of Welsh-medium schools in the English-speaking south (Newbold, 2011). Furthermore, with the development in the 1980s and 1990s of a more devolved and confident Wales, novels started to appear in great number compared to when Welsh writers in English would favour short stories over the novel for most of the twentieth century. These years witnessed the establishment of bilingual publishing houses, such as Y Lolfa and Seren, which were respectively founded in 1967 and 1981 (Evans & Fulton, 2019), and, as will be later shown, the spread of a young generation of creative writers who aimed at fiction as the best means to grab the quick changes occurring in Wales (Newbold, 2011); these writers demonstrated that their choice to write in English was not necessarily a reflection of their inability to speak Welsh or the abandonment of their language and culture, and thus marked the beginning of a new attitude towards both the Welsh and English languages.

2.2 Welsh Through the Media: The Establishment of Radio and S4C

On 13 February 1923 at 17.00, BBC broadcasting in Wales started when the British Broadcasting Company opened its station in Cardiff, representing one of the eight stations in Britain then in existence (Medhurst, n.d.). At the time, very few people possessed a radio, and English was the principal language used. Only occasionally a Welsh song or item was broadcast, but nothing more than that. Originally, the Cardiff station was the centre in South Wales and the west of England, and the creation of a service entirely in Welsh seemed unlikely. Indeed, when the Swansea station was established in December 1924, it received the majority of its programmes from Daventry, the centre that produced programmes for all of Britain. In this period, the BBC created an English-language service in Wales, despite protests that grew in the 1930s, with ten of the thirteen county boards demanding better service for Wales. Nevertheless, as opposed to Scotland, which received its own service, Wales was not provided with the same chance by the BBC, the latter claiming the impossibility of doing so given Wales' delicate and difficult situation (Davies, 2006).

In 1935 the BBC officially opened the first studio in Bangor, where the first person to broadcast from the BBC was the former Prime Minister David Lloyd Georg (Crump, 2015) and which began transmitting more programmes in Welsh; a fact, however, that didn't please listeners in the west of England. Even Sir John Reith, the director-general of the BBC, who initially refused the establishment of an autonomous provision for Wales, eventually realised how the station's double function didn't please anyone, and as a result, the Welsh region of the BBC started broadcasting in 1937, thus marking its own victory (Davies, 2006).

By the late 1940s and 1950s, Welsh-language radio reached the peak of its popularity, with different Welsh broadcasters, such as T. Rowland Hughes, creating useful and interesting programmes, and writers providing Welsh listeners with translations of the most prestigious literary talks and dramas. Furthermore, in the 1950s, children were eager to listen to the popular series "S.O.S. Galw Gari Tryfan", and many entertainment programmes, such as "Noson Lawen" and "Raligamps", which became very successful and achieved very high ratings (Gęsikiewicz, 2021).

In 1953, Wales was given its own Broadcasting Council, and some of its members started to demand an increase in Welsh-language programmes. Yet, as would subsequently be the case with television, most of those who received the Welsh Home Service, a national and regional radio station, did not speak Welsh, and thus objected to the introduction of more programmes they could not understand. A solution was reached in the 1970s with the employment of VHF (very high frequencies wavebands) and in 1977 Wales was offered the choice to resign from Radio 4, which had, in turn, replaced the BBC home service, with Welsh on VHF and English on the medium wave. Such division was completed with the establishment in 1978 of Radio Wales and Radio Cymru, thus giving Wales a comprehensive service both in English and Welsh. At first, Radio Cymru did not broadcast only in Welsh, but at the end of the 1990s, it started providing listeners with a whole sequence of Welsh programmes starting from 6 a.m. to 12 p.m. (Davies, 2014).

Radio Cymru proved to be beneficial to the Welsh record industry, especially pop music, and also provided greater exposure for popular sports. As many topics were covered with this new programming, many new words had to be coined. In this regard, Radio Cymru has rendered an excellent service to the language, providing the Welsh listeners with a new vocabulary, and allowing them to familiarise themselves with it through constant listening at home (Davies, 2006).

Today, radio continues to be very popular in Wales, with Welsh programmes also transmitted on commercial stations, such as Radio Ceredigion and Red Dragon Radio, and with Radio Cymru attracting 147.000 listeners per week, a number that, with the Welsh Government aiming to reach one million Welsh speakers by 2050, could increase further in the years ahead (Jones, 2022).

On Monday 1 November 1982, Sianel Pedwar Cymru (S4C- the Welsh fourth channel) began broadcasting at 18.00: twenty-two hours of programmes in Welsh would be transmitted every week, together with English-language programmes from the Channel 4 service. Today, S4C broadcasts 115 hours of programmes each week completely in Welsh and commissions independent producers throughout Wales in order to produce most of its programmes, such as ITV Cymru Wales, the independent television franchise for Wales. The Welsh-language channel boasts a number of programmes such as drama, music, sport, news, entertainment and events and includes several

services for children, such as “Cyw” for a younger audience, “Stwnsh” for slightly older children, and programmes for adolescents. Today S4C's main offices are located in Canolfan S4C Yr Egin, Carmarthen, but also in Gwynedd, Caernarfon, and in Central Square, Cardiff (S4C website, n.d.).

However, the creation of Sianel Pedwar Cymru was met with many obstacles along its path, and the campaign that led to its launch is one of the most impressive events in the recent history of the Welsh language.

In 1960 more than half of the Welsh households had a television set, and after the establishment of relay stations, the percentage had increased to ninety-two by 1969; at the time it had become clear that television had become an integral part of the lives of Welsh inhabitants. The BBC had been producing Welsh-language programmes since 1952, following the opening of a transmitting station at Wenvoe, and the independent commercial company Television Wales and West (TWW) at St Hilary in 1958. By the early 1960s, the BBC and the TWW were broadcasting about twelve hours a week, and thanks to the guidance of brilliant producers such as Hywel Davies, many distinct programmes in Welsh were created (Davies, 2014). BBC Wales was founded in 1964 with the requirement of broadcasting twelve hours of programmes per week, half of which had to be in Welsh.

However, as the majority of English-language speakers could not understand Welsh, and thus had no interest in watching Welsh-language programmes, these latter were restricted to the late night or in the afternoon, when the number of viewers was lower (Gęsikiewicz, 2021). Also, when an alternative English-language service was available, as was the case in the most populated areas in the north-east and south-east, many people aligned their aerials in order to receive English-language programmes, thus avoiding watching both new Welsh programmes and English-language programmes about Wales. Nevertheless, in some areas lacking an alternative service, many people were compelled to watch Welsh-language programmes, and although these latter comprised less than 10% of the total production, and an English programme was broadcast on ITV when there was a Welsh one on BBC, many protests arose. Since almost the totality of programmes broadcast were in English, including the programmes transmitted during peak hours, the number of people wishing

to watch Welsh programmes also increased (Davies, 2014).

Eventually, both English-monoglot speakers and Welsh speakers agreed that the introduction of a separate television channel broadcasting in Welsh was the only solution, which was later adopted. Nevertheless, this arrangement could not please everyone: on one hand, English speakers were dubious about the creation of Welsh-language programmes given the small number of Welsh monoglot speakers; on the other hand, when English and Welsh programmes were interspersed, many non-Welsh speakers kept watching, and it was thus feared that the introduction of a separate Welsh channel would have caused the loss of these viewers (Davies, 2006).

At the time, there were speculations about the establishment of a fourth channel in order to meet the minority interests, and in 1974 the notion of a Welsh channel was supported at a national conference held by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff. In 1974 the Crawford Committee declared itself in favour of the Welsh fourth channel, and its report was accepted by the Labour Party. Nonetheless, the Conservative Party won the election in that same year, and although it had originally supported the creation of the Welsh channel in its election manifesto, the new Home Secretary William Whitelaw declared in a speech held in Cambridge four months later that he was against the establishment of a Welsh fourth channel, and instead announced his intention to strengthen the existing service. This event gave birth to many acts of civil disobedience, including refusals to renew the television licences and occupations at BBC and HTV studios. In 1980 Gwynfor Evans, the former president of Plaid Cymru, threatened he would go on hunger strike unless the Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher fulfilled its commitment to supply a Welsh-language TV service. However, before Mr. Evans announced his hunger strike, the Government had capitulated and agreed to fulfill its promise. As a result, Sianel Pedwar Cymru started broadcasting in 1982 (Shipton, 2009).

In 1998 a new digital channel broadcasting in Welsh for twelve hours was launched, and since 1999 S4C started to be available throughout Europe via satellite. Despite many doubts about the possibility for a half million people to sustain a high-standard television channel, S4C managed to create a variety of extraordinary programmes (Davies, 2006). Its services received praise for

reporting Welsh-language news from all over the world, and “Pobol y Cwm” (People of the Valley), an evergreen Welsh soap opera produced by the BBC since 1974, is S4C's most popular programme. This programme continues to attract up to 250,000 viewers and was briefly broadcast in 1994 across the United Kingdom on BBC Two with English subtitles, like most of S4C's programmes (Lewis, 1995).

Furthermore, many programmes broadcast by S4C have been sold abroad, such as the two Welsh pre-school children's programmes “Sali Mali”, and the live action series “Mees”, which were transmitted in Arabic on Al Jazeera's Children's Channel (WalesOnline website, 2006). Also, the TV detective drama “Y Gwyll” (Hinterland), filmed in Aberystwyth, was bought in 2013 by the television company DR Denmark, expecting that both the series and the landscape of Ceredigion would please the Danish viewers (BBC News, 2013).

The establishment of S4C contributed greatly to the revival of the Welsh language and provided many Welsh speakers with job opportunities using the language. The channel's success provided new hope for the future of the language, and independent companies producing television programmes for S4C are an essential part of the Welsh economy, in particular in the Welsh-speaking areas (Gęsikiewicz, 2021). Today, Welsh can be regarded as one of the few European minority languages that can claim to have an independent television service (Davies, 2006).

2.3 The Promotion of Welsh-Medium Education in Wales

If broadcasting was one of the most controversial subjects where the Welsh language was concerned, education was no less; a significant amount of efforts over the past fifty years was invested by those who were interested in the prosperity of Welsh, in order to promote the language through education, a commitment that was mostly realised as a result of parents' willingness to ensure their children a Welsh education.

By the mid-1940s Welsh was the medium of instruction within primary schools located in predominantly Welsh-speaking areas, and before any Welsh-medium school had been officially

established. Nevertheless, English was the dominant language in all other schools (Davies, 2006). The first Welsh-medium primary school was established in Aberystwyth in 1939 by Syr Ifan ab Owen Edwards, a Welsh academic and founder of Urdd Gobaith Cymru (The Welsh League of Youth) (Nation Cymry website); it was a private institution that was opened about four weeks after the outbreak of World War II when the flood of English evacuees was moved to the Welsh countryside. However, given the high number of children in the local schools and the increasing use of English as an everyday language, in particular, among Welsh-speaking children, a group of parents led by Edwards, chose to establish an entire Welsh-medium private school, which turned out to be very successful, and which led parents from other areas to ask education authorities to open such schools (Khleif, 1976).

An important step for education through the medium of Welsh was taken in 1947 when Carmarthenshire Education Committee opened one of its primary schools in Llanelli (Gwyn et al., 2006); this option had been opened to the committee in the wake of the Education Act of 1944, which represented a great change to the education system of England and Wales, stating that children should be educated according to their parents' wishes, and providing the introduction of secondary education for all, the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen, and the supplying of school meals and milk for all children (WCML website, n.d.). In the following years, more Welsh-medium primary schools were established, and in the 1950s the counties of Flintshire and Glamorgan worked hard to guarantee an extensive Welsh-medium primary education, a commitment supported by the establishment in 1952 of the Union of Welsh Medium School Parents (Undeb Rhieni Ysgolion Cymraeg) which later became Parents for Welsh Medium Education (Rhieni Dros Addysg Gymraeg) (Jones, 2006).

Originally, these schools accepted only children from Welsh-speaking families to be educated in their native language, yet, as a result of the school's renowned educational excellence, non-Welsh-speaking parents began requiring admittance for their children as well, and once their demand was granted, a quick expansion of these schools took place. At the end of the 1950s, most of the schools' pupils came from English-speaking homes, and by 1962 there were thirty-six Welsh-

medium primary schools attended by 3795 pupils, while 61 Welsh-medium schools were attended by 8,500 children by the middle of the 1970s. Non-Welsh-speaking parents were astonished to see how their children could effortlessly speak both English and Welsh; it was thus evident how the influence of parents was essential in the development of these schools, which were indeed established mainly because of parental pressure, a fact explaining the varied provision of Welsh-medium education depending on the different areas (Davies, 2006).

Along with the increase of Welsh-medium schools, was the establishment of Welsh-medium nursery education: in 1971 a group of parents decided to establish Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM- Nursery Schools Movement), a voluntary organisation that aimed to provide children from early years to school-age with services and learning experiences through the medium of Welsh (Mudiad Meithrin website, 2021); at the time, there were 68 schools throughout Wales with 950 pupils, a number that, after the Mudiad Meithrin organisation was officialised, grew to over 500 schools with around 13,000 children by 2012. By 2005 MYM was in charge of providing for 10,000 children and 450 Ti a Fi (Toddler Groups for children aged under 2, 5 years), which were attended by 6,823 children (Davies, 2014). As a result of this growth, demands for Welsh-medium education naturally increased, especially in Cardiff, where the growth of Welsh-medium schools has resulted in many young Welsh speakers who would spend their lives in large towns and cities, thus significantly varying the social basis of the language. Today, seventeen Welsh-medium primary schools and three Welsh-medium secondary schools are located in Cardiff (Cardiff Council website, n.d.).

In the 1940s Welsh was among the subjects studied in most of the secondary schools in Wales; schools in English-speaking areas would generally teach Welsh in the same manner as French, whereas, in Welsh-speaking areas, Welsh was the only subject to be taught through the medium of Welsh. At the beginning of the 1950s, some secondary schools would use Welsh as a means of teaching specific subjects, such as Welsh history and religion, however, it was not until the Flintshire County Council established Ysgol Glan Clwyd in Rhyl in 1956 and Ysgol Maes Garmon in Mold in 1961, that secondary schools began teaching mostly through the Welsh language.

Glamorgan followed by establishing Ysgol Rhydfelen near Pontypridd in 1962.

Thus, by the mid-1980s there were fifteen similar schools, especially in the English-speaking north-east and south-east; yet, some of these schools, such as those at Carmarthen, Bangor, and Aberystwyth, were located in traditionally Welsh-speaking towns. To facilitate the growth of these schools was the rearrangement of secondary instruction following the introduction of comprehensive schools, most of which were bilingual rather than Welsh-medium schools, given that science subjects were generally taught through English. Furthermore, by the 1980s schools in Welsh-speaking areas, in particular, Gwynedd and Dyfed, were also providing a higher number of subjects through the medium of Welsh (Davies, 2014).

In 1988 the National Curriculum for Wales was introduced as part of the Education Reform Act, which provided Welsh as a core subject, together with English, math, and science (Daugherty & Elfed-Owens, 2003); since 1999, all secondary schools were compelled to teach Welsh as a second language to students until sixteen years old. Such a decision led to significant implications in terms of the number of teachers and the number of resources required: for those wishing to practice the teaching of Welsh or teaching through the medium of Welsh, special scholarships were offered, and the Language Resource Centre at Aberystwyth began actively producing a great amount of materials (Davies, 2014). These activities were originally coordinated by PDAG (the Committee for the Development of Welsh-medium Education), which was established in 1987 to promote the wider use of Welsh as the medium of instruction in all sectors of the Welsh education system, both in academic studies and in professional training and education. Nevertheless, the PDAG's functions have been replaced by the Curriculum Council for Wales since 1994 (Elfed-Owens, 1996).

During the first years of their existence, the University of Wales' colleges did not use Welsh as a medium of instruction at all: members of the Welsh department at Cardiff started lecturing in Welsh in the 1920s, while by the 1940s all such departments were teaching almost entirely in Welsh. In the 1950s language enthusiasts suggested that one of the university colleges should provide a whole range of courses taught in Welsh, a proposal that was rejected by the university

authorities. Nevertheless, the university promised to increase the use of Welsh at the same time with the growing number of secondary-education's pupils who were educated through the Welsh language. Therefore, at the end of the twentieth century, about twenty lecturers responsible for teaching through the medium of Welsh were appointed, the majority of whom were in art departments, thus expanding the opportunities for those students studying through the medium of Welsh, who had previously been limited to those studying the language itself. Furthermore, in 1980 the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, introduced its External Degree through the medium of Welsh, and the existence of groups of students attending Welsh-medium university courses led to a major production of Welsh-language scholarly works (Davies, 2014).

A significant event in the history of education was marked by the establishment of Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (the National Welsh College) which was founded in 2011; since its introduction, it strategically plans and promotes Welsh language Higher Education provision across Welsh universities, and works with providers to guarantee and create more Welsh-medium study opportunities for learners and students in Wales. (Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol website, n.d.).

Among the many reasons for which today's parents wish their children to have bilingual education, are the children's building of a fuller understanding of their community and place, along with access to a wide culture, including music, literature, and digital media, which might otherwise be unavailable to them. The students' and parents' decision to attend a Welsh-medium school is also concerned with the advantages in the workplace: the ability to speak Welsh is both an important and preferable skill for a growing number of job fields, such as health, education, retail, and public services. According to Bronwen Hughes, headteacher at the bilingual comprehensive Ysgol Maes Garmon, 80% of the school's pupils come from families where English is the predominant language spoken. Also, contrary to common beliefs, which see the studying through the medium of Welsh as damaging English-language development, “pupils are able to continue with their English and develop it as well” since the Welsh-medium education's purpose is to enable pupils to become fully fluent and confident in both Welsh and English (Flintshire County Council website, n.d.). In addition, since students from Welsh-medium schools are fully bilingual, they can choose to attend

college and university courses in English or Welsh or both of them. In recent times, the work of the Coleg college has claimed that there is an increasing number of university degrees that are partially or entirely available through the medium of Welsh. A growing number of Welsh-medium courses are also available today in Further Education, yet, students from Welsh-medium schools frequently choose to attend English-medium courses at university or college (Cardiff Council website, n.d.).

Throughout the years, education has proved extremely important in contributing to the survival of the Welsh language, which, according to the Schools' Census Results in April 2021, was the medium of education in 440 schools across Wales which were attended by 110,142 pupils (23%). These schools are mostly located in Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Ceredigion, and Carmarthenshire, whereas most schools in the other eighteen local authorities, including Cardiff, Swansea, and Powys, are English medium (Schools' Census Results, 2021).

3

Bilingual Writers in Wales in the Twenty-First Century

In the aftermath of the establishment of Welsh-medium education in English-speaking South Wales, the launch of BBC Radio Cymru, as well as S4C (Sianel Pedwar Cymru), and the creation of the Welsh Assembly, there was a significant change towards the language; a new faith that English and Welsh could coexist without posing a threat to the survival of the Welsh language was born (Newbold, 2016). An excellent example of such an attitude shift regarding the two languages is displayed by a whole contemporary generation of bilingual writers from Wales who choose to use both English and Welsh, often translating their own works or having their own works translated, and who no longer feel to betray their language and culture if they write in English. Some of these authors are Gwyneth Lewis, one of the leading Welsh poets of her generation, and the first writer to be given the Welsh laureateship (The Poetry Archive website, 2014) and Grahame Davies, poet and author of seventeen books both in Welsh and English, including “Everything Must Change” and “Real Wrexham” (Seren Books website, n.d.). Other examples are Rachel Trezise, who, with her first short fiction collection “Fresh Apples” won the Dylan Thomas Prize in 2006 (Doherty, n.d.), and Manon Stefan Ros, author of several children's books and self-translator from Welsh into English for her two novels “Blasu” (The Seasoning) and “Llyfr Glas Nebo” (The Blue Book of Nebo) (Raymond, 2021). This is the framework in which Alys Conran makes her appearance with her debut novel “Pigeon”, which represents an attempt to reach a wide audience and especially celebrate the Welsh language and culture.

3.1. Alys Conran

Originally from North West Wales, Alys Conran is a contemporary writer and daughter of the Anglo-Welsh poet Tony Conran. A graduated in English literature at the University of Edinburgh, Alys Conran completed with distinction her MA in Creative Writing in Manchester, and trained in

Youth and Community Work, carrying out projects in creative reading and writing among unprivileged groups in North Wales (Crump, 2017). Conran spent several years in Barcelona and Edinburgh before returning to her country to live and write, and her short fiction was listed in several competitions, including the Manchester Fiction Prize and the Bristol Short Story Prize. She had also read her poetry and fiction on Radio Four and at The Hay Festival. Her work can be found in various anthologies for Parthian, “The Bristol Review of Books”, and Honno press, but also in magazines including “The Manchester Review” and “Stand”. Furthermore, Conran publishes poetry, literary translations, creative non-fiction, and essays, and she's currently a lecturer in creative writing at the University of Bangor, apart from being a writing workshop leader for other national and international organisations (Storgy, 2017).

Alys Conran's debut novel “Pigeon” was published by the West Wales-based independent publisher Parthian on 1st June 2016, with which Conran won the Wales Book of the Year award 2017 (Literature Wales website, 2017). This was the first instance of a novel being simultaneously published in English and Welsh (Pijin) with translation by the writer, editor, and translator Siân Northey. The novel was also awarded the Rhys Davies Trust Fiction Award, and won the main English-language award, as well as a specially commissioned trophy designed and realised by the Welsh artist Angharad Pearce Jones (The Bangor Aye, 2017). Parthian expressed their pride in the innovation brought by Conran's novel, claiming: “This month, for what we believe to be the first time ever in Wales, we will launch one novel in both Welsh and English on the same day” (Iwa, 2017). Lleucu Siencyn, chief executive of Literature Wales, a national company for the development of literature, defined the novel as “peculiar”, especially since literary translation is often a difficult matter to raise in Wales, where it can potentially lead to prejudices and misunderstandings (Siencyn, 2017). Although translation from English to Welsh is not uncommon in Wales, the contemporary release and the promotion of both versions of the novels had not been accomplished before, thus giving birth to interesting conversations during the promotional tour of the book (Siencyn, 2017).

During an interview given to the Welsh academic and novelist Angharad Price, for the “Wales

Art Reviews” in 2016, Conran explained how the idea about publishing the English and the Welsh versions at the same time came from the publisher Richard Davies, and in doing so, she described as incredible her experience of reading for the first time Siân Northey's translation into Welsh, and therefore “Pigeon” in its own language. The author also stated that she would have never written her novel in Welsh, nor this latter could have never existed in Welsh since what she needed was a tension between the two languages in the book in order to write it in the first place (Wales Arts Review, 2016), a tension that in an interview given to the novelist and Wales Arts Review's editor Gary Raymond in 2017, the author defined as “an energetic tension” rather than a conflict (Wales Arts Review, 2017); this tension appears clear in the space separating the two languages as well as in the novel's character's attitudes and the orthography (Newbold, 2016). Furthermore, unlike some of the bilingual novelists mentioned above, such as Lewis and Ros, Conran declared herself unwilling to translate her work by herself for many reasons, among which her unwillingness to have her first fiction written in Welsh as a translation (Wales Arts Review, 2017), and her refusal to rewrite her own book; she defined, indeed, her writing the novel as a very difficult process since Pigeon was a character she had always been writing somehow, but for which she couldn't find a place until she had “another character for him to misbehave with”. In addition, Conran stated her belief in the process of translation, which she considers to be a creative and a reading process, the reason for which she expressed her impossibility to read the novel like someone else (Wales Arts Review, 2016).

Siân Northey admitted that she had an initial concern about how to make the two languages work; however, she described her experience in translating a Welsh novel from English into Welsh as less hard than what she thought it would be. (Wales Arts Review, 2016). Through the inversion of the text, and the inclusion of several English terms and phrases in her translation, Northey managed to make the Welsh text appear occasionally disrupted, just as the Welsh terms disturb the English version of the novel, and has in this manner been very much capable of remaining faithful to the double language theme. (Siencyn, 2017). After arguing how the process of translating allowed her to discuss the way she writes and made her and Conran discover a similarity between their way of

writing, Northey defined the English language used in the novel and Conran's way of punctuating as unconventional, which is where, according to the translator, her freedom to play and invent started. Furthermore, despite her initial hesitation about publishing the two versions at the same time and with almost identical covers, Northey eventually declared herself to have been persuaded, and to have been very pleased to have used “Pijin” as a title, (the name being a phonetic representation of “Pigeon”), instead of translating it into the Welsh “colomen” (Wales Arts Review, 2016).

With its gloomy post-industrial slate-quarried atmosphere surrounding the novel's never named town, for which however geographical clues suggest it to be the post-industrial village of Bethesda in North Wales, its community (including the chapel), and the ever-present Welsh language, Conran's novel is Welsh in its true essence, but it is also universal since it narrates about the life challenges of a young unconventional boy, whose name Pigeon is an English nickname that he uses to be identified by other people; Pigeon's name also holds a symbolic significance since Pigeon is the kind of boy who generally passes unnoticed wherever he goes, just as the pigeons that everyone sees but often ignores (Parthian Books website, 2016), but he's also a surviving creature, who, as will be demonstrated afterward, carries a message concerning the future of the Welsh language. Depicted as a coming of age journey through difficult childhood memories and a life spent at the margins, Conran's novel (as will be later shown) also relates to some of her own life experiences and echoes the Welsh-language autobiographical novel “Un Nos Ola Leuad” by Caradog Pritchard; first published in 1961, this novel is regarded possibly as the greatest Welsh-language novel ever written in Welsh, and was subsequently translated into English as “One Moonlit Night” by Philip Mitchell in 1995 (BookerTalk website, 2020). The novel, which has been compared to Dylan Thomas' “Under Milk Wood” in its depiction of a village community through the inhabitants' antics, and for its Welshness, shares various similarities with Conran's “Pigeon”, such as poverty, hardship, and the setting of Bethesda, which is Pritchard and Conran's homeland; in Pritchard's novel, Bethesda is only referred to as “the village”, while nearby places are given their real names (Pritchard, 1999). Besides, both of the novels relate the story of a nameless disaffected Welsh boy and his horrible experiences during his abused childhood, as well as his complicated relationship

with his widowed and unstable mother. Nevertheless, adventures, explorations of the surrounding lakes and hills, and joyful moments with good friends, are not missing in both Caradog's and Conran's novel, the latter claiming that “there's a need for more cultural representation that emphasises the complexity of small-town, or rural life, particularly in North Wales”, and aiming with her book “to reflect modern life in North Wales, and just how nuanced and mixed communities here are” (Wales Arts Review, 2017).

3.1.1 Pigeon's Plot

In Conran's novel, Pigeon's story is mainly divided up into two sections: childhood and adolescence. In the first part of the novel, the seven-year-old Pigeon is portrayed as spending much of his time collecting words and going out with Iola, his best friend and loyal companion of adventures. Both of the children come from an unprivileged background; Pigeon, missing his never mentioned-father, lives in a crooked house with his beautiful mother Mari Davies, who used to be a seamstress before starting a relationship with her boyfriend Adrian, who comes from Liverpool, and whom Pigeon always refers to as *He*. After losing his job, Adrian moves permanently into Pigeon's home with his daughter Cher, and soon turns out to be an insincere violent partner and an abusive stepfather. Iola lives in the care of her hippy-dressed and yoga-practicing elder sister Efa, having their mother died, and so as their grandmother “Nain”, who with her rigid methods did her best to run Iola's house and look after her son, before he disappeared under unclear circumstances. Nain also used to daily complain about Iola's grandfather “Taid” who abandoned her in her youth to go to Spain; however, Iola's house is kept alive by lighthearted dances with Efa, music, lighting candles, and cheerfulness of cooking, as opposed to Pigeon and his situation at his home, who after lending Cher his room for what was to be only a weekend, he is made permanently sleep in a damp cold shed at the bottom of the garden. In the meantime, Pigeon's house is increasingly being dominated by Adrian, who constantly watches Pigeon's television and intimidates Mari Davies and even his daughter, who agrees with everything he says to allay his anger.

Through rebellion and the power of imagination, Pigeon, followed by Iola, creates an alternative world that the children use to escape from their everyday routine, and besides playing truant, inventing stories, and messing around at Sunday School, Pigeon identifies Gwyn Gelataio, the half Italian local ice-cream man, as a scapegoat, who, after telling Adrian about the lolly that Pigeon had previously stolen from his van, thus costing the boy a black eye, has become the evil character of Pigeon's fantasies. Gwyn will have to pay the devastating consequences of the children's actions, such as the arson attack on his house, from which he will save himself by getting out of a window, and the dangerous incident on the ice-cream van caused by Cher; the latter, in the belief that Pigeon has been abducted by Gwyn, starts to hit the man until he loses the van's control, and Cher is thus left gravely injured. It is right in these circumstances that Pigeon realises the real motive of his hatred for Gwyn, and that stories cannot truly physically protect him.

After discovering what happened to his daughter, Adrian has a terrible fight to the death with Pigeon, in which the man is killed with a gun and Pigeon is accused of murderer, although the book does not clarify until the end who the real shooter was. Pigeon is thus taken away from his home and made to talk to a police psychologist, from whom, if it weren't for his confession of burning Gwyn's house, he might have been acquitted for self-defense, given his bruises and since Adrian was generally known for his aggressiveness. Therefore, Pigeon is condemned as a dangerous boy who needs to be re-educated and is sent to a borstal in Liverpool where he finds himself unable to speak his mother tongue since Welsh there is an unknown language, and where he is unwilling to speak English. Nonetheless, it will be right here that Pigeon will reflect on the relationship between English and Welsh, and will realise the importance of his language and his origins. Also, Pigeon slowly learns that he is obliged to learn English in order to protect himself within the borstal, and after eight years he returns to Bethesda having turned into a completely transformed fifteen-adolescent, who's reluctant to speak his mother tongue despite Iola's and his mother's attempts to speak in Welsh.

Pigeon makes his best to face the challenges that keep coming his way, such as the depression in which his mother is increasingly sinking, and her resorting to prostitution to pay the debts, before

ending up in a mental hospital. Iola has meanwhile built a good friendship with Cher, who after his father's death speaks very little and slowly, and frequently visits Iola and Efa's house; the latter occasionally brings home her boyfriend Dafydd, a yoga teacher, who, despite looking nice and caring at the beginning, turns out to be a deceitful person and a blackmailer.

Among the many adversities, however, Pigeon gradually revives his friendship with Iola, who, on one occasion, witnesses from the window of her room Pigeon's apologising to Gwyn, the latter showing himself sympathetic to the boy, and having in the meantime started a new and better life, for which a humorous and detailed summary is provided, including the description of his mother Mrs. Gelataio. Pigeon feels the urge to confide to Gwyn that he didn't kill Adrian, a confession that he also makes in tears to his mother and Cher, by stating that the real murderer is Iola. Towards the end of the novel, Pigeon also develops a strong friendship with Elfyn, a gentle and friendly man who teaches him the skills for building dry stone walls, and with whom Pigeon regains his willingness to speak Welsh, thus gaining some peacefulness and a feeling of liberation.

After learning that Cher will soon move to Manchester in order to reunite with her sister Martha, Iola starts to work at "The Home", a nursing home where Efa is already an employee, so that she can earn some money and leave the town; Iola is unwilling to stay in Bethesda without Cher, and feeling guilty over Pigeon spending all those years in the borstal while living her normal life in the town. It is at "The Home" that Iola makes the acquaintance of Huw, an old man who turns out to have been Iola's grandfather's best mate, and who tells Iola that her grandfather was a brave good man who went to Spain and volunteered to fight the fascists, unaware that Nain was pregnant when he left her. Iola later has the chance to confirm Huw's words by searching through the old photos of her grandmother, and one day she decides to take the train and visit his father, who throughout the story, turns out to be actually alive and mentally sick in a hostel near Liverpool. In their reunification, Iola confesses to his father how she was obliged to kill Adrian with his own gun, or else he would have strangled her friend Pigeon, an admission that she previously makes to Cher, and successively to Efa, the latter, however, being already aware of the truth.

The end of the novel takes place within a slate quarry above the town, where Pigeon retrieves

the murder weapon, and where the truth about the murderer of Adrian will finally be revealed in detail through Iola's flashback; this describes how after killing Adrian, Pigeon had warned Iola to go home and maintain the secret, thus taking the blame, and perhaps, in Iola's opinion, wishing it had really been him. It is in these circumstances that Pigeon and Iola will try to come to terms with the complicated events that marked their unusual past, and will possibly create a new and better future for themselves.

3.2 Thematic and Symbolic Analysis

The following analysis aims to explore specific themes of Conran's novel, which is characterised by childhood abuse, mental disorders, and a deep sense of solitude, but also by the power of language, Wales' historical and cultural aspects, and the way in which the Welsh language coexists with English in the village of Bethesda. The analysis particularly illustrates how, through a journey made of many hardship, important encounters, and peculiar vicissitudes, Pigeon's journey with his language will eventually become the symbol of the loss, struggle, and recovery of the Welsh language and identity, thus creating a symbolic connection with the history of Wales and its relation with the Welsh language.

The narration of the novel, which is mostly filtered through the attentive eye of the smart Iola, provides the narrative with a childish tone, but also a mysterious and involving one, since children's imaginary stories and real facts are mixed together. At the same time, Pigeon's fantasy allows the protagonists to escape from a suffering reality, which is primarily marked by loneliness, the lack of love, and a real family. The two young characters are being raised by a maternal figure, who, despite being committed to maintaining her child and home, is not always able to express love or sufficient understanding. Moreover, the children see male figures entering their house as possible stepfathers, who later turn out to be insincere or abusive individuals, as in the case of the brutal Adrian, who moved into Pigeon's house, bringing his daughter Cher, his preconceptions, and his violent threats.

3.2.1 The Arrival of Adrian

With his arrival, Adrian dramatically changes Pigeon's and his mother's life, symbolically representing England and the English language invading Wales and depriving its inhabitants of their native language and identity for a long time. In addition, the marriage between Mari and Adrian, as well as the latter's imposition of his language, his willingness, and his restrictions, end up embodying respectively the annexation of Wales to the realm of England in the wake of the 1536 Acts of Union, and the introduction of the norms of English administration, along with the enforcement of English as the first language in Wales.

Pigeon sees his everyday life and sacred territory being occupied and destroyed by the intrusion of this English man, who from the very beginning introduces his English language into Pigeon's home, calling his mother “love” with a voice sounding “uncomfortable around the word” (Conran, 2016, p.19), thus causing the young boy a sort of initial dislike and contempt. Taking advantage of the kindness and affection of Mari, Adrian occupies Pigeon's family property acting as if it were already his, without even considering his partner's opinion, and Pigeon soon realises the dark intentions of his probable enemy, whose hands, as Pigeon notices, “were big...they were the hands of a man who liked to limit things” (p.19). Adrian quickly gains the upper hand over Pigeon's house and his mother, whom he exploits to have his supper prepared, and slowly prevents her from speaking and even going outside. Also, he controls and criticises everything that Mari generally does, from the clothes she washes and irons to the manner in which the dinner is served. As a result, Pigeon observes how his mother, who constantly feels the need to apologize to his oppressor and does nothing to oppose him, is gradually being subdued and deprived of her dignity, her identity, and her right to self-expression:

“He started coming at weekends. He'd be sitting in the living room, on the sofa, when Pigeon came home. He'd be watching a programme He wanted to watch. He'd be getting Pigeon's mam to make Him dinner. He'd be telling them all things about the world. He'd not be listening to Pigeon's mam, nor leaving her space for an answer...

What Pigeon didn't like was how his mam went so quiet when He was around. She was nervous. He made her feel as if everything was wrong. You could see it. It wasn't that He said so exactly. But He was always checking everything." (19)

3.2.2 The Shed

As mentioned in the novel's plot, Pigeon is forced to give up his own room to Cher, who, with her pink suitcase and her "perfect blue dress" (p.20), contrasts greatly with the simplicity of his new stepbrother's home. However, the damp shed where Pigeon is obliged to sleep, ends up representing an important dualistic space; on the one hand, the shed constitutes a very limited area that keeps Pigeon distant from his beloved mother and his home, but on the other hand, it will become Pigeon's little refuge, where creative and expressive liberty will become possible, and whose access will be exclusively permitted to Pigeon's dearest affections, namely his mother and his best friend Iola. It will be just in this place that Pigeon will spend much of his time obsessively collecting new and complex English words from the newspapers, and will use them to create his distorted stories, causing them to become not only his alternative reality, apparently better than that in which Pigeon and Mari endure Adrian's frequent verbal and physical violence, but even Iola's reality. His fables will become a kind of sanctuary that will illusorily protect him both psychologically and physically, along with the shed and the attic where he smokes, reads, and plots in secret:

"Pigeon's reading the newspaper, Efa's newspaper he stole. He's reading it line by line. He doesn't understand all the words, but he can read them. He says the words into the shed, and he likes the sounds of the words in the newspaper as they fill the mould that is the shed. "Exper-i-ment. Acqui-sit-tion. Super-la-tive."

He has a small, cold mouth, and the words fill his mouth too, they fill it with their different textures: clay, metal, soap textures, and the strange tastes of the words as he says them into the cold air." (22)

3.2.3 Bethesda's Landscapes

Pigeon's shed is not the only place from which the boy gets some relief from the harsh world he has inherited; the natural surroundings provided by the Welsh hills and the woods around the town, the waterfalls, the pool, but also the neighbouring slate quarry, represent, as Conran defined them “a much wider place of possibility” (Literary Atlas, 2016), and a further escape that allows Pigeon to steer away from the urban environment where he appears out of place, thus getting rid of that sense of enagement and expropriation originating in the town. Characterised by a “feral” disposition, a term used by Iola's sister to describe Pigeon as a “scraggy black cat” (Conran, 2016, p.153), Pigeon wanders around the town, in an almost disoriented manner, and is incapable of adapting to it, possibly because of his character, but also because the wary gaze of the middle-class Welsh-speaking community depicted in the novel, denies him hope and friendship. The amount of time that Pigeon spends sitting on the top of the hill provides him with a strong sense of control over the town in the background, which leads him to see the world from a totally different perspective as he tries to make sense of it (Sterly, 2018). In an interview, Conran claimed that “there are difficulties about growing up in this kind of area. For teenagers, there's not an awful lot to do at times and you can get in trouble...but also the kids here have access to this incredible environment”, and added “I did use it and enjoy it inexpertly and in a kind of fairly feral way (Literary Atlas n.d).

In introducing the slate quarry, which plays a pivotal role throughout the story, being the former the place where Pigeon hides the gun that killed Adrian and where the closing scene between the main characters takes place, Conran seems to be referring to the historical Penrhyn Slate Quarry located near Bethesda; this was the world's largest and productive slate quarry at the end of the nineteenth century and continues to be very alive since modern equipment and machinery have been used to extend the quarry since the 1970s (Llechi Cymru website, n.d.):

“Shall we go up to the quarry then?” Cher asks.

We walk up the dusty road to the quarry, the quarry that’s still working,
where there are still trucks loading and reversing and a few men who’ve kept their jobs

there. There's a big railing and a sign. DANGER it says, KEEP OUT. We hang over the railing and watch the trucks driving up the road that goes up the slate tips to the top of the mountain. From here you can see down to the lake that's been made of one of the quarry holes. The water's blue green. There's something fluorescent in the water. There's some dead trees sticking out of it, they're bleached white as bone." (197)

3.2.4 Pigeon's Imagination

Iola is fascinated by Pigeon's stories and imagination, and although she doesn't fully believe them, she still supports her friend's plan to prove that Gwyn Gelataio might be a horrible and wicked murderer; Pigeon vents his misdirected rage against Gwyn in the hope of changing his dysfunctional situation and temporarily cancel his sense of impotence, but without success. In an interview, Alys Conran expresses how she “felt that the stories of young people who struggle in places like this were not maybe finding their way in North Wales, were not finding their way into books” and underlines her desire to write against a specific restricting stereotype of Wales, according to which those types of characters perhaps “had no creativity or agency or imagination within their situation...Pigeon does find himself at several points unable to change his situation, but he's always a character that is absolutely full of ideas and really able to imagine his way out” (Literary Atlas, n.d).

Iola's friendship with Pigeon and the time she loves spending with him represent an escape from her everyday life, in which Iola notices how Efa, despite her hard job and the pills she takes “to keep her soul healthy” (Conran, 2016, p.30), makes the best of a difficult situation. At the same time, Iola is essential to Pigeon's life since without her Pigeon's thoughts “just made a black inky mess. It was telling her that put it all in order” (p. 34).

3.2.5 The Nasareth Chapel

As soon as Iola starts to attend the Sunday School at the Nasareth Chapel on the High Street of the town, Pigeon decides to reclaim his playfellow, and the best way to achieve that is to prove to

Iola that the time they spend together is much better than the time she spends in the chapel, and that the chapel community doesn't care about her as much as he does. For this section of the book, Conran took up the themes of the Sunday church service and the Sunday schools, which are still run today by most chapels and churches in Wales, under various names or even with different targets set, and depicts Iola as an example of those children who were likely unhappy to head towards the local Sunday School (Carradice, 2012). Iola is depicted as forced to follow the will of Efa, who urges her little sister to go to chapel and Sunday School after the service, and “learn how to live in society” (Conran, 2016, p.31) instead of “eating ice creams and playing stupid games with Pigeon” (p.26). Through the non-conformist Nasareth Chapel, perhaps inspired by the actual Calvinistic Methodist Jerusalem Chapel in Bethesda, the author portrays the symbol of what remains for the community's life, by recalling the crucial role played by the nonconformist chapels, which unlike the Church of England or the Anglican Church, flourished in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, providing the inhabitants a place for congregation, prayer, and expression of their identity. The chapel, along with the group singing the Welsh hymns, the ladies' flower fragrance, and the chapel attendees in their Sunday dress, contribute to providing Iola with a strong sense of community, a feeling of belonging to something greater, a perception that her life is important and significant within the grand scheme of things (Sterly, 2018). Nevertheless, all of this is not enough to replace Pigeon's relevance in Iola's world and the fact that she misses him:

“But even Jesus and the singing, and Anti Siwan and the other ones who smell of flowers and smile, and even the being a part of it, this huge thing, even that doesn't cancel out missing Pigeon. Compared to chapel, compared to anything, Sundays with Pigeon are one big ride. He's making it up as he goes along and you just want to make sure you're in on it. Well in. Compared to that, chapel is all polish smells, pretty, uncomfortable dresses, girls pinching, and boys getting the credit for everything.” (31)

To get his friend back, Pigeon will abruptly disrupt the sermon of the chapel, and with no regard for the chapel members, he will start joking around with Iola, and make inadequate drawings on the Bible, causing the young women and even the minister's laughter. Thus, the two kids will be led out of the chapel, not without receiving an insult by one of the ladies, and they will be able to

get back to their plans against Gwyn.

3.2.6 The Influence of the Media

Throughout the narrative, Pigeon uses several English stereotypes and descriptive pejoratives, such as “psycho”, “knife carrier”, “torturer”, and “pain-lover” (Conran, 2016, p.12); it appears that the young boy absorbs such terms from some English language films and television programs, which, as Iola notes, “make him speak English like cowboys” and which he regularly watches. Iola, on the other hand, is often portrayed while listening to some English songs played by the actual Irish longwave radio station “Atlantic 252”. Through these examples, but also through the English newspapers that Pigeon steals from Efa, the bilingual school that Iola attends, and Iola's references to the National Eisteddfod, it is possible to observe the author's attempt to make evident the coexistence of the Welsh and English languages and cultures in Bethesda. Unlikely Iola, however, the kind of approach that Pigeon experiences with English can be considered negative and brutal since Pigeon acquires some of the language through the viewing of violent shows that can potentially and adversely affect not only his behaviour, but also his attitudes, his beliefs, and his values. In addition, because of his natural tendency to absorb information and reference models, Pigeon is particularly attracted by these programs, which, due to the absence of adult supervision and the boy's difficulty to distinguish facts from fiction, contribute to creating in him a feeling of suspicion, and a desire of negative imitation, which ends up influencing his actions in the real world:

“It’s a five-stage plan,” said Pigeon to Iola like James Bond. He communicated the plan to Iola between cigarettes – puffing and coughing and exhaling clouds of smoke into the cobwebbed air of the attic” (60)

“Gwyn is a Psycho, a Kiddie Fiddler, a Mask Wearer and a Torturer!, I tell Efa, saying the words like prizes. (13)

“Cher...she's crying, and saying “He’s taken him! Murderer, sicko, torturer! He’s got

Pijin!” although I’m telling her she’s “got it all the wrong way round” (66)

3.2.7 Bethesda and Liverpool

After the accusation of Adrian's murder and the destruction of Gwyn's dwelling, Pigeon is obliged to spend part of his childhood and his early adolescence in the borstal in Liverpool- today known as a “juvenile detention centre”- before he could return to his homeland in Wales and resume his life. In this respect, an antithetical relationship opposes the settings presented of Liverpool and Bethesda, which highlights the deep connection between the two nations and their people's lives; on one side, Liverpool is not only connected to Pigeon's borstal, but is also related to at least two more dark subject matters within the story, namely Adrian's hometown, and Iola's long-considered dead father's home; as a result, Liverpool triggers the protagonists a sense of anxiety, disorientation, and restlessness. Bethesda, on the other side, whose natural landscapes bring the protagonists a sort of peace and stillness from the town, evokes a sense of freedom, peacefulness, and tranquility. At the same time, though, the English city of Liverpool will eventually become a place of opportunity, growth, and discovery since Pigeon's experience within the borstal will be crucial to make him understand the importance of his original roots, while Iola's meeting with his mentally infirm-father, will finally offer her the possibility to give a sense to the long-unsolved history of her family.

3.2.8 Pigeon's Experience in the Borstal

During his stay in England, Pigeon goes through a tough learning experience, which in contributing to his self-development, will allow him, as mentioned above, to comprehend the great value and significance of his Welsh roots, a process occurring not so much for his self-conception, but because of others' perception of him. Pigeon finds himself alienated within a confined world, which is far removed from his homeland, his culture, and fellow citizens, and being unable to express himself, he feels like “his mouth's been shut up” (p.118). Moreover, Pigeon will have to confront a new sense of otherness, which is quite different from that feeling of estrangement

experienced in Bethesda, and which will be aroused by the constant bullying by Neil, an English inmate; Neil regularly insults Pigeon due to his Welsh accent and refers to him as “Taffy”, a slang word or nickname for “Welshman” which was an unknown term to Pigeon until his arrival at the borstal, and which is today considered racist by the majority of Welsh and English people (Jefford, 2016):

“Hey Taffy!” Big Neil calls after Pigeon as Pigeon and Salim are walking towards Education Block. It’s because he’s Welsh, although Pigeon’s never heard the word before, Taffy, and he doesn’t feel anything. He doesn’t feel Welsh. He’s just Pigeon, just Pigeon.

It’s important here, where you’re from. It’s funny how it’s so important, considering everyone here lives the same life, eats the same food, gets up at the same time, and has lights out just at the same moment.” (118)

Pigeon's experience abroad represents the historical decline of the Welsh language, when its speakers and status were not glorified, but also recalls Conran's history of growing up in rural north Wales and then in Barcelona; the author described her experience during an interview in 2016, and in doing so, she made emerge her own sense of “home”, culture, and place (From the Margins, 2016):

“I was really, really drawn to come home – all the time I was away - partly due to language and culture – but it was a struggle to return. In a strange way I came back through Barcelona - I learnt Catalan whilst I was there and I saw this minority culture at the centre of this cosmopolitan place, and people really respected where I was from there, my Welshness, in a way it wasn't the same elsewhere - it just hadn't been acknowledged. There was a tension when I was away until Barcelona - where they saw my being Welsh very differently - and I realised I wanted to come home.” (Conran, 2016)

Dispossessed of his language, and subjected to incomprehensible insults and discriminations, Pigeon once again resorts to the reading of stories that narrate far-off worlds, thus becoming estranged from the reality that currently surrounds him. Nevertheless, it is through this strong feeling of alienation that Pigeon starts to deeply reflect on the community to which he belongs, and

the role that the Welsh language, the one “he'd got smart with” (Conran, 2016, p.131), had in shaping his reality and his identity. Conran herself expressed her opinion on such matters:

“It is the emotional tie to a community and sense of being looked after, held by a community in a web of genuine relationships - people don't let go - it still amazes me what persists - at the launch of Pigeon people came from the chapel I went to as a child and school - it was incredible. When I was away people saw my being Welsh as an easy thing - but it was complicated, and many of the people around me had more interesting lives than people understood, but they were also more difficult and darker. Thinking about coming back reminds me that I left my Welsh language school as a teenager to go to an English medium sixth form and had to go back, I missed the closeness - it was so alienating. By the time I went to University I was ready to go, but what I came back to is incredibly valuable.

Just as I came back to the Welsh language through the work I did when I moved back, in a way the book was also about coming home for me - in parallel with reengaging with language and culture through work I was also writing my way back to the people around me. I could not live without the culture and language that surrounds me.” (From the Margins, 2016)

After recognising his difficulties within the borstal, but also his great potential and his resourcefulness, Allan, the Education Block's instructor, urges the boy to learn reading and writing in English, firmly believing that this will help him overcome his stressful condition; despite an initial and total refusal, Pigeon gradually understands how the knowledge of the enemy's language will help him improve his situation in the borstal and finally be respected. It is through a constant and gradual acquisition of English words and expressions that Pigeon will eventually build up a solid armour, to be both used as a weapon and a shield, thus spreading around the building fearsome stories about his reputation, and bringing an end to those threats, insults, and beatings that he is frequently forced to undergo by Neil and his friends:

“But slowly Pigeon learns that English was a weapon, and could be a shield. You needed it in pristine condition, and you needed the tricks of it, so you could defend yourself. Your own language was a part of your body, like a shoulder or a thigh, and when you were hurt

there was no defence. When the kids argued in Welsh at home on the hill it was a bare knuckled fight. But English. With English what you had to do was build armour, and stand there behind your shield to shoot people down. Pigeon buried his own language deep. (131)

However, in the construction of his new and defensive identity, Pigeon starts to stifle his mother-tongue language, and part of himself, day after day, to such an extent that, by the time he returns home, he has created a strong barrier between his past and present self. Therefore, Pigeon experiences a partial loss of Welsh, and associates the language not only with the state of vulnerability and defenselessness that marked his staying in the borstal, but also with the language that defined his early childhood, often characterised by fears, frustration, and confusion:

“We walk down the hill in the yellow glow of the streetlamps. Pigeon’s different. And, although he came round, it’s like he’s come looking for something that isn’t here anymore. Something we’ve lost, like Nain’s ring which got lost in the laundry all those years back, and which we never found again although we all cursed black and blue looking for it.

It must be here. It must be here. Like that. The same feeling of desperate, hopeless searching, except worse. Like losing your own eyes, or your ears, or your heart.” (152)

3.2.9 Pigeon's Homecoming and “Redemption”

There are many steps in the novel that constitute Pigeon's learning process towards his adult maturity, the healing of the huge rift with his life's past events, and the recovery of his former language and identity. Of particular note, is Pigeon's resolution to bring back light, order, and hope within his home, where Mari, who stands now increasingly motionless and absent-minded, watches his son blowing away that past and those memories of “Him” who changed and distorted their lives. Equally important to Pigeon's process of growing are his heartfelt apologies to the understanding Gwyn, who, after long consideration, has been able to recognise Pigeon's true nature, which is not that of a “demon-vandal-boy”(p.173), but that of a child who has been “caught in a web of make-believe gone wrong” (p.173). In this forgiveness-ceremony accompanied by dignified handshakes,

Pigeon takes a further step towards a sort of redemption, confessing to the ice-cream man his innocence about Adrian's death, and thus getting rid of that heavy lie, that secret he had been protecting all along with a kind of frail pride, and that cost him all those years away from his home and his land. Yet, it is mainly through the gradual acquaintance with Elfyn, the eagerly awaited father figure with whom Pigeon establishes a special bond from the very beginning, that the boy will regain his willingness to speak his “hen iaith” (old language) again; Pigeon will thus be able to fill that “blank space in his mouth” (p.222) which prevented him from communicating naturally as in the past and will find the way to construct and express himself with an identity that makes him content:

“Perhaps he got off lightly, in a way, Pigeon. Just a short sentence, relatively speaking, and then a couple of years on parole. What he lost, when he gave in to his own stories, perhaps wasn't so great, just a few words, or, to be precise, a home's worth. And only Elfyn sees the marks left by the words, the faint imprint of having been once a part of something, only Elfyn can coax Pigeon to come a little closer to home, to utter a few sparse words of Welsh. The old man greets each one as if it's made of gold, or purple slate.” (224)

Elfyn's caring and patient attitude towards Pigeon, his fatherly suggestions, and his support, are essential in helping the protagonist to find his balance and his place in Bethesda. Moreover, Elfyn makes Pigeon further realise the value and the beauty of his hometown, while offering him a packed lunch that he purposely prepares for their daily break from work. To be noted is the fact Elfyn uses brown paper to wrap his and Pigeon's packed lunch, which recalls the brown paper that wrapped the gun of Adrian, before and after his death. In this regard, it is possible to notice how the thoughtful Elfyn contrasts greatly with the abusive and threatening figure of Adrian, and at the same time, Elfyn can be opposed to Allan, who, despite his goodwill to help Pigeon in his bewilderment in Liverpool, obliges the boy to learn English against his will. With Elfyn, Pigeon's return to communicate in Welsh, proves to be spontaneous and without imposition, and his Welsh answer “Iawn” (all right) in one of his dialogues with Elfyn, marks the prelude of Pigeon's readiness to take his armour off and find his voice again:

“He looks up at Pigeon for a second. There’s no trick in the look. Pigeon considers. He looks at the pile of stones. There’s one here. It has a flatish front and back, but a wave down the bottom, and a small chink taken out of the top. It’s a simple shape, the kind of shape he’s seen the man choose. He should be able to find some other stones to match it. “*Iawn*,” says Pigeon, like moving his stuff back from the shed to the house. He starts looking through the pile. Picking. Choosing. Making sense of it. And that’s how it begins, with Elfyn, the building things back again, the putting the pieces back in their place.”
(208)

The learning of dry stone walls building becomes a strong metaphor portraying the gradual restoration of Pigeon's identity and becomes the emblem of the reconstruction of his relationship with his country, his town, and his language. In this regard, Pigeon's interest in using Welsh to express his identity echoes a wider rebirth of the language, namely the gaining of the official status in Wales by the Welsh Language Act 1993, and subsequently, by the Welsh language (Wales) Measure 2011. At the same time, the reconstruction of Pigeon's identity, and hence of himself, might imply the building of a new defensive barrier that the protagonist rises to firmly protect himself and his just-regained identity from an alleged threat.

In the final reunion between Pigeon and Iola, new truths will finally be unveiled and understood by the reader, who, after many events and difficulties, may hope that Pigeon may finally start to find a place where he belongs. “Geiria” (words) is Pigeon's final answer to Iola which closes the novel and suggests to the reader that the skinny boy whose shoulders were “delicate as eggshells” (p.224) has definitively reconciled with his own language. The novel's undefined ending can be better considered as a transitional phase, which becomes a symbol of the uncertain stability of the Welsh language; however, Pigeon's recovery of his language and identity, as well as his very likely intention to create through the Welsh language a better future for him and his friend Iola, represents Wales' aim to promote and preserve the future of the language:

“What can I do about all this?” I ask him my stupid question, here in the empty quarry, and stand, hopeless, waiting for the answer. Pigeon’s answer. Pigeon’s own. It doesn’t come. He smiles just a bit, his eyes still that boy’s eyes, the boy who had all those ideas and those stories which started this whole thing off, stories that’ll go on and on as long as

we're together, me and Pigeon, as long as it's never him or me, but both of us, together.
 "How can I get back what you've lost?" I ask him again. He's still smiling, just a bit.
 Considering. You can feel something building.
 "Geiria," he says. *Words*.
 He shrugs, his eyes searching the ground for them.
 "Only words."

3.3 Linguistic Analysis

This analysis aims to illustrate how Alys Conran decided to frequently introduce Welsh terms and expressions within many of the English-language dialogues that are carried out by the different characters in the novel. Also, the analysis shows how Welsh terms and sentences are often provided without any direct English translation, thus allowing the reader to imagine the sounds that the characters themselves experience throughout the story. Most of the time, however, the reader can rely on the author's assistance, who, through the use of several kinds of strategies, which will be analysed in detail throughout this last chapter, provides the readers with specific information on a linguistic level. In this way, the author makes the readers aware of what is being communicated and what is happening all the time in the narrative and enables them to clearly understand what they are reading.

As described in the previous chapter, Conran's novel presents a multitude of different and specific themes, such as memory, childhood, fantasy, and broken families, and conveys a great sense of culture and place. Nevertheless, "Pigeon" is mainly a novel about language, as the author herself outlined in an interview given to the "Wales Arts Review" in 2016:

"When I write, I don't plan ahead usually. So I didn't know that I was writing a novel about language. But when I came to Pigeon, finally, and he had a friend, and they started on their journey together through the story, from the moment they started speaking to each other, I knew they needed to speak in Welsh or else it would be all lies. Fiction isn't a lie. I couldn't write Pigeon speaking English. From that point on, the novel developed into being one about language. About losing language"

Pigeon and Iola, like the majority of the characters living in the bilingual community of Bethesda, and generally in many small towns in North Wales, are fluent Welsh speakers, who throughout the narrative are mostly portrayed using their Welsh language through written English. At the same time, it is also possible to notice the fluidity with which the characters occasionally switch from one language to another, by resorting to their expert knowledge of Welsh and their expertise in English. This process takes the name of “translanguaging” (Newbold, 2016), and has been described by Ofelia García as “the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential” (García, 2009). Coined as “trawsieithu”, the term “translanguaging” was originally introduced by Cen Williams, a Welsh educationalist and leading scholar in the 1980s, (Omidire&Ayob, 2020), who, in his unpublished doctoral thesis “An Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Methods in the Context of Bilingual Secondary Education”, used the term “to refer to a pedagogical practice where students in bilingual Welsh/English classrooms are asked to alternate languages for the purposes of receptive or productive use” (García&Lin, 2016).

As previously mentioned, Conran uses numerous linguistic strategies to support the readers in their comprehension of the text; the first strategy to be analysed will be the way in which many dialogues present assertions, questions, and affirmative/negative answers that are directly reported in Welsh, and for which the narrator's inner voice and commentaries are often essential to provide the reader with an explanation and understanding of the text.

3.3.1 The Narrator's Inner voice, Descriptions and Observations

To begin with, it is possible to consider the first description of Gwyn's arrival uphill in his van on a Sunday afternoon, accompanied by the sound of old English songs, which draw the attention of all the children of the town. In this setting, Gwyn is portrayed addressing Pigeon and Iola through the Welsh anglicism “bois”, whose singular version “boi” is introduced by Iola's inner thoughts, and whose meanings can be easily guessed by an English monoglot reader as “boys” and “boy”. Also, it

is through Iola's inner voice that the reader is provided with clues about the meaning of Gwyn's question “B b be ’dach chi isio heddiw ’ta?; Iola's statement “but we still haven't decided” allows the reader to assume that Gwyn is asking the boys what kind of ice-creams they want:

“Iawn, b b bois?” he asks us.

Together Pigeon and me breathe “Iawn” back, although everyone knows I’m not a boi, any more than Pigeon is a prissy hogan – but I quite like being called a boi by Gwyn.

“B b be ’dach chi isio heddiw ’ta?” Gwyn’s question goes up at the end, really high, as high as here; but we still haven’t decided. (2)

Similarly, in the extract below, it is possible to grasp the meaning of Gwyn's assertion “Tywydd braf” through Iola's dissenting opinion on the “fine weather” and the detailed description she gives of a probable storm on the way. Thus, it can be inferred that Gwyn claims that the weather is nice:

“Waiting, Gwyn, to keep talking, says “Tywydd braf”, and he grins. We grin back because this is no more fine weather than Pigeon is a hogan, or I’m a boi, or Gwyn’s van’s a BMW or we’re all Colin Jackson doing the hurdles. The weather’s come in again; it sits all over the hill and the clouds are blowing up now like a balloon water bomb and they have a grey colour that’s almost dark blue, so you know it’ll rain forever.” (3)

When Pigeon and Iola are at Gwyn's house to implement their wicked plan against him, it is again through Iola's inner voice that one can assume the meaning of the questions in Welsh; as demonstrated in the following extracts, it is possible to notice that Iola's statement “He doesn’t answer” and her assumption that Pigeon “doesn’t know what to do next” imply that her Welsh question “Be nawn ni ta?” means “what are we going to do?”:

“Be nawn ni ta?” I whisper the question to Pigeon when we’re both back on the street side of Gwyn’s garden wall, away from the house enough to talk. He doesn’t answer, doesn’t know what to do next, that’s what I reckon.” (42)

In the next case, Iola's approval to Pigeon's question "Awn ni mewn?" along with her observation "he starts walking toward the house again, like as if he was the one that was brave and decided to go in, not me" suggests that Pigeon proposes to Iola to enter Gwyn's house and that he is waiting for her reply:

"Awn ni mewn?"

Pigeon doesn't usually ask questions. Which is good, cos I don't much like choosing answers. Like now, I really don't know. But I nod.

Pigeon looks surprised. I'm surprised too, because that was a crazy thing to do: nod. Then Pigeon nods too, and he starts walking toward the house again, like as if he was the one that was brave and decided to go in, not me." (42)

Sometimes, however, it is the third narrator's voice that replaces Iola in the narration of the events: in the example below, Pigeon's exclamation "Agor y drws! AGOR Y DRWS!" is explained by the third narrator, who describes Gwyn "ignoring the children's demands to be let in" and "closing the door tight", thus making clear that Pigeon is demanding: "open the door":

"Agor y drws! AGOR Y DRWS!" the boy shouts, seeing Gwyn's round face wearing the curtains around it like a wig. Gwyn quickly drops the curtains back over the window, terrified.

Ignoring the children's demands to be let in, he tries to tiptoe across the room away from the window, a cumbersome undertaking for such a square body on such small little feet. He finally reaches the kitchen, closing the door tight and exhaling with relief against it." (89)

Likewise, Gwyn's question "Be ydach chi'n ei wneud yma?" is clarified by the third narrator's consideration "there's the sinking feeling that he doesn't want to know why they're here after all" which helps translate Gwyn's question as "what are you doing here?". As regards Iola's answer "Dilyn fo", this is explicitly translated in the text as "just follow my leader":

"Be ydach chi'n ei wneud yma?" His Welsh is even more formal than usual. Asking the question, there's the sinking feeling that he doesn't want to know

why they're here after all.

There's a silence. A sniff. Then, "Dilyn fo."

And that's it. There it is. No answer, no reason, just follow my leader." (91)

Further dialogues including the narrator's descriptions and observations which are necessary to the full understanding of the text, can be noticed among Pigeon, Iola, and Elfyn; on one occasion, Pigeon visits Iola in her house, and the latter is depicted while warning her sister "Da ni am fynd lawr dre", whose meaning "I'm going downtown" can be both inferred from Iola's statement "Efa'll let me go anywhere, even down to the bus stops in town" and the description she gives of the downtown:

"Da ni am fynd lawr dre, Efa," I call to my sister, and it's not my mouth that says it. It doesn't feel like me.

Efa comes through, nods. She'll let me do anything. But this time Efa gives me a kiss, and in my ear, "Be careful, Iola," she says, but she lets me go anyway. Efa'll let me go anywhere, even down to the bus stops in town, where there's smoking and drinking and lads who can't keep their hands or their thoughts to themselves." (152)

At another time, Pigeon is portrayed insulting Cher in front of Iola, and the latter defends her friend by asserting "Nacdi tad, cau hi", although "not in a strong and brave way. Not like a friend should.". Throughout the novel, Iola is never really shown acting courageously against Pigeon's bad words or intentions, possibly because of her own disposition, or for fear of losing her friendship with him; the reader can thus presume that Iola's feeble attempt to protect Cher may be translated as "shut up" or "stop talking like that":

"Why d'you hang round with Cher?" he says, in English again, still copying as he asks me. He doesn't even look up.

"She's alright"

"She's a freak."

"Nacdi tad, cau hi," I say, half sticking up for her, but not in a strong and brave way. Not like a friend should." (156)

Again, when Pigeon asks Iola to get closer, it is Iola's thought "I think I know why" that makes it

possible to understand her Welsh question “Pam, Pigeon?” namely “why, Pigeon?”:

“Pigeon sits there and he says nothing at all. And then he beckons with a hand. *Come over here* says his hand.

“Pam, Pigeon?” But I think I know. I think I know why” (186)

As regards the dialogues conducted between Pigeon and Elfyn, the latter is once shown asking the boy “Gei di helpu, os ’sgen ti awydd?”: although it is not possible for an English monoglot speaker to completely understand Elfyn's question in Welsh, it may be inferred its meaning “you can help” from the Welsh anglicism “helpu”, namely “help”. In addition, it is possible to notice that Elfyn's question causes Pigeon to search for the same kind of stones that Elfyn chose, and after Pigeon's answer “iawn” the boy is depicted “Picking. Choosing. Making sense of it”; this allows the reader to ascertain Elfyn's request for help:

“Gei di helpu, os ’sgen ti awydd?” the man says to him now. He looks up at Pigeon for a second. There’s no trick in the look.

Pigeon considers. He looks at the pile of stones. There’s one here. It has a flatish front and back, but a wave down the bottom, and a small chink taken out of the top. It’s a simple shape, the kind of shape he’s seen the man choose. He should be able to find some other stones to match it.

“Iawn,” says Pigeon, like moving his stuff back from the shed to the house. He starts looking through the pile. Picking. Choosing. Making sense of it.” (208)

In the same way, it wouldn't be possible to fully understand much of Elfyn's statement in the extract below, and yet, the reader can tell that Elfyn is talking about Pigeon's mother, considering the narrator's question “Elfyn? Knew his mam once?” and Pigeon's brief answer “Mam's OK”:

Elfyn looks at him. Then gently. “Sut ma’ dy fam, Pigeon? Ro’n i’n i nabod hi, blynyddoedd yn ôl ’sdi. Pan o’dd ei theulu hi’n cadw’r post.”

Elfyn? Knew his mam once? There it is again, like her name, Mari, as if she was once someone real. It’s the gentlest of invitations. Between the words there’s Elfyn beckoning. *You can talk to me. You can talk to me my lad.* That’s

what's between the words.

“Mam's OK,” says Pigeon. Keeps putting up walls.” (223)

In the next example, Elfyn's question “Ti'm am fyta'r frechdan 'na?” can be interpreted as “are you going to eat that sandwich?” thanks to Elfyn's additional sentence “I'll happily eat it if you don't” and the description of Pigeon looking at his sandwich:

“Ti'm am fyta'r frechdan 'na?” Elfyn was asking. I'll happily eat it if you don't, he adds. Pigeon looks at the sandwich. He takes a bite. It's tangy and spicy and good.” (226)

3.3.2 Short Answers in English, Natural Circumstances and Lack of Translation

Another common strategy used by the author throughout the novel consists in providing the characters' questions with very short answers in English, thus allowing the reader to immediately understand the questions in Welsh:

“Pryd ddes ti'n ôl? Sut wyt ti? Sut ma' dy fam?” but his answers are short and in English.

“Friday. I'm fine. Mam's OK.” (151)

“So be 'nes di'n Lerpwl?”

“In Liverpool? Nothing. We were shut in. I didn't do anything.” (152)

“Sut ma' dy fam?”

“She's alright.”

“Ti, 'di gweld Cher?”

“Yep, she's at my house.” (152)

“Welai chdi eto rywbyrd ta?” I say then in Welsh, to pretend we're still friends.

“Yep, see you,” agrees Pigeon, standing still.” (153)

“I've gotta girlfriend, anyway.”

“You have not.” My face cools too quick. Something icy in my stomach.

“Do so.”

“Be di ’i henw hi ta?”

“Ceri.” (156)

“Be di d’enw di ’ta machgen i?” the man asked him then. Why did he ask just Pigeon? Why was he speaking to Pigeon directly and not to the others?

“I’m Pigeon,” Pigeon answered.” (205)

In some cases, however, the readers can intuitively deduce the meaning of a Welsh question solely by the natural circumstances, namely what the readers would naturally expect a character to say in a particular situation. For instance, Efa's natural first reaction when “seeing all the piles of papers” that Iola is making in her room is “Iola, be ti’n gneud?” which can be assumed as “Iola, what are you doing?”:

“Iola, be ti’n gneud?” asks Efa, standing in the doorway of the room now, seeing all the piles of papers I’m making. Her voice is far away.” (80)

Or when Elfyn gives Pigeon half of his sandwich and Pigeon replies “diolch” namely “thank you”:

“Elfyn gave him half a sandwich.

“Diolch.” he said. And Elfyn nodded, as if that was the most natural thing in the world, Pigeon saying it: “Diolch”. (225)

Less frequently, the author leaves the reader without any kind of translation or hint in the context, except that it is a number or a song:

“How old are you love?

I lie. “Deg,” I say.

“Iola!” says Efa.

So I have to tell them my real age” (27)

“Back then Nain was the only one who sang. Sang perfect, stiff folk songs, the ones you learnt at school for Eisteddfod competitions. Nain sang them too

pretty and too neat, this tidy kind of happiness in the way she sang them.

“Molianwn oll yn llo – o – on!” she’d sing, or “Tw rym di ro!” or “Migldi Magldi hei now now! Ffaldiralidialym!” (54)

“The boy tells the girl to “Ista lawr yn fana” and guard the toilet door.” (91)

“Ma raid nes ti ’wbath.”

“Nope, not much.” (152)

“Pigeon’s mam puts her sewing down, and starts humming a song to herself, sitting in the dark in the corner, rocking. A drink, whisky or brandy, sits cloudy in the glass by her side. It’s a lullaby she’s singing,

si hei lwli lwli lws

si hei lwli lwli lws” (184)

“I can’t quite read his joined-up writing. I can’t quite read it, but it says

“cariad” at the bottom, and he must’ve loved her, Nain, and he must’ve had a reason.”

(216)

3.3.3 Mechanisms of Repetition

A further effective strategy to be noticed is the mechanism of repetition, which can be classified into three different types: as concerns the first type, the author first ensures the reader the proper understanding of specific terms in Welsh; some examples are “od”, whose meaning “odd” in the dialogues below is understandable and reinforced through many English adjectives like “strange” and “funny”, and through the equal sign “Gwyn=od”; and “iawn”, which, according to the context can be translated as “ok”. Afterwards, the author resorts to the repetition of these Welsh terms on multiple pages, so as to help the reader to digest and assimilate the meaning of them:

“Ma’ Gwyn yn od,” says Pigeon.

And that’s it forever after that. Gwyn is ‘od’, funny, strange. It’d never occurred to us before. And that’s what started this whole thing off, licking those ice creams, thinking, and then that idea of Pigeon’s: Gwyn = Od. (3)

“Ma Gwyn yn od,” I tell Efa, at home.” (13)

“Ma’ Gwyn yn od.” The words are whispered after him, as the children lick their ice creams with pink tongues. Gwyn is ‘od’, funny, strange. “ (88)

“I stare at it. I stare at it, and in my head there’s that statement, that statement: *Ma’ Gwyn yn od*” (151)

“Iawn, bois?”

Together breathing “Iawn,” in reply” (63)

“How was the party?” Efa asks me after The Cuban Song’s finished.

“Iawn.” I shrug off the question.” (57)

The second type of repetition mechanism consists in introducing the same Welsh word twice in the same dialogue, in order to draw the readers' attention to it and make sure that they associate the Welsh word with its English equivalent, which will be later reported in the same paragraph:

I just read my comic, and I’m almost there, at the end, when

“Murdyr! Dyna be ’di o: murdyr!”

I’m looking up from my comic, a bit surprised. We’ve thought of a few things: kiddie fiddler, woman in a man’s body, a ghost, but Pigeon’s never got quite this far.

Murderer... (7)

The third and last type consists in the repetition of English translations several times, in order to emphasise the message in Welsh:

“We get to the bus stop and hide inside. Pigeon stands looking out of it down the road. Ydi Gwyn yn dwad, Pigeon? Is he coming? Pigeon, is Gwyn coming? Is Gwyn coming after us, Pigeon?” (43)

“Fi nath o,” says Pigeon, pointing at Him, “Fi.”

It was me. It was. It was me.” (103)

“She’d never been the same, Cher, since the accident. That’s what everyone says here

“Di ’rloed ’di bod cystal. Rioed ’di bod ’run un.” They shake their heads as they say it. Shake their heads.” (125)

“O nghariad i,” she says, “Oh my love, my love.” (146)

“Does na’ m gwell lle yn y byd.” Elfyn says it quietly, because it’s a fact. Pigeon smiles. And right now it’s true. They’re on top of it, on top of the world on this heap of a hill by this wall, and there’s nowhere better, nowhere better. There’s nowhere else in the world” (223)

“Dos adra, Iola,” says Pigeon after an empty time. Pigeon’s still not looking at me, still staring at Him on the ground. Go home, Iola, he says, taking it from my hand. Go home. Don’t tell anyone. Don’t even tell Efa. Act like this is nothing to do with you. Go home, Iola. Home” (251)

3.3.4 Phonological Processes: Yod Coalescence and Epenthesis

Through another particular strategy, Conran sometimes explicitly expresses which language is being used by the characters, such as in the case of Cher, who, from the very beginning, is described as a native English speaker and later as a learner of Welsh. Occasionally, the author highlights Cher's strong English accent and depicts her while correcting Pigeon's wrong pronunciation of some English words, thus reminding the readers that the scene is taking place in English. Furthermore, Cher's accent reveals a phonological phenomenon known as “yod coalescence”, a form of assimilation that tends to occur when a final /t/, /d/ and an initial /j/ following often fuse to form /tʃ/ (as in “church”) and /dʒ/ (as in “jewel”) (Roach, 2009). This makes possible to understand why Cher pronounces “do you” as “jew” in the extract below:

“Jew really think Gwyn’s a murderer?” (10)

When Cher is shown asking Pigeon what are his intentions with the microscope he has taken from school, Pigeon replies “Anna lice it”, whose final unvoiced consonant /s/ is corrected by Cher with the voiced consonant /z/. Also, in calling Pigeon “stewpit”, it can be noted how Cher pronounces the unvoiced final stop consonant /t/ instead of the voiced consonant /d/ (Newbold, 2016):

“Wha you going to do with tha?” Cher catches Pigeon and me on the way into the shed with it.

“Anna lice it,” says Pigeon.

“Snot anna lice, stewpit, it’s analyse.” (12)

Cher is not the only character for whom the author chooses to emphasise her foreign accent; Mrs. Gelataio, Gwyn's mother, is described as a tiny Italian woman, whose highlighted Italian accent occasionally confers upon the novel an ironic tone. Her accent provides information on another phonological process named “epenthesis”, which in phonology is defined as the insertion of one or more extra sounds into a word, particularly at the beginning (prothesis) as “astrong” for “strong” or at the end (paragoge) as “yesa” for “yes” (Nordquist, 2019):

“Above all else she was fond of Gwyn. Proud of every hair that sprouted, wiry from his barrel chest, proud of his bulging belly, his lazy smile, and his legs “Shorta yesa, but astrong”. (84)

“So, when his father died, the world went into a frenzy of blind dates for Gwyn. At least once a week he was wheeled out, suited and booted, waxed and polished and adorned with his late father’s fake gold watch, “You cannot atell, you cannot atell, and she willa like ita yes”, a perfect side parting folding the black hair over his prematurely balding crown and enough money to pay him and the lady in question through a pub dinner “But aNO DRINK we willa not have a drinking girl.” (86)

“Gwyn would arrive home to a tirade of questions. “So eerly? So eerly? Gwiiin but watt has ahappened tonite, you have acome home so eerly! What is awrong with athese women, such a good man!” And then, taking his round head in her arms as Gwyn mumbled apologetically, she’d say, “It’sa all right my darrrling. So handsome! Your amother willa always love you, allllways.” (86)

3.3.5 Explicit Assertions and Expressions

Another way in which Conran shows precisely which language is being used is the use of assertions such as “he/she says/said in English” or “he/she says/ said in Welsh:

“Pigeon this is Adrian,” she said in English” (18)

“There are also toys on the floor for kids. “To make it easier for children to talk,” she says in English, with her smile like aluminium.” (109)

“Mum!” he says in English “You can’t bloody live like this.” (147)

“That’s a good name, lad,” he said in Welsh.

“It’s my real name,” said Pigeon, in English.” (206)

“I didn’t think I’d see you again,” he says in Welsh. “Efa said you didn’t want to know.” His Welsh sounds like it hardly gets used, creaky” (231)

But also expressions like “snobby Welsh”, “slate Welsh”, “posh English”, “funny chapel”, “bizarre Chapel Welsh”, “Welsh voice”, and “smooth English”:

“What are you dressed up for, dear?” Anti asks Efa in her snobby Welsh.” (29)

“Sad isn’t it? So sad,” says Efa all quiet in her slate Welsh” (50)

“Norwegian is when you sing through your nose the same way Mrs Thomas at school speaks posh English for show” (50)

“Your daughter,” begins Gwyn in his funny chapel Welsh.” (65)

“But Gwyn, with his brown skin, his tasty winter ice creams and his bizarre chapel Welsh” (88)

“He’s in the toilet,” a girl’s Welsh voice, shrill as metal.” (90)

“Pigeon was going to be old enough soon anyway, and he persuaded them, persuaded them with his tight, smooth English, so they did.” (146)

3.3.6 Code-switching

Among the various strategies described so far, it is interesting to observe how in a few cases, particularly when it comes to the stories that the children invent about Gwyn, the dialogues include a mixture of English and Welsh words within a single sentence; the meaning of these words can be presumed by the reader thanks to the English key words and the context that precedes or follows the terms in question. In linguistics, such phenomenon is known as “code-switching”, and consists in the practice of alternating between two or more languages, accents, or dialects in conversation (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). This phenomenon became progressively widespread as Wales became increasingly anglicised. Besides, Welsh code-switchers are generally classified into three different categories: the first one includes people whose native language is Welsh and who are not completely at ease with English; the second one consists of native English speakers who are not confident with Welsh; the last category involves people with expertise in both languages (Deuchar, 2006):

“Gwyn is a psycho and kiddy fiddler, knife carrier, mask wearer, pain lover, torturer, and all the other things that come from those programmes on the TV that Pigeon watches, and I don’t because of Efa, and which make him speak English like cowboys and say things like “Rho dy hands up or I’ll shoot!” and “Rhedeg i ffwrdd on the count of three, neu dwi mynd i make mincemeat of you!” (12)

“Efa got the idea about chapel last week, in the kitchen, after I told her about Gwyn again.

“Ma Gwyn hufen iâ’n *murderer*,” I’d said, the idea of it fizzing on my tongue. “Mae o’n lladd pobl efo’i *bare hands*.” (26)

“Pigeon has a pencil behind his ear and, with his black cheekbone from Him, he looks like he means business, so when I hear the van coming up the hill singing ‘bla bla bla’ and something about love or something, my bol lurches: hunger and nerves.” (62)

“Up here, the sign saying ‘Hufen Iâ Gwyn’s Ice Creams’ stands like a castle’s flag above the round heads of the people. A long tail of kids goes round to the slot in the van’s side, where Gwyn’s bristling face sticks out, smiling.” (68)

“Na Pigeon, ti’n wrong. It was a mistake, Cher got hurt cos she made a mistake, that’s all, just kids Pigeon, kids.” (185)

3.3.7 Welsh/English Direct Translations

Often, the author decides to make English-language assertions or questions that are followed by their Welsh equivalent or vice versa, thus providing the reader with a complete translation rather than hints:

“Ar noson dywyll,” begins Pigeon. On a dark, dark night.” (12)

“Don’t talk like that, Iola,” Efa says back, stirring the hippy soup in the kitchen. “Paid a deud petha fel’na.” (13)

“Un o’r teulu?” she asks Efa, syrup sweet. One of the family is she?” (29)

“Dwi ’di brifo dyn, Mam,” he tells her. “I’ve hurt a man.” (95)

“Cachwr,” says Pigeon.

“What’s that mean?”

“Arsehole,” says Pigeon bracing for the kick that lands in his gut.” (119)

“Who hurt Cher, Iola?”

“Dwn im ... I dunno,” I shrug. I don’t want to look at him” (185)

“Murderer. Murderer. Llofrudd,” (173)

“Stop saying that Pigeon, stopia Pigeon, paid a deud hyna, plis.” (185)

“Fuck this shite,” said one of the guys and kicked at the floor. He had an earring, thought he was tough, but Pigeon thought different. Nobody here scared him now, not after Neil at the centre and all that.

“Di o’m yn ffweicn dwad,” said the guy again.” (205)

“Dwi’m yn teimlo’n ry dda,” I say. And I don’t. It’s true. I’m not feeling well” (201)

“Na fina machgen i. Na finna. Hen beth gwael ’di alcohol. Difetha

bywyda' a Difetha pobl," says Elfyn. Pigeon sits quietly, knowing Elfyn's right. Alcohol is a home- wrecker, a people-wrecker a medicine with terrible side-effects." (223)

"Nei di ddod adra, Pigeon?" she asked him. Will you come home?" (243)

3.3.8 The Use of Italics and Capitalisation

Conran also points out the English translations in italics by putting them right beside their Welsh equivalent:

"Ers talwm iawn," *long time no see*, she says, licking her pink lipstick, sour-puss mouth." (28)

"Chei di'm lwc yn fanma 'sdi, nghariad i." *You'll get nowhere from here, love. You'll get nowhere. Here is nowhere.*" (55)

"Sothach!" she says quickly. *Rubbish!*" (65)

"Falla," says Pigeon. He moves his shoulders for *Not sure*" (93)

"Ddim fanma, Iola," he says. "Y nesa". *The next stop*, he says. Get off at the next one." (94)

"And I want to shout out at one or both of them *Gofalwch! Be careful, Murderer! Murderer!*" (174)

"Wyres Leusa da chi ynde?" he says, as clear as day. *You're Leusa's Granddaughter aren't you?*" (212)

"Ma'r lle ma'n hanner marw," Nain'd say. *This place is half dead.*" (216)

"Ti'n yfed Pigeon?" Elfyn asks one day. *Do you drink, Pigeon?*" (223)

"Geiria," he says. *Words*" (252)

Or she rarely highlights the English words in capital letters, in order to distinguish them from

the rest of the text in Welsh:

“Your sister has had an ALLERGIC REACTION. Perhaps indeed...” again his funny bible language, “perhaps indeed she needs to go to the HOSPITAL?” says Gwyn to Efa. He talks funny, like chapel, but with English in. (65)

3.3.9 Welsh Accents, Colloquialisms and Anglicisms in Welsh

Throughout the novel, it is common the presence of a few Welsh-language terms which indicate the kind of dialect spoken in Wales, the latter being divided into different dialect areas. Welsh dialects are generally divided into Northern (Cymraeg y gogledd) and Southern (Cymraeg y de), which differ in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, although the differences are more pronounced in speech than in the written language (MustGo Welsh website, n.d.). The Welsh words “nain” -grandmother- and “taid” -grandfather- are especially used in North Wales, contrary to the South Walians who prefer “mam-gu”- grandmother- and “tadcu” -grandfather- (BBC News, 2011). Also, the north-Welsh equivalent for “how are you?” is “sut mae” -pronounced “sit-mi” - whereas “shw mae?”- pronounced “shoe-mi”- is used in South Wales (LearnWelsh website, 2020). In the same way “tyrd” is the second-person singular imperative of “dod”, the Welsh equivalent for “to come” and it is specifically used in North Wales:

“Nain moved in with rules, dinner on the table, and bedtime like a stone wall.” (51)

“She meant Taid, our grandpa. She couldn’t speak about Dad without getting him mixed up with Taid.” (55)

“Sut mae?” says Gwyn shakily” (91)

“Sut mae?” I say to his mam in the living room.” (183)

“Tyrd!” Gwyn says, over and over, come on...” (72)

“Iola,” Efa’d said that morning. “Tyrd. Come and sit here, Iola.” (137)

Frequently, Conran uses Welsh and English colloquialisms in order to mark the new generations' language and vocabulary, such as when Pigeon and Iola are portrayed using the term “anyways”, a non-standard form of “anyway” which is typically accepted only in informal writing or colloquial language (Grammarist, 2010). Other colloquial expressions in the novel are: “iawn?” (how are you?), “na”, the informal Welsh version of “nage” (no) (English to Welsh Dictionary) and “ta ta” an informal British exclamation used to say goodbye (Collins, 2022):

“How’d you know he’ll be in anyways?” I ask Pigeon.” (40)

“He’s gone,” he snaps.

“He’s not around anymore anyways” (110)

“Iawn, bois?”

Together breathing “Iawn,” in reply.” (63)

“Pigeon should we go back? Should we go back, Pigeon?”

“Na,” he says. “Na.” (93)

“I pick up the dead chrysanthemums then, and I say, “Ta ta Gwenllian,” and start walking back home to Efa.” (157)

Eventually, Conran includes several anglicisms in Welsh used by a few characters in the novel, which further remind the readers of the common presence of Welsh/English bilingualism in North-Wales: “o” (oh) “secsi” (sexy) “riaction” (reaction) “sori” (sorry) and “stopia” (stop):

And then Pigeon got to his feet, walked down the hall, and wrenched the door open, making the first crack in the door as he yanked it.

“O,” she said.

“Oh,” said the man.

“O,” said Pigeon” (18)

“Secsi!” Efa says about it, laughing, and

shaking her beads as she dances round the kitchen, while, on a dusty stage someplace

and sometime else shaking bottoms dance behind the twanginguitar strings of The Cuban Song. “ (50)

“Then I begin it, the riaction alergick we’ve been practising by Pigeon strangling me over and over against the rough stones of the school wall.” (64)

“Sori,” she says. And then, “Sori, Pigeon,” again. She keeps shaking.(93)

“Afterwards, on the bus, counting the streets back home from Gwyn’s, Iola’s not speaking to him. She sits next to Pigeon, shaking.

“Stopia,” he says. “Stopia.” (93)

Conclusions

This dissertation has attempted to demonstrate that Alys Conran has successfully managed to celebrate the Welsh language and culture through her English-language novel “Pigeon” and has presented to her readers the idea of “Welshness” by pointing out the existence of Welsh in Wales.

To achieve this, Conran used many methods, one of which is the inclusion in her work of many places and references to the history of Wales, such as the slate quarry environment and the children's Sunday School at the chapel. Additionally, Conran highlighted the way in which English and Welsh coexist today through bilingual education, through the media, and through Pigeon's and Iola's recurring code-switching throughout the narrative.

By presenting both Welsh and English through her novel, Conran also provided the readers with insights into the way in which language influences the protagonists and how Welsh is spoken today, especially among young generations living in modern Wales and using both languages, of which Pigeon and Iola are an example. With the many Welsh-language dialogues among the different characters present in the novel, Conran's work can be regarded as a rare instance of a Welsh writer who, while writing in English, includes a number of words and sentences in Welsh.

Furthermore, the provision of a historical background, as well as an interpretation of the novel describing Pigeon's symbolic journey with his language as a metaphor for the history of Welsh, has been a further attempt to prove that the novel aims to celebrate Wales and its language.

Like many of her generation, and as opposed to those Welsh writers in the nineteenth-century who were regarded as traitors to their country and language if they wrote in English, Conran has proved that English may no longer be a threat and that it may instead be used as a medium to promote Welsh. In addition, her strong commitment to help and allow the non-Welsh readers to understand the dialogues in Welsh turned out to be an efficient and smart strategy not only to highlight the tension between the two languages, but also to possibly allow the English audience to be involved in the modern life in North Wales and enable them to acquire some daily Welsh words. Finally, Conran's technique can potentially increase awareness and curiosity among future readers,

thus keeping the Welsh language and culture alive.

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