



Travelling Ideas Between Wales and Brittany

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This article asks what uses two minoritized cultures, Brittany and Wales, make of each other. Travel writing provides a privileged point of access to the issue, and the motif of mutual understanding between the two cultures is a key way in. Analysis of this motif in Welsh-language travel accounts to Brittany by O.M. Edwards, *Tro yn Llydaw* [*A Tour in Brittany*] (1888), Ambrose Bebb, *Llydaw* [*Brittany*] (1929), *Pererindodau* [*Pilgrimages*] (1941), and Dyfnallt, *O Ben Tir Llydaw* [*From the Headland of Brittany*] (1934) sheds light on the issues of cultural translation, periphery-periphery relations and Wales's Europeanness.

Keywords: Wales, Brittany, France, minoritized cultures, periphery-periphery relations, travel writing, cultural exchange, transnationalism.

The motif of mutual understanding investigated in this article ranges from claims that the two Celtic languages – Breton and Welsh – are one and the same, to affirmations of kinship, and is found across texts in different languages from Romanticism onwards. The incidence of such claims in French-language travel writing about Wales rises, following the French Revolution, and its positive valorization of Gauls, and therefore Celts, over France's Frankish ancestors. So whereas the novelist and educationalist Mme de Genlis (1746–1830), whose visit to Wales in 1792 is described in her memoirs of 1825, has recourse to Scottish and Irish points of reference (in this case Walter Scott, Ossian and Irish harps) in order to convey the Celtic otherness of Wales, more and more French writers during the course of the nineteenth century draw explicit comparisons between Brittany and Wales.¹ Historian Jules Michelet (1798–1874), for instance, who travelled through north Wales *en route* for Ireland in summer 1834, is transported right back to Brittany by his experience of the Welsh landscape.² In the case of Breton-born travellers to Wales, such as the poet and song collector Hersart de la Villemarqué (1815–1895) who visited an Eisteddfod in Abergavenny in 1838, along with a delegation of fellow-Bretons, investigating and subsequently exploiting this Celtic kinship, was the main motivation for travel. At the end of the nineteenth century, the heyday of pan-Celticism, another delegation of Bretons attended an Eisteddfod held in Cardiff, and the travel writing that resulted from their visit shows a new generation of Bretons putting the idea of Celtic connections to the test *sur place*.³ The motif appears in various guises, ranging from the linguistic myth of mutual comprehension to assertions that the Welsh and Bretons are cousins or siblings separated either by a geographical feature such as the sea, or indeed by time, as when one Celtic branch is referred to as the ancestors of the other. The precise form that the motif takes gives an indication of the writer's agenda, from those who exaggerate the connection by manipulating or even fabricating evidence (like La Villemarqué), to those who strive to demystify and to downplay it (like Ambrose Bebb).

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¹ Genlis's visit is described in her *Mémoires inédits sur le XVIIIe siècle et la Révolution française*, vol. 3.

² Michelet's travel account was published by Mme Michelet, but in altered form, in *Sur les chemins de l'Europe* (1893), then in its original form, in Paul Viallaneix, vol.1 (1959). It was first published on its own as *Voyage en Angleterre (août-septembre 1834)*, préfacé par Jean-François Durand (2005).

³ These French-language travel texts about Wales are discussed in detail in Kathryn Jones, Carol Tully and Heather Williams, *Hidden Text, Hidden Nation: (Re)Discoveries of Wales in French and German Travel writing (1750–2015)* (forthcoming).

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This article will privilege Welsh-language travel texts, a tradition that has received precious little critical attention. While actual travel underpins all the travelogues discussed here, published between 1890 and 1939, it is the mobility of ideas across cultural and linguistic borders that is of primary interest here. By showing that the Welsh and Breton cultural revival movements have always been internationalist in outlook, and that “marginal” or “minoritized” cultures can do more than merely talk back to the centre, this discussion will suggest the micro-cosmopolitanism of Wales. “Micro-cosmopolitanism”, a term coined by Michael Cronin, and first applied to Wales studies by M. Wynn Thomas in 2016, counters the idea that only large politico-cultural units can nurture tolerance and pluralism.⁴ Welsh Studies has a good claim to being “language aware,” as it deals with two languages – Welsh and English – and because bilingualism has long been a feature of Welsh culture. In the world of scholarship, M. Wynn Thomas’s pioneering work argued that in order to make sense of Wales, we must consider the two literatures of Wales in parallel and in dialogue with each other.⁵ Nevertheless, the accusation levelled by colleagues in modern languages against other humanities disciplines, namely that they conduct research that is “language indifferent,” may be relevant also to Welsh Studies.⁶ The material analysed in the present article shows how researching multilingually and transnationally can provide a fuller picture of Wales, allowing for an understanding of how it interacts with another culture, in this case, another minoritized one. It will also confirm the key contribution that travel writing scholarship has to make to the new “translingual,” “transnational” and “post-monolingual” paradigm in literary studies.

The examples will be taken from three Welsh travel writers, who devoted whole books to Brittany: O.M. Edwards (1858–1920), *Tro yn Llydaw* (Dolgellau: E.W. Evans, 1890),⁷ Ambrose Bebb (1894–1955), who published three books on Brittany, *Llydaw* (1929), *Pererindodau* (1941) and *Dydd-lyfr Pythefnos neu y Ddawns Angau* (1939), and Dyfnallt (John Dyfnallt Owen (1873–1956), *O Ben Tir Llydaw* (1934, 1937). These Welsh-language texts are shot through with passages in French and Breton, particularly Bebb’s. These passages include transcriptions of conversations with travelleses and translations of poems. The correspondences and other papers that accompany these intercultural projects – mainly held at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth - are totally multilingual.⁸ As such these texts require a post-monolingual approach.

Before turning to these three travel writers, La Villemarqué is an important precursor to any discussion of Welsh-Breton relations in modern times, as his visit to Wales in 1838 marks a watershed in the special relationship.⁹ Between 1834 and 1853, the “Cymreigyddion” of Abergavenny held a series of eisteddfodau

⁴ Michael Cronin, “Global questions and Local Visions: A Microcosmopolitan Perspective.” *Beyond the Difference*, edited by Alyce von Rothkirch and Daniel Williams. University of Wales Press, 2004, pp. 186–202; M. W. Thomas, <http://www.cymmrodorion.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/STUDYING-WALES-TODAY-M-W-THOMAS-6-DECEMBER-2016-compressed.pdf>.

⁵ See his *Corresponding Cultures: The Two Literatures of Wales*.

⁶ Term proposed by Loredana Polezzi, cited by Charles Forsdick, in <https://languageacts.org/blog/translating-cultures-and-digital/>.

⁷ On the confusion about dating this work, see Thomas Jones, ‘Dyddiadau cyhoeddi *O’r Bala i Geneva, Tro yn yr Eidal a Tro yn Llydaw*’, *Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society*, 9: 2 (1959), pp. 78–82.

⁸ The multilingual archive of documents relating to cultural exchange and dialogue between Wales and Brittany, kept at the National Library of Wales is exceptionally rich for a number of reasons. Firstly, the sense of affinity between the Welsh and the Bretons has been especially strong over the centuries, probably because of the proximity of their languages (much closer than, say, Welsh and Irish). Then there are also historical reasons for the importance of this archive, that have to do with the lack of a comparable National Library for Brittany, and the fact that Breton activists in exile after World War II chose not to donate their papers to an institution in France. However, this collection currently lacks visibility, partly because it requires a multilingual research approach (Welsh, Breton, French), and partly because of the geographical distance between Aberystwyth and Brittany.

⁹ Modern scholarship on both sides of the Channel has discussed the significance of La Villemarqué’s visit for inter-Celtic relations. See Pierre de la Villemarqué, *La Villemarqué, sa vie et ses œuvres* (1926), Francis Gourvil, *L’Eisteddfod d’Abergavenny (Septembre 1838) et les relations spirituelles Bretagne-Galles* (1938) and a chapter in his *Théodore-Claude-Henri Hersart de la Villemarqué (1815–1895) et le “Barzaz-Breiz”* (1960); Fañch Postic, ‘La Villemarqué et le pays de Galles (1837–1838), *Triade I, Galles, Ecosse, Irlande* (1995), 15–30, and “Le voyage de La Villemarqué au pays de Galles en 1838. Les premières relations interceltiques” (34–43). On the Welsh side the most comprehensive discussion is in Mair Elvet Thomas, *Afiath yng Ngwent* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1978), and Mair Elvet Thomas, *The Welsh Spirit of Gwent* (University of Wales Press, 1998).

under the patronage of Augusta Hall née Waddington, or Lady Llanover, also known as Gwenynen Gwent.¹⁰ Visitors came to the Eisteddfod from Europe and beyond, and scholars from France and Germany competed in the essay writing competitions. In 1838 the Abergavenny Eisteddfod invited a delegation of Bretons including La Villemarqué to attend. If he was officially in Britain “*pour étudier la langue et la littérature galloise dans ses rapports avec la langue et la littérature bretonne et pour consulter les Mss. Gallois de la Bibliothèque du Collège de Jésus à Oxford*” (to study Welsh language and literature in its relation with Breton language and literature and to consult the Welsh manuscripts in the library of Jesus College Oxford),¹¹ in reality the highlight for him was the ceremony at Abergavenny in which he was officially accepted as a bard by William Ellis Jones, “Cawrdaf” (1795–1848). His letters home bristle with information, descriptions and opinions on these events, as La Villemarqué was searching for inspiration, and wanted to draw on the Welsh example in his attempt to revive Brittany’s cultural awareness. As a result of this aim he overstressed the similarities and closeness of the languages, writing home that “*mon breton est entendu de tout le monde*” [my Breton is understood by all].¹² Also publicly he tried to convince both sides that Breton and Welsh are mutually comprehensible, composing a song for the occasion – “*Kan Aouen Eistezvod*” - in a rather opportunistic hybrid language that struck the perfect balance between Breton and Welsh, which was published a few days later as a trilingual “*feuille volante*,” with translations into Welsh and English arranged by Thomas Price.¹³ But this poem was the product of wishful thinking, and commentators agree that it is fake.¹⁴

What this traveller saw corresponds to the utopic vision that he had for his native Brittany. The way in which he shamelessly manipulates medieval and other sources across languages in order to further his own vision has been studied by Mary-Ann Constantine, who cautions that this is a complex issue.¹⁵ The attempt seen in La Villemarqué to prove that Breton literature is older than that of another culture or literary tradition (Welsh) is by no means unique to Celtic debate. Rather it makes of him a man of his times, as we see French national pride playing its role, for instance, in Bédier’s editorial work on the *Chanson de Roland*.¹⁶

Nevertheless, Wales undeniably had an impact on his plans for the *Barzaz Breiz*, the ballad collection for which he is remembered, and in which he tells the story of Saint-Cast, which he rehearsed at Abergavenny. This story is about a battle in which the French defeated the English because when the Welsh soldiers in the English army heard the Breton soldiers in the French army singing a Breton song they refused to fight, thinking that the army was Welsh.¹⁷

In any case by the time O.M. Edwards was writing his Breton travelogue (1889) the idea of mutual comprehension between Breton and Welsh was well known, and had gained a mythology of its own, and one of his main aims in his travelogue *Tro yn Llydaw* seems to be to put it to the test. Edwards was a highflying academic who spent his career as history don at the University of Oxford, before becoming chief inspector of schools under the new Welsh Education Department in 1907. He was also a prolific writer of popular history, and it is as such that he is mostly remembered in Wales, rather than as a founding father of Welsh language travel writing. In *Tro yn Llydaw* the idea of mutual comprehension is acted out through the creation of an alter

¹⁰ Her bardic name is literally ‘Gwent’s bee’; on her see Prys Morgan, ‘Lady Llanover (1802–1896), “Gwenynen Gwent”’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, new series vol. 13 (2007), 94–106.

¹¹ Cited in Pierre de la Villemarqué, *La Villemarqué sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris: Champion, 1926), p. 40. All translations from French and Welsh into English are the author’s own.

¹² Letter from La Villemarqué to his father, 5 November 1838, cited in Constantine, “La ‘sainte terre de Cambrie’” (217).

¹³ A number of copies have survived in the National Library of Wales and in the La Villemarqué family archives kept at Kernault, Finistère. In due course La Villemarqué’s French translation was published in the *Gazette de France*.

¹⁴ “En dépit de certains emprunts manifestes, ce texte n’est guère plus gallois que Breton” [despite some clear borrowings, this text is no more Welsh than it is Breton], Francis Gourvil, *Un Centenaire: l’eisteddfod d’Abergavenny* (10). From the Welsh side, Ambrose Bebb states equally categorically in *Pererindodau* “*Ond ni wn i am yr un Llydawr arall a’i galwai’n Llydaweg; ac yr wyf yn sicr na ddeallai’r un Llydawr cyffredin mohono*” [But I know of no other Breton who would call it Breton; and I am certain that no ordinary Breton would understand it] (136). The various contemporary reactions to this have been analysed by Constantine, who concludes that much multilingual work remains to be done on these texts: “Il reste tout un travail à faire sur la façon don’t nos sources écrites, dans les trois langues, ont résumé et décrit, voire manipulé, les événements et les discours” (“La ‘sainte terre de Cambrie’” 218).

¹⁵ For a more detailed discussion of this manipulation of medieval Welsh sources, see Constantine, *The Truth Against the World*.

¹⁶ See Glencross (176) and Utz (119–34).

¹⁷ On this story, see Guillorel and Laurent (167–184).

ego/ travellee figure named Owen, and historicized in Edwards's own telling – after La Villemarqué – of the story of the battle of Saint Cast. Edwards sets up his journey as a search for cousins, “*cefn dryd*” (9). As soon as he arrives in Saint Malo he tests the language myth out on a young boy “from the countryside,” who claims that he can understand their Welsh (23). Thereafter he never misses an opportunity to seek out speakers of Breton, and the text is full of anecdotes that together prove that the myth was well known beyond a circle of scholars. Owen Tresaint comes into the narrative to tell the Saint Cast story, the story told by La Villemarqué in Abergavenny, and again in his *Barzaz Breiz*. While O.M. Edwards doubts that the song would have been understood by the Welsh in 1758, he nevertheless concedes that they might have recognized it as Welsh. The climactic realization of kinship is put in the voice of Owen Tresaint; “*rydym ni’n frodyr*” [we are brothers] “*yr un bobl*” [the same people] (44). The fact that O.M. Edwards questions the veracity of his story is somewhat cancelled out by the fact that he retells it here at all, cleverly putting it in the voice of another Owen, an authentic Breton-born voice, which helps him make his next point that the story is well known through Brittany. He then exchanges the voice of the travellee for that of the scholar when he goes on to refer to and quote the *Barzaz Breiz*. The time travel motif is a common feature in travel texts, and indeed in any text about Brittany by an outsider, and in Edwards it grows out of the kinship myth just discussed. For him, arriving in Brittany is like travelling backwards in time:¹⁸ it is like being in Wales at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Whereas the discourse used in inter-Celtic writing around the assertions of similarity is usually about siblings or cousins separated by the sea, here it is not water that separates them but “two centuries.”

But what really shines through in O.M. Edward's book is his Britishness. As Katie Gramich has observed in a discussion of his home tour travel writing, he is a “hybridized figure” (154): something of an English gentleman traveller by education, but a (Welsh) travellee by birth and language. Travelling abroad, then, he is happy to identify with the imperial power and to present himself as British “*teithiwr Prydeinig*” [British traveller] (Chapter 5), “*Prydeinwyr*” [British] (47). He also generalizes that the English are better than the French, although he points out that he belongs to neither category (44). Many Breton travellers to Wales during the nineteenth and increasingly in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have seen Wales as a model for Brittany to follow, but Edwards proposes this from the opposite direction, and does so with a rather nasty British imperialist flavour, turning Celtic kinship into imperialist hierarchy. He is effectively telling the Welsh readers that they are superior to the Bretons when he states that Wales should send more Protestant missionaries to save poor Brittany from the dual enemy: atheism from France and Catholicism.¹⁹ The book closes with a re-assertion that Wales is progressing satisfactorily with democracy and Protestantism, but that poor benighted Brittany needs help.²⁰ For Edwards, then, closer connections between these two Celtic nations are needed not so as to jointly revive their ancient native cultures, but in order that Wales may “save” Brittany. Might this superior attitude be explained by reference to the postcolonial situation in Wales? It seems likely that the ideas soon to be expressed in his later volume of travel writing *Cartrefi Cymru* [*Homes of Wales*] were already brewing here. This home tour travelogue has recently been called “postcolonial” writing (Thomas 91),²¹ for its attempts to make up for the nation's invisibility. For M. Wynn Thomas, Edwards here turns the passive, Victorian response to the culturally devastating 1847 government report on education in Wales into “politico-cultural assertiveness” (77).²² It seems that the bullied tend to perpetuate rather than put a stop to bullying, and that the British imperial project cuts across the periphery-periphery relations.

¹⁸ He says, on the way to Dinan: “*myned i Lydaw ac yn ol i'r hen amseroedd*” [going to Brittany and back to the olden times] as they travel down the Rance on a steam boat (28).

¹⁹ “*Dylai Cymru anfon, nid un, ond deuddeg o genhadw*” [Wales should send not one but a dozen missionaries] (104).

²⁰ He further belittles the Bretons on the matter of religion: ‘*ni agorwyd eu llygaid*’ [their eyes have not been opened] (v), and speaks of their ‘*anwybodaeth*’ [ignorance] (v).

²¹ M. Wynn Thomas, *The Nations of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016), p. 91.

²² Ibid. p. 77. It should be noted that O.M. Edwards was not interested in class politics, as pointed out by Katie Gramich in “‘Every hill has its history, every region its romance’: travellers’ constructions of Wales, 1844–1913”, in Benjamin Colbert (ed.), *Travel Writing and Tourism in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2012), pp. 147–63. In discussing his travel writing about Wales she describes him as something of a hybrid figure ‘Often mis-recognized by the Welsh country people themselves as an English gentleman, he is the Oxford/ don returning to his native land, observing, remembering, and delivering patriotic homilies’, pp. 154–55. However, she concludes that his writing ‘cannot help but be potentially challenging to the political status quo’, despite the conservative ideology that it expresses, p. 161.

Ambrose Bebb was a truly intercultural figure, who unlike O.M. Edwards was a linguist who had lived in France, and translated from French into Welsh.²³ He wrote two travel books devoted to Brittany, much more substantial than Edwards's. *Llydaw* (1929) and a sequel *Pererindodau* (1941). He also wrote a book of "reportage," or almost manic note-taking, chronicling his visit to Brittany in the last fortnight leading up to the Second World War: August 1939, *Dydd-lyfr pythefnos, neu y ddawns angau* (1939). A multilingual biker, Bebb seems obsessed in his travelogues with talking to people. Not so much for the thrill of finding words in common between Welsh and Breton, but in order to gain insights into people's views. The voice of the traveller is strong in his texts, if mostly filtered through translation. Large chunks of conversation are transcribed, for instance, the poet Taldir (bardic name of François Jaffrennou, 1879–1956), gives a lengthy account of his trip to Cardiff in 1899 (68–71). Bebb also meets and portrays many intercultural figures in his travel books: people who have travelled to Wales, or who speak Welsh, or are active in the Breton movement, or both. It reads like a "Who's Who" of Breton culture and provides a valuable snapshot of intercultural relations in the middle of the twentieth century.

Bebb states that Wales and Brittany are siblings, "*chwiorydd ydynt o ran gwaed ac ysbryd*" [they are sisters by blood and spirit] (*Llydaw* vi), and that is his version of the idea of Celtic kinship. However, for him it is not just the Celtic past that ties them, but more crucially a very contemporary political problem, "*ac ill dwy yn wledydd bychain sydd yn rhaid iddynt ymladd yn galed yn erbyn dwy genedl fawr i achub eu henaid*" [and both are small countries that have to fight hard against two big nations to save their souls] (*Llydaw* vi). It is this shared disadvantage that makes it imperative that they work together, not in order for Wales to "save" Brittany (as in Edwards), but simply to support one another: "*mae'n briodol ac yn angenrheidiol hefyd iddynt gynorthwy y naill y llall ac i wneud hynny yn dda, dylasant adnabod y naill y llall yn well*" [it is appropriate and imperative too for each to help the other, and in order to do so well, they must know each other better] (*Llydaw* vi).²⁴ So it is hardly surprising that he rejects the hierarchy between Wales and Brittany established by O.M. Edwards in his own version of the time travel motif. He starts by presenting Wales and Brittany as opposites: one is rich with song, dance and costume, and the other deathly: "*drych bedd a mynwent*" (*Llydaw* x). In other words, Breton culture shows Wales everything it had lost with Puritanism, or Brittany allows Wales to see a version of itself that has been forgotten: "*ei weled ei hun fel yr oedd yntau gynt*" (*Llydaw* xi), but in Bebb's text the past has something important to offer the time traveller, it is not something that needs to be escaped from as it was for O.M. Edwards.²⁵

Bebb tackles the linguistic myth of mutual inter-Celtic comprehension head on, and declares, after his visit to Guingamp/ Gwengamp *pardou* (traditional Breton religious procession and cultural celebration):

Clywais daeru weithiau y gallai Cymro a Llydawr ddeall ei gilydd ar y waith gyntaf. Chwedl ydyw honno nad oes dim gwir ynddi. Dim yw dim. Y mae y peth yn amhosibl. Nis medrir heddiw. Nis medrid ddoe. (Llydaw 55–56)

[I have sometimes heard people swear that a Welshman and a Breton can understand each other straight away. This is a myth without any truth. None whatsoever. It is impossible. It is not possible today. It was not possible yesterday.]

²³ Bebb contributed to *Breiz Atao* a Breton nationalist journal and was extremely well connected with the Breton movement – to the point of facing two allegations after the war: first, that he was a British spy, and second, that he was a French spy! He also translated two books from French to Welsh: Lammenais, *Paroles d'un croyant* (trans. 1923) and Vercors, *Le Silence de la mer* (trans. 1944).

²⁴ But Bebb recognizes that Bretons themselves do see Wales as a model to follow when he claims that most Bretons expect Wales to provide: "*arweiniad a chyffro symbyliad yn y dyfodo*" [leadership and encouragement in the future] (*Pererindodau* 114).

²⁵ It should be pointed out that Bebb also uses time travel in a more conventional way, for instance, when he sees costumes on women in the train station in Saint Brieuc; it was "*megis eich gosod eich hun ar amrantiad yn y Canrifoedd Canol, megis symud o'r ugeinfed ganrif i'r ddegfed*" [like placing yourself in an instant in the Middle Ages, like moving from the twentieth to the tenth century] (*Llydaw* 32). He states that the contrast with France could not be greater (*Llydaw* 33). Also when he witnesses agricultural practices in Le Faouët that have been abandoned in his native Ceredigion in 1924 he describes this remnant of the past as primitive: "*darn o gyntefigrwydd pur@* [a piece of pure primitivism] (*Pererindodau* 124).

He even condemns it as a “*chwedl ramantus a chelwyddog*” [a romantic and deceitful myth] (*Llydaw* 56). Also he tackles the legacy of La Villemarqué and his use of the Saint-Cast story by exposing the Abergavenny poem as linguistically inauthentic, and declaring: “*ni wn i am yr un Llydawr arall a’i galwai’n Llydaweg; ac yr wyf yn sicr na ddeallai’r un Llydawr cyffredin mohoni*” [I know of no other Breton who would call it Breton, and I am certain that no ordinary Breton would understand it] (*Pererindodau* 138). And what is more he has done his research, and relates an attempt by critic and journalist Francis Gourvil to test the Bretonness of the famous “Breton” poem presented by La Villemarqué at Abergavenny, by inviting readers of the *Ouest Éclair* newspaper to send in translations of it. The results were comical and Bebb quotes (in Welsh) two incorrect translations of the opening couplet and explains how it should read. So if Gourvil had already proven that this is not Breton, Bebb adds that it is not Welsh either, despite the inclusion of Welsh words and what he refers to as “Welsh clothing”: “*Dyna gân, ynteu, nad ydyw hi na gwir Lydaweg na gwir Gymraeg*” [here is a poem that is not really in Breton nor really in Welsh] (*Pererindodau* 139), “*gân na ddeallai neb yn llawn, ond pawb o ran*” [a poem understood fully by no-one, but partly by all] (*Pererindodau* 139), and adds that this is also true of the *Barzaz Breiz* more generally. However, he is aware that the impact of this fake, Welshified Breton on the Welsh present at the Abergavenny Eisteddfod was impressive, with people clambering onto the benches in order better to cheer the young poet. Bebb realizes that the veracity of the Saint-Cast story is irrelevant, the point is that the audience loved it, showing that La Villemarqué had a bit of a knack for applying just the right spin.

Unlike O.M. Edwards, Bebb had read the French-language literature on Brittany – he names Chateaubriand, Michelet, Renan – and complains that too much has been made by them of Brittany’s sadness, despite himself saying that Bretons are maybe too spiritual. He says that Bretons are a people who give in to fate, or who are just preparing for “the other side”; but unlike those Romantic, melancholy French writers, Bebb sees the connection between the theme of death and the political, postcolonial situation:

Pwy sy’n nes at y Llydawr na’r meirw? Y mae eu hysbrydion yn mhobman. [...] Y mae eu beddau yng nghanol y dref, neu’r pentref, ac yn gyfeillion agos b’r byw. //Hawdd ydyw gormesu ar genedl felly. Canys ymfodlona hi i weld tynged yn yr holl ormes.

[Who is closer than the Breton to the dead? Their ghosts are everywhere. ... Their graves are in the middle of the town or village, and they are close friends of the living.// It is easy to oppress such a nation. Because it is happy to see fate in all the oppression.] (*Llydaw* 87)

The Welsh perspective on Brittany, as a fellow periphery, is totally different from the French one, and he connects the cliché of a death-obsessed culture that pervades French writing on Brittany to his opening point about political imbalances, his point about living in the shadow of a powerful neighbour.

O Ben Tir Llydaw by Dyfnallt (1873–1956) is written rather in the idiom of a guidebook with many instructions and imperatives: “*Dylai’r teithiwr*” [the traveller should] (17), “*Dylai pob teithwr*” [every traveller should] (15); and the reader is warned not to miss various things.²⁶ By bossing the reader about, Dyfnallt establishes his own superiority as a traveller. He congratulates himself for leaving the beaten track in order to see the authentic culture that is being lost or about to be lost. By telling the reader not to follow the common track of the summer traveller “*er mwyn gweld y wir Lydaw, ac nid Llydaw hanner Ffrengig ochr y ffordd fawr*” [to see the true Brittany, and not the half French Brittany along the main road] (31) he positions himself as a traveller, not a tourist (word given in italics in English, 23), and signals his disapproval of the founding father O.M. Edwards.

In Dyfnallt’s text Celtic kinship plays a new role. While he receives the same welcome in Brittany as the two travellers already discussed – since people are generally glad to meet travellers from Wales (27), at Le Faouët his Welshness, and Celticity, afford him special favours. Some girls in costume refuse to be photographed by him, and so he describes them as “*rhy falch i fold yn wrthrych cywreinrwydd i ddieithriaid*” [too proud to be the object of the curiosity of strangers] (33), but once he demonstrates that he is no stranger, by revealing that he is Welsh, the Bretons are persuaded to pose. Again in Concarneau, women and fishermen

²⁶ For instance, “*ni ddylai ar un cyfrif*” [he should not on any account] (15). The imperatives include “*ewch*” [go] (15), “*Ni ddylid gadael y gymdogaeth heb gip ar Sainte Barbe*” [the area should not be left before a look at Sainte Barbe] (35), “*Gofaled y teithiwr fynd...*” [the traveller must be careful to go to...] (51), “*Ni ddylai’r teithiwr ar un cyfrif gollu rhyfeddodau’r [ffordd i Hennebont]*” [the traveller should on no account miss the wonders on the way to Hennebont] (54).

“*yn codi a throi cefn ar y camera, ond yn barod i gymryd eu llun wedi deall mai Cymry oeddym*” [get up and turn their backs on the camera, but are ready to have their picture taken once they understood that we were Welsh] (33). Similarly a farmer carrying wheat (“*wŵ*”) between the ancient standing stones of Carnac decides to pose once he realizes that the photographer is Welsh (51). And once again fish wives knitting and sewing on the quay at Concarneau, initially refuse to be photographed, but agree once the kinship card is played, whereas another group of rather wiser women nearby demand to be paid for posing (65).²⁷

Many fields in the arts and humanities have been too Anglophone for their own good, and travel writing is no exception. This discussion has demonstrated the importance of multilingual research, by drawing attention to a nest of transnational texts that have been neglected. Minoritized languages provide instructive case studies, and this discussion contributes to an emerging question about centre-periphery dynamics. While minoritized cultures can clearly be microcosmopolitan, the travel writing of O.M. Edwards in particular demonstrates that the influence of the hegemonic culture (that is responsible for the marginalization) demands to be considered. “Travel writing” is not just writing that is generated by actual travel. It is not just a characteristic of a text but also a mode of reading that is alert to the movement of ideas between cultures. Ideas have never respected national boundaries. Within literary studies the concept of a national literature that is taught and researched within one academic department – say the Welsh department, or the French department, has been transcended, with our focus now on “contact zones” (see Pratt 7, 8) and “translation zones” (see Apter 129-34). The travel writing that exists between Wales and Brittany, as well as the multilingual corpus of diaries, correspondences, essays, translations and journalism that exist alongside it,²⁸ is prime material for looking at Wales transnationally and translangually. It reveals Wales’s microcosmopolitanism and indeed Wales’s Europeanness.

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²⁷ For a brief discussion of photography in the context of tourism in Brittany, see Young (129).

²⁸ For instance in the case of O.M. Edwards, for this travelogue we also have his letters to his wife Elin of 30 July 1889, *Llythyrau Syr O.M. Edwards ac Elin Edwards 1887–1920*, p. 90; and to his father, of 27 July 1889 describing the “Hôtel de l’Univers,” where he notes that he “understands people speaking Breton” [deall y bobl yn siarad Llydaweg yn iawn], p. 91.

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