The Poetry of Celtic Places

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Note on Contributor
Heather Williams is a research fellow at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. Her publications include *Mallarmé's Ideas in Language* (2004), *Postcolonial Brittany: Literature between Languages* (2007), and numerous articles on cultural exchange between Breton, French and Welsh, translation studies and travel writing. Recently, she has been working as Co-I on the AHRC-funded "European Travellers to Wales" project, its follow-on project, and the forthcoming book of the project with Kathryn Jones and Carol Tully, *Hidden Text, Hidden Nation: (Re)Discoveries of Wales in French and German Travel Writing (1750–2015)*.

Abstract
This paper examines the radical shift in the place of Celts in the French imagination during the course of the nineteenth century, by focusing on two versions of a passage describing Wales by Michelet: the first written in his travel journal (1834), the second published by his widow (1893). Wales, by virtue of being a Celtic place, allows Michelet to deepen his understanding of France. Whereas juxtaposition of the two versions of his text reveals something of the French state's attitude toward the ambiguously domestic and exotic Celtic "other."

The place of Celts and Celticity in the French imagination shifts radically during the course of the nineteenth century.[1] It is widely accepted that Ernest Renan's essay "La poésie des races celtiques" (Poetry of the Celtic races) of 1854 is key in this development. Renan is often referred to as the point of departure in any investigation of the dominant images that we have of Brittany—indeed of Celticness—today. Along with Matthew Arnold's *On Celtic Literature* (1867), which is indebted to Renan's text, "La poésie des races celtiques" occupies a key position in the development of Celtic Studies as an academic discipline, and has colored views of Celtic lands and people ever since. The discourse inaugurated by Renan and Arnold has been described as a "Celticism," modelled on Edward Said's "Orientalism" (Mc Cormack 1985, 220; Kiberd 1996, 6), and Arnold's work in embellishing and interpreting Renan has been described as "arguably the most influential piece ever written in the field of Celtic studies" (Chapman 1992, 25).

However, it is notable that, despite the mention of 'race' in the title of Renan's essay, the discussion of poetry contained within seems to be just as much about place, as a passage near the opening demonstrates: "Le sommet des arbres se dépouille et se tord; la bruyère étend au loin sa teinte uniforme; le granit perce à chaque pas un sol trop maigre pour le revêtir; une mer presque toujours sombre forme à l'horizon un cercle d'éternels gémissements" (The treetops lay themselves bare and writhe; the heather extends its unchanging hue into the distance; at every step granite breaks through a topsoil too thin to clothe it; at the horizon an almost-always somber sea forms a circle of eternal sighs) (1928, 375-76).[2] In what is ostensibly a study of literature, we find a landscape conjured up by a vocabulary of human suffering called on to express a psychological state.[3] The present article explores descriptions of Celtic places that foreground the question of poetry and poeticness, with a focus on travel writing about two Celtic places, Brittany and Wales, by Jules Michelet (1798–1874), the foremost historian of his generation in what was a golden age of French history. Michelet's Breton pages are well known, since the notes in his travel journal for August 1831 were reworked to form the Breton section of his *Tableau de la France* (1833), before being taken up again in *La Mer* (1861), to be finally published posthumously as part of his *Journal* ([1828–1848] 1959).[4] His Welsh pages, on the other hand, have been overlooked, but repay close attention, not least because they exist in two distinct versions: as notes kept in Michelet's travel journal for August 1834, and as a passage of *Sur les chemins de l'Europe* (1893), heavily edited by his widow Athénaïs.

Written at different moments, by two people with different purposes in mind (one, private notes to the self, written with the aim of maybe re-working them later; the other, aimed directly at the public), these two versions present a compelling case for comparative analysis. Michelet's process of editing and reworking his own text is readily observed in the juxtapositions of different versions of the Brittany material by Paul Viallaneix in the introduction to the *Journal* (Viallaneix in Michelet [1828–1848] 1959, 13), and it appears from the Welsh pages that Athénaïs Michelet employed the same tactics, thinking, as would any editor, about what readers would buy. However, it is not my intention to contribute to the debate around Athénaïs's various roles as literary collaborator or co-writer, posthumous editor, or "abusive widow."[5] Rather, this article views her emendations, spanning more than half a century, as an index of the changing reputation of the Celts in France.

The first version of the Welsh text predates the watershed year of 1838, when La Villemarqué—who was incubating his landmark work *Barzaz Breiz* (Breton Ballads) (1839)—visited Wales, and enthusiasm for all things Celtic reached boiling point at the Abergavenny *Eisteddfod* (Edwards 1980, 305). The second coincides with the publication

date of Anatole Le Braz's magnum opus *La Légende de la mort en Basse-Bretagne* (The Legend of Death in Lower Brittany) (1893). In the interim, Renan's essay was published, formal inter-Celtic exchanges such as the Saint-Brieuc congress of 1867 flourished, and Celtic Studies was inaugurated as an academic discipline in France, thanks to the appointment of Henri Gaidoz (1842-1932) to the École des Hautes Études in 1876, as well as the establishment of the *Revue celtique* in 1870.

A nineteenth-century focus is key to understanding the evolution of the figure of the Celt, in France as indeed in Britain. Indeed, Celticity was mostly an irrelevance in eighteenth-century French thought. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, even those French citizens whose sole language was a Celtic one—the Breton-speakers of western Brittany or *Breizh-Izel*—would have derived their sense of identity from their parish and local squire, rather than from any sense of belonging to a Celtic family.[6] The land of Brittany was seen as nothing more than a challenge for administrators and agriculturalists wishing to modernize and eradicate regional differences in France. Overseas Celtic areas such as Wales were generally perceived as part of England, even by French travelers who ventured there. It could be argued that Celts were invented in the nineteenth century (Williams 2007, 33), since everything had changed by 1899, when pan-Celticism was at its height, as the national *Eisteddfod* in Cardiff attracted delegations from a range of Celtic regions, including Brittany. Even beyond circles of Celtic enthusiasts, both Brittany and Wales had developed into tourist destinations by the end of the nineteenth century, such that the former was recommended by Stéphane Mallarmé's fashion magazine *La Dernière Mode* (The Latest Fashion) as the destination for the traveler in the know (Mallarmé 2003, 503), and the latter inspired a humorous guidebook that poked fun at ill-travelled Parisians, namely Albert Huet's *Un tour au pays de Galles* (A Tour in Wales) (1877). This volume was written as a riposte to the author's unadventurous Parisian friend to persuade him that Wales was a tried and tested destination, eminently suitable for him and his wife.

What is clear is that wherever there are attempts to describe or define Celts, their poetry and poeticness is never far away. Following the French Revolution, which brought about the need to reframe the past for the newly forged nation, the Gauls—"nos ancêtres les Gaulois" (our ancestors the Gauls) —came to be favored over the Franks in the Romantic project of creating a history of and for the Republic, since they were seen as the ancestors of the people (Croisille in Viallaneix and Ehrard 1982). The Bretons were seen as the living link to these Gauls, who were also perceived as Celts—indeed, the terms "Gaul" and "Celt" were often used interchangeably, and "the Celts became topical within mainstream French historiography" for the first time (Rigney 1996, 163). The title of the "Académie celtique," founded in 1805, shows how valorized Celts were, as its purpose was to study the past of the whole of France, not just Brittany. For post-Romantic French observers, the poetry of the Bretons represented the most authentic link with the French nation's Celtic (Gaulish) past. French travelers to Wales sought in Welsh poetry further, perhaps even deeper, links to the same sort of past. According to Jacques Cambry, whose *Voyage dans le Finistère* (Travels in Finistère) (1799) can be considered the founding text of French-language writing about Brittany, poetry is the authentic expression of 'natural man': "La poésie naquit avant la prose; elle est l'expression ardente des émotions de terreur, d'étonnement, d'admiration ou d'amour, que l'homme de la nature éprouve avec un sentiment plus vif que l'homme civilisé" (Poetry was born before prose; it is the ardent expression of feelings of terror, astonishment, admiration or love, that the man of nature feels more acutely than does civilized man) ([1799] 1836, 98–99). Drawing on ideas pioneered by Rousseau and Diderot about the origins of language and poetry in the cries of primitive man, Cambry cannot resist making digressions

into the history of poetry in the middle of his descriptions of landscapes and scenery. In a similar vein, the authors of the *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France* (Picturesque and Romantic Travels in Old France) (1820–1878), Isidore Taylor, Charles Nodier, and Alphonse de Cailleux, had stressed that oral poetry heard in Brittany belonged to an unbroken tradition. Indeed, its poetic nature is probably the most enduring cliché about Brittany—the language is poetic, the people are poetic, the landscape is poetic. This is an attitude toward Celtic places that accompanies French travelers on their journeys to Wales.

Jules Michelet spent a month travelling around Britain and Ireland in summer 1834. In a letter home to his first wife Pauline, dated 15 August, he describes his daily travel and signals his intention to make a detour along the coast of north Wales to its very extremity before sailing for Dublin from Liverpool:

> Tous les jours nous faisons une vingtaine de lieues, nous arrivons de bonne heure et nous voyons une ville. Hier, c'était Oxford, aujourd'hui au soir Shrewsbury, ou Birmingham, demain ou après, nous serons à Bangor, à l'extrémité du pays de Galles. De là nous reviendrons vers Liverpool pour passer à Dublin.

> Every day we cover some twenty leagues, we arrive early and see a town. Yesterday it was Oxford, this evening Shrewsbury or Birmingham, tomorrow or the day after we shall be at Bangor, at the furthest point of Wales. From there we will return towards Liverpool and sail to Dublin. (Michelet [1828–1848] 1959, 751)

Unlike many travelers through north Wales to Dublin, whose travel accounts say next to nothing of the journey between the English border and Holyhead,[7] Michelet chose to visit, and kept a journal that, though not intended for publication, is described by its editor as a place where Michelet's books were "prepared" (Michelet [1828–1848] 1959, 8). This journal contains a passage describing Wales that was not published in that form until 1959.

Michelet, as his stagecoach crosses from England into Wales, is aware that this border is so much more than a line on a map. He first notices donkeys rather than horses, signaling a hilly terrain: "l'emploi des ânes annonce un pays de montagnes" (1959, 134), and then comments that the place names become foreign: "étrangers" (1959, 134). He notes the presence of slate ("L'ardoise paraît, je reconnais la Bretagne" 1959, 134), realizing that the landscape is not only different from the English one he had left behind, but also strikingly similar to that of Brittany. Thus, it is through analogy with the Brittany that he had described only a few years previously that Michelet recognizes that he is in Wales. He goes on to discuss the Welsh landscape and evidence of industry, offering an opinion on the latter (1959, 134). The pinnacle of the account comes when he hopes that an unsuspecting Welsh native jumping into the stagecoach will provide him with access to ancient poetry (1959, 134). The passage ends with his crossing to Dublin (1959, 135).

Though his second wife Athénaïs was frequently his literary collaborator, even she was not allowed access to the journal, and Michelet never envisaged publishing it. Noting that the travel sections are better organized that the papers in other parts of Michelet's journal, Viallaneix concludes that this work shows us the real Michelet. Having been granted sole rights to her husband's manuscripts on his death in 1874, Athénaïs reworked the journal to publish *Sur les chemins de l'Europe* (On the Roads of Europe) in 1893. Her main aim seems to have been to enhance its literary value. She makes the logic clearer in places by adding details and place names, but mostly she makes the sentences more balanced and literary, in much the same way that Michelet himself edited his notes as he prepared his work for

publication (Viallaneix in Michelet 1959, 13; Landrin 1991, 392). However, there are some telling changes in emphasis, with some significant cuts to the text, as well as additions. Though Mme Michelet makes the piece longer overall, some aspects have been omitted. For instance, she is clearly less interested in the material reality of travel, and omits references to the coach itself, and the traveler's need to eat and sleep, preferring to flesh out the descriptions of the landscape. The emphasis added to Wales's Bretonness and Celticness, and corresponding sadness, suggests not only the influence of a key essay such as Renan's, but also reveals something of the French state's attitude toward the Celtic as an instance of internal difference.

In French travel writing on Wales, the importance of Brittany as a point of comparison grows during the course of the nineteenth century—as argued by Jones, Tully and Williams (forthcoming). In émigré travel writing, the similarity was only noted by Breton natives, and non-Breton French travelogues display a degree of uncertainty regarding Celtic places, suggesting that the vocabulary was unstable. When Mme de Genlis, the educationalist and novelist, visited the ladies of Llangollen in north Wales in 1792, she knew that she was in Wales, because she refers to it as the "principauté de Galles," (Principality of Wales) despite thinking that she is in "Angleterre" (England). However, it is Ireland (via the harp) and Scotland (via Ossian) that are called upon to help situate and convey her impression of this Welsh landscape. Surveying the landscape around the Llangollen home of Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, she says: "On n'y voyoit plus que des troupeaux de chèvres et quelques pâtres dispersés, assis sur les rochers, et jouant de la harpe *irlandaise*" (All we saw then were herds of goats and a few goatherds, sat on rocks, playing *Irish* harps) (Genlis 1825, 352, emphasis added). She moves immediately to describe another vaguely Celtic location: "En face de ce tableau agreste et mélancolique les deux amies avoient fait poser un siège de verdure, ombragé par deux peupliers; et c'étoit là, me dirent-elles, que souvent en été elles venoient relire les poésies d'Ossian" (Facing this melancholic and rustic scene the two friends had placed a seat of greenery, in the shade of two poplar trees, and it was here, they told me, that they often came in summer to re-read the poems of Ossian) (352-53). It is as if these two names had some currency in French, whereas the word "gallois," (Welsh) or even "celtique" (Celtic) did not.

Brittany comes up a number of times in Michelet's original journal, but this is developed each time by Mme Michelet, making the comparison more explicit and more sustained. Michelet was no Celtomaniac, though, and his views were more measured than those of the Thierry brothers (Augustin Thierry, 1795-1856, Amédée Thierry 1797-1873) and Henri Martin (1810-1883). In his 1869 preface to the *Histoire de la France*, Michelet thought of the French as "mixed Celts" (as well as Gauls, Greeks, Romans, Germans) and was "careful not to ascribe a monopoly of the highest virtues to the Celts" (Crossley 1993, 204).[8] Instead, Michelet felt that the Celts had good features, but the Romans were needed to move things on. For him, "the meaning of France coincided neither with the Gauls nor with the Franks" (Crossley 1993, 203); it resided in the fact that France had made and re-made itself out of diversity. It was not the elements that made up France that mattered, but the success of their fusion. The Celts, as Michelet saw them in his day, had failed and were weak—although he calls the Bretons a "peuple de granit" (people of granite), they are the detritus of history, and doomed (Rigney 1996, 175).

Michelet briefly makes the point that Wales is better off than Brittany because of its orientation in the sea. Mme Michelet develops this into a more literary passage, personifying Wales as it avoids the worst of the sea's fury: "sagement, il évite ses fureurs ne s'offrant aux flots que de côté" (wisely avoids its fury, offering only its side to the sea) (1893, 73). Then, a

whole portrait of Brittany in her timeless battle with the sea is added (73). The waves and winds of the west are evoked to stress Brittany's bravery, resilience, liminality, and determination to survive, perhaps betraying some Gallic pride. Most of this added section is reminiscent of Michelet's own descriptions of the Breton sea in *Tableau de la France* (Scenes of France) and *La Mer* (The Sea), but describing the ocean as that which today separates these sister Celtic cultures—Wales and Brittany—is new. Mme Michelet goes beyond the idea that one culture or landscape might leads to thoughts of the other to evoke the actual Celtic connection, the exchanges, the congresses that had taken place between the cultures, such as the *Eisteddfodau* at Abergavenny in the 1830s, or the Saint Brieuc Celtic Congress of 1867. Thus, she makes Wales *more* Breton. By adding granite to the slate, she betrays the Breton filter, and recalls the granite-pierced ground of Renan's essay. Michelet wrote of a mixture of rocky ground and fresher land, adding that Wales has coal and peat ([1828–1848] 1959, 134). Though Mme Michelet points out that Brittany also has peat, she exaggerates the rockiness of the ground, adding the word "stérilité" (sterility) (1893, 75), and claiming that granite sticks out of the ground here and there, reminding the observer of Breton standing stones: "Ici et là, le granit se dresse sauvagement en pointes acérées. Je retrouve mon menhir Breton" (Here and there, granite rises up brutally in sharp tips. I recognize my Breton menhir) (75). But Michelet had only mentioned barren land ([1828–1848] 1959, 134), not stones thought at the time to be Druidic remains. Manipulating the description to seem more Druidic in this way is an indication that Brittany had become fashionable.

The change of focus between the two versions of the text regarding the question of industry confirms the shifts detected above. At a time when "British industry served both as model and as rival for a less-developed nation such as France," and "virtually every French industrialist" was aware of the superiority of British industry (Stearns 1965, 50), Michelet was keen to observe the effects of the industrial revolution on Britain. He had seen the acculturation, the effects of the rural exodus, and the workers transformed into objects ("chose") from his first day in London: "Nulle part la misère ne m'a semblé plus triste qu'ici" (Nowhere have I seen poverty as sad as this) ([1828–1848] 1959, page). He is worried by what he sees because, without wanting France to be left behind like some rural backwater, economically dependent on Britain, he does not want France to suffer culturally. Mme Michelet deletes his explanation of the industry that he sees in north Wales. Michelet mentions the presence of mines, "fourneaux" (forges) (134) and "exploitations" (ventures) (134) in the midst of forests that at first struck him as untouched, and he offers some social comment in a matter-of-fact way: "La cherté de la main-d'œuvre pousse ainsi l'industrie dans les lieux où le peuple est pauvre" (the cost of labour pushes industry into the places where people are poor) (134). This explanation is omitted entirely in Mme Michelet's version; instead, the incongruity of finding industry and Celticity hand-in-hand is stressed. It is with "surprise" (1893, 73) that one hears hammers and activity, only for the whole scene to be pronounced harmonious: "Ce qui l'harmonise, c'est que la vie agricole se mêle à l'industrie à mi-côte" (what harmonizes it is that agricultural life merges into industry half way up the hill) (73). Whereas Michelet had concluded that this co-existence summed up the story of humanity ("réunissant ainsi tout les âges de la vie humaine" (drawing together all the ages of humanity) [(1828–1848) 1959, 134]), reading the Welsh landscape as an allegory of progress, Mme Michelet stresses the way that industrial architecture can enhance nature (1893, 73). She alludes to Thomas Telford's much-admired feat of engineering, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, when it was not even present in the original notes. It would seem that she only adds Telford because his masterpiece enhances the natural landscape—the changes she makes to the discussion of industry are part of her making Wales more Celtic. The adjective "Celtique"

(77) is also added—along with the reference to Druids, who were absent from the original—in the key passage describing the farmer/peasant (77).

Michelet claimed that the Welsh were more poetic than the Bretons, and when a Welsh farmer—he calls him both "un paysan gallois" (a Welsh peasant) ([1828–1848] 1959, 134) and "un fermier aisé" (a comfortable farmer) (134)—joins him in the stagecoach, he hopes to hear some songs from the past. Sadly, this Welsh farmer proves a disappointment: though he sings for this travelling Frenchman, he has no voice, as his only reported words are 'yes' (in English in the original, 1959, 134); perhaps Michelet tried to elicit responses from him in English or even French, when he may well have been a monoglot Welsh speaker. The changes made to this passage by Mme Michelet are slight—she is content to exchange the imperfect tense for the historical present, and to add a sentence to stress the distance between this peasant farmer and an Englishman: "ses prévenances ne sont pas non plus d'un Anglais" (his kind consideration is not that of an Englishman either) (1893,77). Mme Michelet hardly changes the key characterization: "Ce sont des chants bas, graves, uniformes, distincts cependant des chants d'église; quelque chose de vaste et de sonore, comme l'écho d'une grande et sauvage nature de montagnes" (these are low, solemn songs, uniform, not like church songs. Something vast and sonorous, like the echo of a great and wild mountain nature) (77). In this episode, she retains the Romantic idea that poetry originates in the primitive cries of man in nature, which is the clearest illustration that Michelet sees Wales through ideas that were current about Brittany, or indeed about popular cultures generally in Europe. The idea that the songs of peasants gave access to an authentic past was soon to culminate in Brittany in La Villemarqué's *Barzaz Breiz* (1839). Michelet shared La Villemarqué's view that "the true national history of a people" was to be found in myth and popular poetry, and that the stories found therein were even more important than facts because they were true to the character of the people who created them (Crossley 1993, 194). Michelet, as an early translator of Giambattista Vico's *Scienza Nuova* (The New Science) (1725), would have been familiar with the latter's emphasis on the "people" as opposed to great men, as well as primitive man's predisposition to poetry (Berlin 1976, 42, 93; Mali 2012; Rushworth 2017). Michelet had even planned to write an "Encyclopédie des chants populaires" (Encyclopedia of popular song), modelled on Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), around 1828 (Bénichou 1970, 51). Michelet's history was one that rejected chronological or dynastic perspectives in favor of seeing races, people and nations as agents of historical change (Crossley 1993, 44). He valued the collective consciousness, considering it a repository of wisdom, and seeing myths, legends and epic poetry as "phenomena deserving serious study" (Crossley 1993, 93–97). To these ideas, current among French historians in 1834, Mme Michelet adds the adjective "celtique" (1893, 77). Where Michelet had simply recorded that he had attempted to get the man to talk about the ancient poetry of the Welsh ("J'essayais de le mettre sur la voie de leur ancienne poésie" (I tried to set him on the tracks of their ancient poetry) [(1828–1848) 1959,134]), Mme Michelet adds Celticity by changing the phrase: "j'essaye de le faire causer sur l'antique poésie de cette terre celtique" (I try to get him to talk about the ancient poetry of this Celtic land) (1893,77). She also enhances the effect of the disappointment on the travelling historian when the native has no poetry to offer, changing the tentative ("je crois qu'il ne savait rien, ou presque rien de tout cela" (I think he knew nothing, or next to nothing about all that) [(1828–1848) 1959, 135]) into the categorical: "Même insuccès. Il ne sait absolument rien du passé" (same lack of success. He knows absolutely nothing about the past) (1893, 77). Following this disappointment, the final scene in the Welsh part of Michelet's travelogue puts the emphasis on sadness: "Traversé la *triste* île d'Anglesey. C'était la *tristesse* du soir, la *tristesse* des bruyères, la *tristesse* de la mer, dont nous nous sentions environnés. Le soir, pris le thé à

Holyhead et embarqué à onze heures pour Dublin" (Crossed the *sad* island of Anglesey. It was the *sadness* of the evening, the *sadness* of the heath, the *sadness* of the sea that seemed to surround us. That evening, took tea at Holyhead and embarked at eleven o'clock for Dublin (emphasis added in each case) ([1828–1848] 1959, 135). This is expanded by Mme Michelet, who adds the detail of a melancholic little bell, stressing sadness and melancholy. She also adds "little," which seems to be affectionate, whereas the same adjective qualifying Anglesey has the flavor of infantilization. As well as patronizing it, she enhances Anglesey's Celticity by adding the clause "sanctuary of Druidism:"

> Puis, nous traversons la *triste petite* île d'Anglesey, sanctuaire du druidisme. C'est la *tristesse* du soir, mais aussi la *tristesse* des bruyères, la *tristesse* de l'océan dont le voyageur se sent de partout enveloppé. Je prends une tasse de thé à Holyhead, et, au moment où une *petite* cloche au timbre *mélancolique* frappe onze coups, je m'embarque pour l'Irlande.

> Then we cross the *sad little* island of Anglesey, sanctuary of Druidism. It is the *sadness* of the evening, but also the *sadness* of the heath, the sadness of the sea that seems to surround the traveller on all sides. I have a cup of tea at Holyhead, and the moment a *little* bell with a *melancholic* sound chimes eleven, I embark for Ireland (emphasis added in each case). (1893, 77-78)

In a further act of melancholizing, Mme Michelet also adds the adjective "mélancolique" (78) to a description of vegetation that compares Welsh with Breton plants. The original text merely listed plants, without passing comment: "Mêmes plantes qu'en Bretagne, bruyères, fougères, joncs marins: je n'ai pas vu de sarrazin" (Same plants as Brittany, heather, ferns, gorse: I did not see any buckwheat) ([1828–1848] 1959, 134). Mme Michelet swaps one common name for gorse (literally "sea-rushes") for the emblematic "prickly gorse," the name preferred by Balzac and other French writers on Brittany (Williams 2007, 52). She also qualifies the whole selection as melancholic: "Mais sur la lande pierreuse, c'est bien la même végétation mélancolique: bruyères, fougères et l'ajonc épineux" (but on the stony heath, the same melancholic vegetation: heather, ferns and prickly gorse) (1893, 74).

We may question why Michelet ends on a note of sadness, despite stating that Wales is better off than Brittany—"il est plus frais que la Bretagne" (it is fresher than Brittany) ([1828–1848] 1959, 134)—and why Mme Michelet ends with even greater sadness. It seems to be because Michelet is seeing Wales through Brittany, of which he had said: "Le pays est sérieux, il va devenir triste et sauvage," (the land is serious and will become sad and wild) and "toute cette côte est un cimetière" (this whole coast is a cemetary) (Michelet 1997, 49, 54). For Michelet, peasant and nature are in harmony in Brittany, where sadness comes from the land itself: "La beauté triste des bruyères roses mêlées de plantes jaunes" (the sad beauty of the pink heather merged with yellow plants) (Michelet 1997, 36). This became such a cliché in French-language writing about Brittany as to provoke the defiant claim by La Villemarqué at the end of the preface to his *Barzaz Breiz* (1839): "Non! Le roi Arthur n'est pas mort!" (No! King Arthur is not dead!) (La Villemarqué [1839] 1997, 97). For him, nothing is dying in Brittany—quite the opposite: he is optimistic and energetic about the future of Celtic cultures, particularly following his trip to Wales in 1838. One explanation put forward by La Villemarqué as to why his contemporaries were producing such death-infused pictures of Brittany is that this furthered their own literary fortunes in Paris.[9] Describing Souvestre's fatalistic *Les Derniers Bretons* (The Last Bretons), La Villemarqué says: "On conçoit que cette peinture presque funèbre ne fut guère du goût de vrais Bretons, mais elle plut fort au directeur de la *Revue des deux Mondes*" (We can see how this almost funerary

picture, though not to the taste of real Bretons, really pleased the editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* periodical) (1865, 5). An alternative explanation for the paradigmatic sadness of Celtic landscapes is the particular idea of progress in nineteenth-century France. The positivist attitude that Celts can only belong in the past, and the "colonial" (Williams 2007) attitude of the French state that wanted its provincial cultures and languages to die—or at least be transformed into an ordered mosaic of docile "petites patries" that would forever be subservient to the "grande"—imposed "tristesse" and "mélancolie" on Celtic places.

In conclusion, the two versions of Michelet's work, which started out in the 1830s as a view of Wales informed by the reading of Vico, are a valuable source for the study of evolving French perceptions of the ambiguously domestic and exotic Celtic "other." As Mme Michelet prepared the travel diary for publication, she was undoubtedly thinking of the needs of the buying public, adding detail and enhancing points, as she does with the comparison between Wales and Switzerland. Whereas Michelet himself merely name-dropped the Alps in his Welsh passage, when he described Snowdonia as being of "picturesque" height in contrast to "infinite" height such as that of the Alps ([1828–1848] 1959, 135), Mme Michelet develops the comparison into the claim that this charming part of *England* is "une petite Suisse en miniature" (a little Switzerland in miniature) (1893, 75). Her expansion also includes naming Snowdon, and giving its height as a mere 3000 feet: "guère que 3,000 pieds" (hardly 3000 feet) (75). The Switzerland analogy was a staple in mainstream writing about Wales in French, as it was in English-language home tours, and it is easy to see why an editor might add these details.[10] Smaller changes can be more telling, though, and something of the relationship between Brittany and France can be observed in the subtlest of them. In the original, Michelet used the first person in relation to Brittany only once and only in the plural—"notre Bretagne" (our Brittany) ([1828–1848] 1959, 134)—merely conveying the fact that he is a French observer and that Brittany is part of metropolitan France. Mme Michelet, on the other hand, adds "ma Bretagne" (my Brittany) (1893, 72), as well as using "notre Bretagne" (our Brittany) (1893, 73, 74) in place of the original's more neutral definite article: "la Bretagne" (Brittany) ([1828–1848] 1959, 134). This point raises questions about how Michelet or Mme Michelet (or, indeed, France) can take possession of Brittany.

Of course, the text is not necessarily about Wales or Brittany for their own sake. For Michelet, the history of Brittany quite simply *is* the history of France because one is at the core of the other. In *Tableau de la France*, Michelet aimed to show how the unity of France grew out of the rich mosaic of provinces, and puts Brittany in privileged position at the opening of the volume (Landrin 1991, 400). In a sense, all Wales did was allow Michelet to deepen his understanding of Celtic places within a project that was actually always about France. On one level, Athénaïs Michelet's posthumous amendments in the 1890s turn the text into a full-blown set-piece on Celticity, but the added sadness and other subtle changes betray an intensification of the French center's colonial attitude toward Brittany. In this travel text, we perceive the Welsh farmer through the lens of Brittany, or rather through French hopes that Brittany will provide a living connection to the Gaulish past of the people, while simultaneously modernizing and abandoning its language.

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[2] All translations into English are my own.

[3] As René Galand has pointed out, Renan "ne tente point de peindre pour le lecteur un tableau du paysage breton, il veut produire une impression d'ordre psychologique plutôt que physique […]. Effaçant toute barrière entre le domaine physique et le domaine moral, Renan communique au lecteur la signification affective qu'il dégage du paysage breton" (1959, 88).

[4] These are collected in *Carnet de Bretagne* (Michelet 1997).

[5] The critical narrative that castigates Athénaïs Michelet for meddling with her husband's texts, detectable in the editorial work of Paul Viallaneix and Claude Digeon, as well as in theoretical work such as Roland Barthes's *Michelet par lui-même* (1954), was exposed by Arthur Mitzman in an appendix to his *Michelet, Historian* (1990, 284–285), and is fully examined in Smith (1992).

[6] A possible exception is seafarers and traders, such as those discussed in an earlier context by Le Bris (2013).

[7] Marc-Auguste Pictet complains that he is stranded in Holyhead for over 24 hours, but finds the area interesting (1802, 199, 239). French-Canadian Jules-Paul Tardivel races through

Wales on the train from Holyhead to London with precious little commentary (1890, 68–69). Jacques Boucher de Crèvecœur de Perthes (1868) says nothing about the area, despite sailing though Holyhead.

[8] Croisille nonetheless shows how he seems to like the Celts, displaying an "attachement sentimental" to them (1982, 217).

[9] On the tactics used by provincial writers from Brittany, see Williams (2003). In the case of France more generally, see Gosetti (2017), as well as Gosetti and Viselli (2018).

[10] A common motif in English tours of Wales such as those to the Hafod Uchdryd estate in Ceredigion, comparison with Switzerland is frequently found in French travel accounts of Wales, such as Marc de Bombelles, *Journal de voyage en Grande Bretagne et en Irlande 1784*, ed. Jacques Grury (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1989), Maudet de Penhouët, *Letters Describing a Tour through Part of South Wales: by a Pedestrian Traveller. With Views, Designed and Etched by the Author* (London: T. Baylis, Greville-Street, 1797), L. Smyers *Essai sur l'état actuel de l'industrie ardoisière en France et en Angleterre* (Paris: Poulet-Malassis et de Broise,1858), Pierre Trabaud, *D'Inverness à Brighton: notes et sentiments sur les Îles Britanniques* (London: Baillière, 1853), as well as French Swiss travellers such as Marc-Auguste Pictet, *Voyage de trois mois en Angleterre, en Ecosse, et en Irlande pendant l'été de l'an IX* (Geneva: Bibliothèque britannique, 1802) and Arthur d'Arcis, 'Voyage au nord du pays de Galles', *Le Globe: Journal géographique. Bulletin* 6 (1887): 34-51, 54-68.