

**ADDRESS:
Terminal Decline?
The Welsh Language in the Twentieth Century**

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In a previous incarnation I carried out extensive research into the history of Quakers in seventeenth-century Wales, notably Thomas Wynne, the Flintshire-born barber-surgeon who sailed to America on *The Welcome* in 1682 and became William Penn's personal physician. In one of his letters he said of Pennsylvania: "this is the place for soul and body." In coming to this conference, held in the traditional stamping ground of Welsh Friends, it's hard not to believe that I'm returning to the land of my fathers. Thank you for the invitation to deliver this keynote lecture and I trust that this conference will also prove to be "the place for soul and body."

If I were a sharp-suited, cocksure ambassador representing that public relations company known as the Welsh Language Board, I would regale you today with a fictional account of the miraculous survival of the Welsh language, its current well-being, and its glowing future prospects. To ambassadors of the Language Board, the Welsh language is rather like cannabis: it induces mild euphoria and a distorted sense of reality. Or, as one of your leading economists puts it, irresistible exuberance. But I'm a pessimistic realist, a mere historian who comes before you in his humble loincloth like a latter-day Elijah, plodding through the desert and preaching woe. My gloominess is largely based on three things. In his book *The Language Instinct*, Steven Pinker tells us that of the 6,000 languages in the world, 90 per cent will have perished by the end of the twenty-first century. Secondly, one of your favorite gurus, the political scientist Francis Fukuyama informs us that the twentieth century has turned us all into "historical pessimists." And thirdly, the cold facts in this lecture will point to language death. In short, Welsh is in the process of irretrievable decline. The torments of "*Tynged yr Iaith*" (the Fate of the Language) afflict us still. Man hands on misery to man and, as the prophet Elijah said, "Listen unto me, and hearken, ye people from afar."

As our touchstone, let's take one of the works of the novelist Islwyn Ffowc Elis, recently voted by readers of the *Western Mail* as the most popular Welsh-language writer ever. Those who have neglected to read his books should hang their heads in shame. In the 1950s

and the early 1960s, Elis was producing a novel every year on average. One of them, *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd* (A Week in the Wales of the Future), was published in 1957. This is a science-fiction novel in which Elis dispatches his main character on two separate journeys into the future. In the first visit he comes across an independent, bilingual Wales at ease with itself. In the second, he finds a Wales which has become a province of Western England – a kind of *Wallia Geriatrica* – in which no Welsh is spoken. He meets an old lady in Bala whom he invites to recite Psalm 23, "The Lord's Prayer." She concurs, only to lapse irrevocably into English, prompting the celebrated comment: "I had seen with my own eyes the death of the Welsh language." Elis's work serves as a leitmotif for this lecture.

Let's begin with the census of 1901. At that time 929,824 people (50 per cent of the population) spoke Welsh – close enough to a million people. 30.2 per cent of them were monoglot Welsh-speaking, and "*Y Fro Gymraeg*" (the Welsh Heartland), where over 80 per cent spoke Welsh, was robust and instantly recognizable. In 1900, it was perfectly possible to live one's life almost entirely through the medium of Welsh and this at a time when Britain was still the greatest power on earth. Welsh was robust in the domains of the hearth, neighborhood, religion, popular culture, literature and even politics. But all this had changed by the 1991 census: only 508,098 (18.6 per cent) spoke Welsh and monoglottism had long disappeared. "*Y Fro Gymraeg*" was a pale shadow of its former self, and four-fifths of the population had no grasp of the native tongue. By any standards, this was a massive transformation – a story of striking numerical decline. Having been a vibrant, living medium of communication for its people at the dawn of the twentieth century, the Welsh tongue now finds itself at the mercy of modernization, market forces, globalization, urbanization and deindustrialization. During the twentieth century the oldest spoken language in Britain began its long but inevitable march to extinction. My aim in this paper is to chart that decline, to focus on those factors which have undermined Welsh, and to assess the current state of play. I do so, while acknowledging, in the words of our greatest novelist Emyr Humphreys, "the debt of honour we all owe to our senior language."

On the eve of the Great War, the number of Welsh speakers was still rising: it had reached 977,366 by 1911, though bilingualism was fast becoming the norm. Welsh itself was a major casualty of war. The war inevitably took its toll on native speakers – perhaps around 20,000 of those who perished were Welsh speakers, and the poet R. Williams Parry spoke for the nation when he referred to "the wretch of losing the lads" (*y rhwyg o gollir hogiau*). Even before the war, the Welsh speaker knew full well that he or she was a second-class citizen. He could only take an oath in Welsh through an interpreter; he had no right to be tried by a jury who understood his language; and he could be refused permission to give evidence in his native tongue. It was no surprise to volunteers and conscripts, therefore, that Welsh speakers were discriminated against in active duty and their language, at least until the latter stages of the war, was proscribed. According to Lewis Valentine, "officers tended to look upon us the Welsh as barely civilized wild men from the hills." Although soldiers were encouraged to sing "*Hen Wlad fy Nhadau*" and Welsh hymns as they climbed over the parapet, many of them complained that every Welsh letter sent by them to their loved ones was returned "as if it were a bad penny." Nothing caused greater resentment than the English-only telegram which informed the next-of-kin of the death of a son. More important, however, as far as the well-being of Welsh was concerned, was the result of greater mobility and the dissemination of propaganda. It's a delicious irony that the first Women's Institute (the redoubtable WI – the epitome of tea-drinking English ladies) was

established in 1915 at Llanfairpwll in Anglesey! A new generation was favouring the English tongue. Around 10 per cent of the bilingual speakers aged 15–25 in 1911 had become monolingual English speakers by 1921. And to those who had been maimed or gassed in the trenches of the Somme, the Welsh language was fast becoming an anachronism, an irrelevance. "Woe that I live in this dire age" (*Gwae fi fy myw mewn oes mor ddreng*) cried the poet Hedd Wyn before he perished at Pilkem Ridge in 1917.

This brings us to the inter-war years, the locust years when sweeping demographic and economic changes deeply affected the fortunes of the Welsh language. Structural weaknesses within the economy were laid bare and mass unemployment, poor health and adverse living conditions scarred the lives of thousands of people. Farming was in poor shape and it is hard to convey the bleak misery of life in the industrial valleys. An exodus of biblical proportions occurred. Whereas nineteenth-century migration among the Welsh had signified dynamism and virility, it was now viewed as a hemorrhage. Between 1920 and 1939 Wales lost 442,000 people – nearly half a million people. 66 per cent of the migrants to England were under thirty. The young and the active left, while the middle-aged and the elderly stayed behind and their command of Welsh was not transmitted to the next generation. Between 1921 and 1951 the Welsh-speaking population of Merthyr Tydfil plummeted from 31,000 to 14,000, and in the Rhondda from 69,000 to 31,000.

During these years, too, dramatic changes were occurring in mobility and technology. By 1938 there were 55,000 licensed cars in south Wales and 21,000 in the north. According to Iorwerth Peate, "the unmistakable marks of the motor trade grew like red bruises along the new roads." The arrival of the telegraph, the telephone and especially the wireless enabled the English language to penetrate the homes of people who seldom spoke English. It is an incontestable fact that the wireless spelled the end of domestic isolation. Not even the might of Snowdonia was a barrier to the progress of Anglo-American culture. During the inter-war years, John Reith, head of the BBC and a man who despised the Celtic fringe, was determined to "make the nation one man" and its language English. Small wonder that the BBC was known in north Wales as the "Big Bumptious Concern." In other domains, the prospects were gloomy. In our national university – the much-vaunted *prifysgol y werin* (the people's university) – teaching and administration were in English and the College at Aberystwyth was described by *Yr Herald Cymraeg* as an elitist institution designed "to nurture snobs who worship the English." English was the dominant tongue in the National Eisteddfod – W. J. Gruffydd dubbed it "our old cannon fallen into the hands of the enemy." *Y Darian* – the much cherished Welsh-language working-class newspaper – folded in 1934, and Welsh Nonconformity became associated with discredited Liberal politics and blinkered rural, puritanical lifestyles. Young people, who despised hell-fire sermons and gloomy hymns, voted with their feet. How could the *seiat* and *cwrdd gweddi* compete with "The Talkies and Picture Palace Boom" of Hollywood? By the mid-thirties, there were more cinemas per head of the population in south Wales than anywhere else in Britain. "Thank God for the pictures," cried the working-class as they celebrated cinema stars like Clark Gable, Bette Davis and Katherine Hepburn. Small wonder that many beleaguered Welsh Nonconformists believed that "The Welsh language is dying, with the Bible in her hand."

In schools, there were compelling incentives to acquire and use English at the expense of Welsh. English-medium schooling became the norm and there were powerful psychological pressures on parents to discriminate against Welsh. It was dinned into their heads that

learning Welsh was futile. English was the language of 'getting on' and the old language was seen as a source of shame. Time and again, in a variety of sources in inter-war Wales, one encounters comments like "What do they want to speak Welsh for?," "Welsh doesn't pay," "No good fiddling about with Welsh," and "But it's no use"! English rapidly became the lingua franca in both school and playground in the industrial south. It's encapsulated in the writer Gwyn Thomas' celebrated comment: "the death of Welsh ran through our family of 12 children like a geological fault." Six spoke Welsh, six did not. In times of economic depression, the struggle to make ends meet was understandably believed to be more important than language maintenance and nation-building.

Of course the Welsh speakers put up a fight, spurred on by the intellectuals – "the masters of the commonplace," as Caradoc Evans biliously called them. Ifan ab Owen Edwards' *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* (The Welsh League of Youth), which had 470 branches and 57,000 members by 1940, was the biggest youth movement in Nazi-free Europe. As a pressure group, the National Union of Welsh Societies kept plugging away in the localities and was instrumental in acquiring 365,000 signatures on the Welsh Language Petition of 1938 which culminated in the Welsh Courts Act of 1942, an act so inadequate that it was greeted with loud cries of betrayal. Welsh speakers were still prevented from using their native tongue freely in court; small wonder in view of the fact that no less a person than Lord Chief Justice Caldecote privately admitted: "I do not know that I feel very sympathetic to this plan for keeping alive what, like Erse and Gaelic, is really a dying language." As far as Welsh was concerned, the symbolic deed of burning the bombing-school at Penyberrth in the Llŷn peninsula in 1936 served to highlight the subordinate status of the Welsh language. The fact that the case was transferred to the Old Bailey and that the three arsonists – Saunders Lewis, Lewis Valentine and D. J. Williams – refused to speak English strengthened public sympathy for Welsh. But it did not undo the damage wrought by Saunders Lewis' flirtations with Nazism, his regressive notion that agriculture ought to be "the foundation of Welsh civilization" and his stubborn attachment to the idea of "a monoglot, Welsh-speaking Wales." Lewis might have been the most able writer and critic of his day – "Small as he was," wrote R. S. Thomas, "He towered" – but his interpretation of the history of Wales and the prospects for the language was massively flawed.

By the coming of the Second World War, Welsh was running into serious trouble at grass roots level, and this process was aggravated by wartime demands. Fewer resources were made available for Welsh-language broadcasting and nearly half a million licence-holders in Wales became thoroughly familiar with a daily diet of English-language programmes and propaganda on behalf of "the British nation." The influx of as many as 200,000 evacuees meant that rural Wales in particular found itself beleaguered by young Scousers, Brummies and Cockneys, many of whom, according to local reports, also brought bugs and body lice to their billets. More serious, in a way, was the confiscation of land inhabited by Welsh-speaking families. We've been inundated in the past few weeks by stories of the Dunkirk spirit of 1940 – and rightly so – but no attention at all has been given to the 200 or so Welsh-speaking people ejected from their homes on the Epynt Mountain in 1940 without adequate explanation or compensation. As Iorwerth Peate put it, when the War Office occupied Epynt "a part of Wales died." This was one of the few robust Welsh-speaking strongholds left in Breconshire, and in many ways it's surprising that this episode never acquired the symbolic significance of Penyberrth or Tryweryn in Welsh folk memory.

The long-term trend, therefore, was towards the breakdown of isolation, swifter mobility, and incursions by the mass media. By 1951 the number of Welsh speakers had declined to 29 per cent of the total population. Adult Welsh monoglots were as rare as gold sovereigns; in English-speaking towns in south Wales the native language was viewed as a badge of ignorance and in the public eye Welsh was virtually invisible. There were no public signs or notices in Welsh, and all official forms distributed by central and local government were entirely in English. In many ways the 1950s was a deeply dispiriting decade, and Islwyn Ffowc Elis in *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd* was among the few to realize that language death was a distinct probability.

There is no doubt that the defining moment in the history of the Welsh language in the twentieth century occurred in February 1962 when Saunders Lewis – in that depressingly thin and plaintive voice – threw down the gauntlet to the Welsh people in his celebrated radio broadcast. "Tynged yr Iaith" (The Fate of the Language), along with Gwyn A. Williams's "When was Wales?" are the two most important BBC Radio Lectures ever published. Both reverberated around Wales for many years afterwards. Lewis's lecture brought the plight of Welsh into the public domain. His message was clear: linguistic decline could only be rectified by revolutionary means. Most important of all, Lewis's broadcast ushered in the young into the political arena, fired by his call for "resolve, willpower, struggle, sacrifice and effort."

It is no exaggeration to claim that the public gains achieved for Welsh in the past forty years are directly and indirectly attributable to the activities of the Welsh Language Society. In many parts of America and Europe, the 1960s was a decade of student activism notable for its idealism, bravery and daring as well as its tear gas and plastic bullets. This was the period described by Martin Luther King as one of "creative extremism" and in Wales the focus was on the fate of the native tongue. It was estimated in the sixties that the mother tongue was losing a native speaker every ninety minutes. It's a remarkable fact that so many linguistic battles were won by a Society whose membership never exceeded 2000. These young people embarked on what George Thomas, Secretary of State for Wales and a man capable of as many gaffes as Prince Philip, called "a madcap campaign." Lord Hailsham called them "baboons" and they certainly devised a whole array of unconventional, inventive, foolhardy and heroic stratagems. These included not only protracted sit-ins but also throwing paper aeroplanes from the gallery of the House of Commons, gluing locks in Tory party headquarters, climbing television masts, and jamming telephone lines of private utilities. It has become fashionable of late to denigrate the Welsh Language Society and to deem it redundant, but no modern movement has done more to revive the fortunes of Welsh. It provided the political dynamic which led to bilingual road signs, car tax discs, *Radio Cymru*, *Sianel Pedwar Cymru*, Welsh-medium teaching, and two Welsh Language Acts (in 1967 and 1993), both of which, alas, fell short of expectations but which established the Welsh Language Board with a brief to formulate language planning policies designed to increase the number of Welsh speakers. Furthermore, its sophisticated drive on behalf of *cymdeithasïaeth* and decentralized socialism was a robust counterweight to the cult of Britishness and free market values. The current Chairman of the Board, a former chairman of the Welsh Language Society and a poacher-turned-gamekeeper par excellence, is of the view that the battle for the language – *brwydr yr iaith* – is over. Is he right? In the second half of this lecture, let me offer you the following doomsday scenario.

One traditional fortress of the language – religion – is now virtually a lost cause. Since the Second World War, the Welsh have abandoned Christianity in droves. No longer is it the case that to be a Christian is an integral part of being Welsh. Church membership in Wales declined by 36 per cent between 1905 and 1982. "The fire now burns on Cambria's altars only with a smoky and fitful flame," wrote Glanmor Williams in 1982. At the current rate there won't be many altars left. Churches and chapels which were once the pride and joy of congregations have been left to crumble into ruins or to be converted into garages, cinemas, bingo halls and pubs. In the past year a Welsh Wesleyan Methodist chapel in Aberystwyth has been converted into a pub called the Academy, which seems to me to be a classic oxymoron. The DJ stands in the pulpit, the organ pipes are behind the bar, and the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer are emblazoned unnoticed on the walls. The decay of the Protestant religion has massive implications for Welsh. It has been the predominant medium of worship for the best part of four centuries, but we are now raising a generation for whom the prose of William Morgan, the pulpit rhetoric of Christmas Evans and the hymns of Williams Pantycelyn are utterly foreign. University lecturers can no longer refer to the Gadarene swine, the waters of Babylon or even doubting Thomas and expect to be understood. When Kate Roberts and D. J. Williams spun their wonderful short stories and novels in the inter-war years, they knew that their near-monoglot Welsh readers were soaked in the Scriptures. Their offspring, two generations later, are soaked in Catatonia, the Super Furry Animals, Stereophonics and other pop groups increasingly polluted by Mammon and designed to satisfy our short attention spans. William Owen Pughe coined the phrase about Welsh being the "language of heaven" two hundred years ago, but it is hard to believe that the Welsh language will ever again draw strength from religion.

Some will doubtless argue that education will be the salvation of Welsh. There is no doubt that enlightened planning and tireless effort have made bilingual education an attractive commodity in Wales, and I yield to no one in my admiration for the success of *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* (The Nursery Schools Movement) and the use of Welsh in primary schools and in bilingual secondary schools. It is splendid that Welsh is a core curriculum subject and that the Welsh Not has been consigned to the dustbin of history. But the results do not match the rhetoric. Only a fifth of Welsh children are fluent in Welsh by the age of eleven. Further deterioration occurs at secondary level. At the GCSE and A-level examinations, only 6 per cent and 5 per cent respectively of all entries are through the medium of Welsh. There are disturbing signs that pupils from English-speaking homes who attend bilingual schools never bother to use Welsh outside school premises or on leaving school. As Robert Owen Jones has rightly emphasized, "after leaving school Welsh becomes a passive skill." The percentage of higher education students pursuing Welsh-medium courses in Welsh universities is a lamentable 1.6 per cent. As long ago as the 1930s Saunders Lewis accused the University of Wales of "a catastrophic lack of moral courage and decision." And Dafydd Glyn Jones of Bangor has been even more scathing of late, describing the current University of Wales as "Dad's Army" and "Fred Karno's Circus." Nor is the situation among adult learners any more encouraging. It has recently been argued that current teaching methods are based on discredited methodologies and the high drop out rate in adult classes is alarming. We are deceiving ourselves if we believe that education, of itself, can guarantee the survival of Welsh. Reversing Language Shift will not occur simply in the classroom.

Others among you will protest that the Welsh are a literate people who cherish their books and will sustain the culture. And, indeed, within the context of lesser-used languages in western Europe, it's extraordinary that the number of Welsh books published in 1999 was nearly 600. It's gratifying that Anglo-Welsh writers have buried the hatchet with their Welsh-speaking counterparts; we now have remarkably self-confident post-modernist novelists, a crop of highly gifted Welsh historians, and at least fifty monthly *papurau bro* – community newspapers – with a total readership of around 280,000, which is greater than that of the Western Mail. But all this activity, however welcome, is heavily dependent on state support. Sales of books are disappointingly low, and the Welsh no longer loiter in bookshops fingering their check books. Even the most successful Welsh biography or novel is unlikely to sell more than 5,000 copies. A yawning gap exists in Wales between Welsh-language oracy and literacy. We have never had a Welsh-language daily newspaper and we are bombarded with English-language tabloid newspapers which speak from outside the Welsh culture and exercise a powerful influence on speech patterns and language skills. More critically, there are clear signs that both *Radio Cymru* and S4C are deliberately *DeCymricizing* programs, dumbing down their content, and encouraging language degeneration in order to improve their ratings. A recent random sample of the language of presenters of Welsh programmes on Radio Cymru contained the following examples of pidgin Welsh: "*essensial, lovely, really, actually, cownto, sortio, dependo, syposo, syporto, trifialeiddio.*" It grieves me to say this, but in the Welsh-speaking world of today there is no serious discussion of philosophical, theological, environmental and historical issues. Serious discourse in Welsh is ebbing away daily. Intellectually, we are becoming anorexic.

Still others may insist that the Welsh language will always survive in the family and the community. For some reason, the phrase *ar yr aelwyd* (on the hearth) has a peculiar resonance in Welsh, but this argument has no substance in the Wales of today. The robust, tightly-knit Welsh-speaking communities which prevailed in 1900 have long ago vanished. An alarmingly high proportion of Welsh speakers are linguistically isolated: 51 per cent of households have only one Welsh speaker; 70 per cent have no Welsh-speaking children within them. A large percentage of the population is elderly, divorce rates are running at over 30 per cent and rising, and lone parent families proliferate. Over Britain as a whole, adults live more isolated lives: there are fewer marriages, fewer children, more divorces and more solo living. The implications of these trends are obvious. We are no longer reproducing Welsh speakers in sufficiently large numbers to guarantee the survival of the language. Parallel to this is the decline of Welsh as a community language. The crisis in agriculture, the collapse of the smokestack industries, tourism, out-migration, in-migration and the loadsamoney ethos have all contributed to this process. The traditional *Fro Gymraeg* has disappeared and the linguistic profile of Wales is now patchy and fragile. In-migration, especially during the locust years of Thatcherism in the 1980s, has had a calamitous effect on the cultural profile of rural communities and an academic survey conducted in mid-Wales in the 1990s produced despairing comments by local people such as "English immigrants are swamping the village and changing the character" and "There's so many strangers in the village now." Blissfully unaware of the otherness of Wales and its native language, the majority of in-migrants remain steadfastly English-speaking. It could be argued that the increase, especially among the young, in the number of bilingual speakers in urban areas of south Wales will compensate for the losses among native Welsh speakers in the heartlands, but a network is no substitute for a community and the number of robust Welsh-speaking

communities is extremely small. Any language which is not a community language will purely perish. Our generation is probably the last of its kind. We are an endangered species.

In extremis, some of you might be tempted to believe that our politicians will be our redeemers just as surely as our Kiwi rugby coach Graham Henry purports to be. Institutionally and politically, of course, Welsh is much stronger in 2000 than it was in 1900. Its public status is high, its use on official forms, public notices, place-names is extensive, and the egregious John Major has assured us in Parliament that "We believe Welsh already enjoys official status in Wales," though no one who has scrutinized the Welsh Language Act of 1993 will find any such reference. Welsh is still excluded from the private sector, it continues to fall foul of the Race Relations Act of 1976, and it is entirely possible that members of our National Assembly will decide, in their wisdom, that Welsh is not the most important badge of national identity in a land in which four-fifths of the population do not speak it. Assembly members themselves are setting a pretty poor example: only around 10 per cent of the proceedings in the Assembly's first year were in Welsh. The example of Ireland reveals how politicians are capable of allowing a language to die by stealth and only a supreme optimist would argue that the salvation of Welsh lies in Cardiff Bay.

In sheer desperation, IT specialists among you will say that the globalism of the Internet will supply untold opportunities for lesser-used languages like Welsh. Do you truly believe that Bill Gates – the great monopolist whose wealth is estimated to be around 60 billion dollars – will come to the rescue? Whenever I think of the Internet, I recall the line by Yeats: "A terrible beauty is born." Far from being a liberating force, the Internet is an agent of cultural imperialism. Technology serves its masters and those masters are English-speaking. Over the course of the twentieth century, English has become a truly global tongue in the field of academia, business, advertising, diplomacy, leisure and sport, and the new information and communication technologies are underpinned by the English language and American culture. Cyberspace is synonymous with English and Anglo-Americanism: it's the very antithesis of linguistic diversity. Devotees of the Internet subscribe to the Babel myth – that the multiplicity of languages is a curse not a blessing. The global dominance of English clearly indicates the slow death of minority cultures which, in a cultural sense, are the have-nots of modern technological society. Currently, half a million Welsh speakers live in the shadow of 59 million English speakers in Britain and 221 million speakers of English in America. On this roller coaster ride on the super-turbo-charged capitalist highway, the smart money is not on Welsh.

All this bodes ill for the Welsh language. Its extinction is not, of course, imminent. It will not occur as a sudden apocalyptic event – more a case of a tortuous death by a thousand cuts – but its demise is assured. All the current trends point to what sociolinguists morbidly call language death. Those of you blessed with a sunny disposition might take a different view but the realists among you will recognize that the road to the truth is hard and stony. That does not mean that we should throw in the towel. That erudite, perceptive, baffling, infuriating veteran Saunders Lewis can have the last word. With typical Olympian flourish, he once declared:

To acquiesce in the death of a language which was the heritage of our forefathers for one thousand five hundred years is to despise mankind. Woe betide the society that despises mankind.

I, the prophet Elijah, even I, have spoken ... Hearken unto me.

* This paper broadly represents the oral version delivered at the NAASWCH Conference at Brynmawr College, Pennsylvania, in June 2000. I should like to acknowledge my debt to colleagues working on the project *The Social History of the Welsh Language* at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies and especially to all the contributors to the final volume in the associated series entitled "Let's Do our Best for the Ancient Tongue": *The Welsh Language in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff, 2000). I have drawn heavily on their work. I should also add that I'm reassured by the fact that not all of them subscribe to my gloomy thesis.