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**“Excuse the Spelling Which is Probably Wrong”:**

**Wordsworth and Tourism’s Welsh Languages**

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***Introduction***

Reading Wordsworth, as a Welsh speaker, can make you feel oddly like an anglophone tourist struggling to decode Welsh place-names. Faced with the poet’s erratic renderings of the names of Welsh locations (“Liswyn”, “Rhaiodwor Gawy”), you have to take a perplexed moment before attempting interpretation.[[1]](#footnote-2) Llyswen? Rhaeadr Gwy? The latter are the standard modern Welsh spellings for these places, and although there is no chance that every literate inhabitant of Wordsworth’s Wales would have spelled them thus, Wordsworth seems aware that his versions were wide of the mark.[[2]](#footnote-3) As he wrote to George Huntly Gordon in 1829 after attempting Pistyll Rhaeadr [“Pistil-rhaidor”]—”excuse the spelling, which is probably wrong” (*LY* II: 79).

Wordsworth’s visits to Wales provided raw material for some of his best known poems—”Tintern Abbey” and the ascent of Snowdon in the “Prelude” amongst them. But his wayward Welsh spelling demonstrates how encounters with Wales disrupted the poet’s command of language. Touristic Wales was a “contact zone”—to use Mary Louise Pratt’s linguistically-derived phrase—and incorporating its Celtic tongue threatened Wordsworth’s English with becoming a “contact language…chaotic, barbarous, and lacking in structure”.[[3]](#footnote-4) For a poet who professed to use “the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes”, or “the real language of men”, any home-nation whose common/real tongue was impenetrable to the English poet presented obvious problems.[[4]](#footnote-5) Similarly, a poet who addressed his war-threatened British nation in 1802 as “We… / who speak the tongue that Shakespeare spake” might have an anxious time imagining national community with those who, instead, spoke the tongue of Taliesin.[[5]](#footnote-6) Building on hints laid down by Paul Wright, our essay establishes that Wordsworth experienced these Welsh linguistic disorientations primarily through the emerging practice of Romantic tourism: we place Wordsworth’s use of Welsh in the context of the wider phenomenon of Romantic-era tourist encounters with the Welsh language, casting new light on his violent early encounter with a drunken knife-wielding Welsh clergyman, the semi-silent presence of lower-class Welsh subjects in the “Prelude” and “Simon Lee”, and the poet’s attempts to establish local toponyms in the later Welsh tour sonnets.[[6]](#footnote-7)

The most enraptured Wordsworthian encounters with Celtic languages are to be found in his Scottish tour poetry: the song of the “Solitary Reaper”, the Gaelic shouts of the “Blind Highland Boy”, the tantalising “few words of English” belonging to the subject of “To a Highland Girl” (*CWRT* I: 663). Wordsworth’s Welsh is, by comparison, more patchy, prosaic, elusive, and (sometimes) rebarbative. Whereas the imagined linguistic content of the song of the “Solitary Reaper” is an important part of its fascination, the “accomplished master” of the “ancient British harp” in Wordsworth’s “Excursion” (Bk. VII) plays his “soft or solemn tunes” (*CWRT* II: 495) without apparent words accompanying them.[[7]](#footnote-8) And whereas the Gaelic-speaker’s struggle with English recounted in “To a Highland Girl” is described as “bondage sweetly brook’d, a strife / That gives thy gestures grace and life!” (*CWRT* I: 663), Wordsworth’s account of a similarly linguistically-challenged Welsh priest (examined below) is far less pleasing, with the Welshman “heaping on my poor English head every reproachful epithet which his scanty knowledge of our language could supply” (*LY* II: 79). Our aim here is not to draw strong distinctions in the national symbolism of Wordsworth’s linguistic thought (though the connection Alan Liu has made between Wordsworth’s Wales and unruly, revolutionary violence is an intriguing one): but we do argue that Wordsworth’s Welsh writings offer an alternative perspective on Celtic linguistic difference, and that reading them in tandem with the wider contemporary phenomenon of Welsh tourism can help us better understand the gaps and silences that make their evocation of Celtic language harder to grasp.[[8]](#footnote-9)

By 1791, the year Wordsworth first came to Wales, the “Welsh Tour” was a phenomenon. Over the previous two decades, and particularly after the publication of Thomas Pennant’s three-part *Tours in Wales* (1778–1783), Welsh sites and scenery had attracted many hundreds of visitors from England and beyond. An impressive number of records of these journeys survive, some transmuted into the increasingly successful genre of published home tours, others into poems or novels, paintings, sketches and prints; many remained as private accounts in letters, diaries and notebooks. They form the broader contextual discursive web within which the journeys of Wordsworth and other English-language Romantic-era writers and artists took place.[[9]](#footnote-10) The troubled decade of the 1790s saw those numbers spike dramatically. Wales could be conceived by visitors as a haven or an escape, a place to holiday and to playfully try out new identities, but it was also a place in which trouble and change took on new configurations and possibilities. Some of these were literal and immediate: Wales had a vulnerable west coast, directly attacked by the French in 1797; the mineral and fossil deposits of its valleys and mountains were, partly as a result of the war, being exploited with rapidly increasing efficiency. Others were more submerged: an alternative “British” history of war and conquest lay scattered (for the most part safely, picturesquely) across the landscape in cromlechs and hillforts and castles. And across it all, as immanent as air or light, but far less discussed by tourists than either, a language.

Donald Hayden has mapped the routes and contexts for Wordsworth’s various visits to Wales, starting with an extended period spent with his Welsh-speaking college friend and fellow Alpine tourist Robert Jones at Llangynhafal, Denbighshire, in 1791.[[10]](#footnote-11) In the summer of 1793 a troubled journey from the Isle of Wight across Salisbury Plain would take him up through the Wye Valley and back to Jones in the north. In July and August 1798 he returned to the Wye twice with Dorothy. In 1824 he spent a period of some weeks in Radnorshire and the north with his wife and daughter; they also stopped over for a few days on a journey to Ireland in 1829. Finally, in 1841, Wordsworth returned briefly to Goodrich and the Wye valley. All of these encounters with Wales left their traces on his oeuvre, and those of the 1790s helped shape some of the defining texts of the period. Romantic criticism has hardly neglected Wordsworth’s engagement with Welsh places, nor has it ignored some of his more memorable meetings with Welsh people.[[11]](#footnote-12) But, with notable exceptions, it has to date made little of the actual linguistic contexts in which those encounters took place.

This is both surprising and not surprising. For a language spoken by eighty per cent of the population in 1800 Welsh feels curiously under-represented in contemporary English-language descriptions of the country; it is not difficult to see how, in later critical readings of the period, it might be overlooked. Exploring this question in a recent study of tour journals written by two lady’s companions in 1804 and 1806, Kathryn Walchester makes the interesting suggestion that “linguistic otherness”, which seems remarkably absent from the texts, is effectively transposed into a more general representation of Wales as “impossible to comprehend.”[[12]](#footnote-13) As early as 1947 the historical linguist W. H. Rees lamented that “the number of tourists from beyond Offa’s Dyke who made any reference even to the existence of the vernacular (not to mention its territorial incidence) is surprisingly limited and thus what might have been a rich mine of first hand linguistic information, has proved relatively barren”.[[13]](#footnote-14) Rees was drawing on a narrower body of (largely published) tours, and his assessment is somewhat gloomy. It is nonetheless true that Welsh only tends to push into typographical view in certain set-piece contexts, and it is against these that we will be reading Wordsworth’s entanglements with the language.

***An Argument in Montgomeryshire***

In the spring of 1829 Wordsworth wrote to assure his friend George Huntly Gordon, who was considering a visit to Wales, that he would find “many beautiful spots in Montgomeryshire”: “Five and thirty years ago”, he recalled, he had spent a few days in “one of its most retired vallies”.[[14]](#footnote-15) This idyllic introduction leads, unexpectedly, to the most violent eruption of the Welsh language into any of his tours, recalling how (as he tells it) an argument about Welsh philology resulted in him being threatened at knifepoint. Wordsworth’s recollection, which bridges his earliest visits to Wales and his later perspectives on the country, is his most direct account of the linguistic disturbances created by Welsh tourism.

The chronology of the 1829 letter is vague, but Hayden suggests that Wordsworth’s Montgomeryshire visit took place in 1791, when he and Robert Jones undertook an extensive pedestrian tour taking them to the north-west coast, down as far as Aberystwyth, and back through the hills and valleys around Bala into Eryri (Snowdonia).[[15]](#footnote-16) Their host, who owned a house at Llechweddygarth near Llangynog, was a Mr Thomas.[[16]](#footnote-17) Remembering that Thomas’s usual residence was in Flintshire, and that he was a near neighbour of Thomas Pennant, Wordsworth immediately diverts into a reminiscence of “several agreeable hours” spent in the study of that famous Welsh traveller at Downing Hall, looking through his collection of richly illustrated manuscript tours.[[17]](#footnote-18) Again, it is not wholly clear if this visit to Pennant’s home took place in 1791 or 1793—perhaps, one might imagine, after an introduction through the neighbourly Thomas—but in the elided time-space of Wordsworth’s retrospective letter, this moment of touristic civility as a guest of the author who did much to launch the “Welsh Tour” as a phenomenon makes a striking contrast to the uncivil encounter he goes on to describe:

…an event took place so characteristic of the Cambro Britons that I will venture upon a recital of it… One day we sat down une partie quarrée at the Squire’s Table, himself at the head; the Parson of the Parish, a bulky broad-faced man between *50* and *60* at the foot and Jones and I opposite each other. I must observe that “the Man of God” had not unprofessionally been employed most part of the morning in bottling the Squire’s “Cwrrw” anglisé strong Ale, this had redden’d his visage (we will suppose by the fumes) but I sat at table not apprehending mischief. The conversation proceeded with the cheerfulness good appetite, and good cheer, naturally inspire—the Topic—the powers of the Welsh Language. “They are marvellous,” said the revd Taffy. “Your English is not to be compared especially in conciseness, we can often express in one word what you can scarcely do in a long sentence.” “That,” said I, “is indeed wonderful be so kind as to favor me with an instance?” “That I will” he answered. “You know perhaps the word Tad?” “Yes.” “What does it mean?” “Father” I replied. “Well,” stammer’d the Priest in triumph, “Tad and Father there you have it”—on hearing this odd illustration of his confused notions I could not help smiling on my friend opposite; whereupon, the incensed Welshman rose from his chair and brandished over me a huge sharp pointed carving knife. I held up my arm in a defensive attitude; judge of the consternation of the Squire, the dismay of my friend, and my own astonishment not unmixed with fear whilst he stood threat[e]ning me in this manner and heaping on my poor English head every reproachful epithet which his scanty knowledge of our language could supply to lungs almost stifled with rage. “You vile Saxon!” I recollect was one of his terms, “To come here and insult me an ancient Briton on my own territory!” (*LY* II: 78–9)

Alan Liu, despite noting that this disagreement was sparked by “fine points of philology”, quickly broadens out into other issues—revolutionary violence, racialisation, colonialism, Welsh social history—leaving the “fine points” of linguistic debate somewhat by the wayside.[[18]](#footnote-19) Similarly (and somewhat curiously) J.R. Watson, suggests that “we do not know” what the argument was about: “it could have been about anything […]: the French Revolution, the church, the English and Welsh, language, politics, religion”.[[19]](#footnote-20) The matter at hand, clearly enough, is the reputed concision of the Welsh language vis-à-vis English. Wordsworth puts this argument into the mouth of a Welshman who is both drunk and ill-informed, but the idea was well-attested in eighteenth-century Welsh linguistic writing, and from there found its way into early examples of Welsh tour literature. It appears in the anonymous (and infamous) *Letters from Snowdon* (1770), an early epistolary tour which was frequently disparaging about the Welsh people. On the subject of the language, however, it was decidedly complimentary, using Thomas Llewellyn’s recently-published *Historical and Critical Remarks on the British Tongue* (1769) to make the point Wordsworth ascribed to a “Cwrrw”-addled parson:

As this people [the Welsh] have made no very considerable progress in a state of civilization, we might naturally be induced to think that their language is barbarous and uncultivated, but the contrary is true. It is not clogged with those many inharmonious monosyllables…as the English language. It is much more harmonious and expressive in its numbers and formation: one word in Welsh frequently expressing as much as a sentence in the English…[[20]](#footnote-21)

A linguistic argument made by the native-speaking Baptist minister Llewellyn is here distorted into a backhanded compliment in an early tour narrative, before eventually becoming a deluded and ignorant boast in Wordsworth’s anecdote. The claim had not lost its currency by 1829, having been maintained by the influential Welsh lexicographer John Walters (1721–1797), whose reprinted English-Welsh dictionary appears in the posthumous sale-catalogue for Wordsworth’s library.[[21]](#footnote-22) But in Wordsworth’s anecdote, the argument appears to be wholly ridiculous, and serves if anything to highlight the young traveller’s intellectual authority with regard to Welsh.

Wordsworth presents his younger self as being admirably knowledgeable about Welsh. He establishes initial familiarity with Welsh vocabulary (“‘Cwrrw’ anglisé strong Ale”), replies correctly when questioned about the meaning of the Welsh word “Tad”, and smiles at the “confused notions” and “scanty knowledge” of English displayed by his Welsh attacker. The anglophone tourist appears to have a stronger grasp on Welsh than a native speaker, not even requiring support from his Cambrian friend Jones. One might parallel this attitude with the *Letters from Snowdon*, where the visitor’s ability to scatter a handful of Welsh words (like, and along with, coins) is presented in quasi-colonial terms, a mechanism for control over a population with an “inveterate hatred” of the Saxon. “By the proper application of a few pieces of glittering ore, and the knowledge of a few Welsh words”, he writes: “they all obey my commands, as readily as any monarch is obeyed by his subjects”.[[22]](#footnote-23) Here, the acquisition of a few words of Welsh is part of a taming strategy, a way of facilitating the conquest of Snowdon. For Wordsworth, however, the stammering Welshman’s sudden turn to physical threat, and the “astonishment not unmixed with fear” he experienced in return, demonstrate that his pose of superiority is situationally insecure. Despite the fact that he has done his research with regard to the language, he remains identifiable (and somewhat vulnerable) as a “vile Saxon”.

As Richard Gravil has argued, the Cumbrian Wordsworth would not necessarily have accepted being purely “Saxon”; the accusation of linguistic invasion is unlikely to have sat comfortably.[[23]](#footnote-24) In the “Monastery of Old Bangor”, published in 1822 as part of the “Ecclesiastical Sketches”, Wordsworth portrayed the spread of English “from coast to coast” across early medieval Britain as regrettable, though principally in the sense that it reflected worldly transience:

…Mark! How all things swerve,

From their known course, or pass away like steam;

Another language spreads from coast to coast;

Only perchance some melancholy Stream

And some indignant Hills old names preserve,

When laws, and creeds, and people, all are lost! (*CWRT* III: 373–4)

In recalling his tour, however, Wordsworth is faced with a living and indignant “ancient Briton”, still using a language that had failed to “pass away”. His tourism becomes a territorial incursion, symbolically comparable to that of the expanding Saxons, whose behaviour (in an authorial footnote to the “Ecclesiastical Sketches”) was a “striking warning against National…prejudices” (*CWRT* III: 373). There’s irony, then, in the fact that he uses some hoary Welsh national stereotypes (hot-bloodedness, overdeveloped patriotic pride, the name “Taffy”) to undermine the position of his modern Cambrian opponent.

In the distant historical framing of the “Ecclesiastical Sketches”, Wordsworth can perform sympathy for the near-total erasure of the “British” language, and regard its vestigial place-names as a poignant remnant of its ruin. In the touristic present, however, the spoken Welsh language has not smoothly absented itself, and the resulting proximity of Welsh and English is presented as somehow vulgar and destabilizing, expressed in the “scanty” English of the clergyman, or the Welsh-English pronunciation mocked in the pejorative “Taffy” (i.e. David/Dafydd). The objectionable untidiness of this linguistic contact appears elsewhere in Wordsworth’s correspondence: consider, for instance, the comment, made in 1814, that his brother-in-law (who farmed in Radnorshire) was “lord of the Manor of *Nash Splash, Nill, Nell* or whatever odd half-welsh half-english name his seignory may be known by”.[[24]](#footnote-25) And then there is the perennial difficulty with rendering Welsh names in writing—it is in concluding this 1829 anecdote that Wordsworth makes the admission, mentioned above:

Not far from the little valley where this occurr’d is one of the most celebrated of the Welsh Waterfalls which probably you will visit “Pistil-rhaidor” (excuse the spelling which is probably wrong).

Despite Wordsworth’s construction of himself as a tourist who has done his Welsh homework, he has to admit that a secure grasp of the written language eludes him, and that rendering a Welsh tour narrative in English opens him up to linguistic confusions similar to those that he mocked in the knife-wielding parson. In some contexts, at least, he cared about accuracy in these matters: the poet who wrote to Walter Scott in 1807 asking for the latter’s “Gaelic friends” to check his spelling in “The Blind Highland Boy” did not want his Celtic interpolations to be incorrect or inauthentic (*MY* I: 124).[[25]](#footnote-26) But the Montgomeryshire anecdote shows how this care for accuracy could be a recipe for anglophone anxiety, with the poet presenting himself at different points as well-informed, culturally vulnerable, and linguistically challenged. And the linguistic insecurity underlying this story, however jocularly it is presented, remains an under-examined context to Wordsworth’s Welsh tour poetry.

***“Ordinary chat” and Shared Silences***

In 1791, Wordsworth and Robert Jones famously set out to climb Snowdon from—well, where exactly? The orthographical instability created by repeated revisions to the final book of the “Prelude” — “Bethkelet” - “Bethkelert” - “Bethgellert” —point again to that insecurity with the representation of Welsh places which marks so many tourist accounts.[[26]](#footnote-27) Behind the variation lies the dual problem of translating the *sound* of the name to the printed page, and the challenge of making that sound interpretable to an anglophone audience uncertain, as Wordsworth himself was, of Welsh spelling conventions. The act of naming, however awkwardly done, brings Welsh (and the sounds of Welsh) to the fore. In this, it gestures to a more hidden linguistic dimension, which can be teased out of the briefly evoked interaction with the shepherd recruited to take the two men up the mountain:

I left Bethkelet’s huts at couching-time,

And westward took my way to see the sun

Rise from the top of Snowdon. Having reach’d

The Cottage at the Mountain’s foot, we there

Rouz’d up the Shepherd, who by ancient right

Of office is the Stranger’s usual Guide,

…Little could we see,

Hemm’d round on every side with fog and damp,

And, after ordinary Traveller’s chat

With our Conductor, silently we sunk

Each into commerce with his private thoughts (*CWRT* II: 236–7)

Jonathan Wordsworth has implied that “ordinary Traveller’s chat” represents easy group community and “normal responsiveness to the outside world” before the more internalised and astonishing revelations to come: the conversation is something familiar and straightforward.[[27]](#footnote-28) But what exactly constitutes “ordinary…chat” in this linguistic context, between three climbers—a Welsh shepherd, a Welsh-speaking student, and an Englishman—with very different relationships to the two languages present? It is frustrating that, unlike in the case of Coleridge who climbed Snowdon in 1794, we do not know who this “shepherd” guide was.[[28]](#footnote-29) Accounts from the period reveal a variety of aptitudes in English, ranging from fluent and educated leaders of the tourist economy, to guides with no English at all; phrase-books published as late as 1831, for instance, imply that mountaineering tourists still needed help to communicate with their Welsh guides.[[29]](#footnote-30) In this reading, the growing silence during the ascent of Snowdon could reflect Wordsworth’s experience of Welsh linguistic difficulty: no longer a progression from easy conversation to solitary contemplation, the initial conversation between the climbers encodes the Welsh setting’s semi-permeable linguistic barriers (perhaps mediated by Robert Jones), and the subsequent silence arises from a touristic setting in which the concept of “ordinary” language is highly subjective.

The silences which grow from such contexts do not need to be uncomfortable; there is no sense in the “Prelude” that this is the case. When, a few years after Wordsworth, Elizabeth Smith found herself on Snowdon with a monoglot Welshman she was, at first, doubly frustrated—by the darkness obscuring the landscape around her, and by her guide who could not tell her how much further the climb might be. Once at the summit, however, her experience was transformed by a speechless communion of bread and milk at sunrise, and her guide’s realisation, presumably from her body language, that she actually enjoyed being led to “the edge of every precipice”.[[30]](#footnote-31) Here, the shared and embodied experience of climbing, resting and eating effectively replaces the need for “ordinary conversation” and leads (particularly in Smith’s case, given her gender and class) to a type of communication which is quite extra-ordinary. It is perhaps this shared translingual silence which Wordsworth evokes in the fourteen-book “Prelude” in his closing image of “three chance human Wanderers, in calm thought”, surveying the view (*CWRT* III: 338).

Inevitably, though, some silences are difficult to read. The point is made astutely in a critique of the anglophone Welsh tour by the surveyor and quarry manager William Williams, Llandygai:

It would be endless to point out the absurd conjectures and misrepresentations of those, who have of late years undertaken to describe this country. Some give manifestly wrong interpretations of the names of places, and others, either ignorantly or maliciously, have, as it were, caricatured its inhabitants. Travellers from England, often from want of candour, and always from defect of necessary knowledge, impose upon the world unfavourable, as well as false accounts of their fellow-subjects in Wales: yet the candour of the Welsh is such, that they readily ascribe such misrepresentations to an ignorance of their language, and a misconception of the honest, though perhaps warm temper of those that speak it. And it may be, travellers are too apt to abuse the Welsh, because they cannot, or will not, speak English. Their ignorance ought not to incur disgust: their reluctance proceeds not from stubbornness, but from diffidence, and the fear of ridicule.[[31]](#footnote-32)

This conciliatory plea for a sympathetic reading of Welsh silence has, especially for a modern reader, the disconcerting effect of placing the Welsh-speaking subjects of the anglophone tourist account in a position of weakness and insecurity (“diffidence, and the fear of ridicule”). Here, speaking Welsh is not (as Walter Davies more bullishly saw it), a form of resistance, a bulwark against invasion;[[32]](#footnote-33) instead, it is the absence of fluent English which is regretted, since it thwarts a desired communication (an “ignorance” which Williams carefully frames as a not-knowing, rather than stupidity). That sense of a people “trapped” in their own language and unable to explain themselves to outsiders is dramatised in serio-comic fashion in Edward Pugh’s account of an encounter near Dinas Mawddwy: Pugh, a native Welsh speaker writing for a tourist market, tricks an old lady into thinking he is English and asks for directions, then records her lamentations that she cannot understand or help him. His point, like that of Williams, is that the Welsh are neither “morose or uncivil”, nor deliberately obstructive—merely uneducated.[[33]](#footnote-34) Neither writer adopts the much bolder stance of Thomas Llywellyn, writing of visitors to Wales who complained of difficulties communicating: “it can hardly be desired, that a whole nation should forget their own tongue, and learn another for them: and the only reasonable and easy method, for removing this inconvenience, would be for such persons, before they go to that country, to take care to learn Welsh”.[[34]](#footnote-35)

But few of them did so, and many tourist accounts record attempts to communicate across the linguistic divide, often to comical effect. After climbing Snowdon in the summer of 1797, Richard Warner and his companions decided to push on towards the lakes at Llanberis. Their guide to the mountain had been the experienced William Lloyd of Beddgelert, an articulate and knowledgeable man, who, unlike Wordsworth’s quiet shepherd with his “ordinary Traveller’s chat”, had filled their climb with a non-stop commentary mixing practical advice with historical and meteorological observations. Their next interlocutor, whom they found after “stumbling over masses of rocks for two hours”, was rather less forthcoming:

Uncertain what direction to pursue to Dolbadern Castle we enquired of a woman who stood at the cottage gate, but received no other answer than an intimation that she did not speak English. After all the expressive gesticulations we could think of, and pronouncing the name of the place with every possible variation of accent, we made her comprehend our meaning; and she ordered her daughter, a girl about twelve years old to direct us to Castél Dolbàthren.[[35]](#footnote-36)

This reads like the pantomime version of Wordsworth’s revisions of “Beddgelert” (“Variations on a Place-Name, Perform’d with Gestures”) with, for the Welsh-speaking reader, an ironic coup-de-grâce: Warner’s triumphant “Castél Dolbàthren”, despite correctly ordering the noun and adjective, is one of the most terrifically mangled versions of the name on record; his English rendering, “Dolbadern”, is much closer to the mark. But there is an added, more intriguing, twist in Warner’s subsequent description of “[o]ur little guide”, who “tripping on before us like a lapwing, and without the incumbrance of shoe or stocking, led us over rocks and bogs for about two miles”. The child is so thoroughly part of this wild landscape that the reader seems asked, in an image which is both poetic and unsettling, to understand her as if she were a bird – through movement, and sounds that are not human speech.[[36]](#footnote-37) There are, then, occasions when linguistic difficulty moves through comedy to uncover moments of powerful extra-lingual communication – though the ambiguity of these unspoken meanings is always difficult to dispel completely.

***The Language of Simon Lee***

Wordsworth presents such an ambiguously communicative encounter in the poem “Simon Lee”, which is set in “the sweet shire of Cardigan” (*CWRT* II: 327–30). According to the loquacious anglophone narrator, the poor and decrepit “Old Huntsman” of the title “says” and “will tell” certain things about himself (ll. 7, 66), although we never hear his direct speech. Information about him comes to us via the narrator and certain unspecified “others” (l. 8), reflecting the processes of mediation by which anglophone visitors gained much of their information about lower-class Welsh subjects. The Welsh language is therefore elided almost entirely throughout the poem, right down to the English form chosen for the name of Simon’s native shire (“Cardigan”, not “Ceredigion”).

There is, however, one intriguing exception to this rule. The home of Simon’s erstwhile master, “Ivor-hall” (l. 2), has long been recognised as a version of, or a play upon the Welsh name “Ifor Hael [Ivor the Generous]”, the bardic patron immortalised in the fourteenth-century poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym, and revived as a figure of ideal patronage in the late eighteenth-century, in poems by Evan Evans and Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg).[[37]](#footnote-38) For David Simpson “Ivor-hall” is a “convenient mistranslation, or coinage by association” on the part of Wordsworth, but Damian Walford Davies’s description of it as “an English ear’s processing of … ‘Ifor Hael’” links us more directly to Wordsworth’s experience as a tourist in Wales.[[38]](#footnote-39) The invented place-name is a knowing cross-cultural literary allusion (well-excavated by Simpson and Davies), but also echoes the kind of touristic mishearing experienced by an anglophone Welsh traveller. More than any other element in this poem, “Ivor-hall” introduces the Anglo-Welsh contact language of Welsh tourism into Wordsworth’s English verse, raising the spectre of unruly “half-welsh half-english” (*MY* I: 175) that we find in Wordsworth’s letters, and subtly placing the poem’s climactic, wordless encounter between the narrator and Simon Lee in the context of an Anglo-Welsh linguistic barrier.

Despite numerous attempts to make “a tale” of it (l. 80) little critical attention has been given to the linguistic dynamic of this final scene—although Matthew C. Jones has recently emphasised that “Lee’s own voice continues to be withheld”, while the narrator’s words to him are “quite likely in a foreign language”. Jones’s pessimistic interpretation of the help offered to Lee by the narrator evokes a Welsh “cultural stasis dependent on a foreign, benevolent force”.[[39]](#footnote-40) Another notable feature of the conclusion, however, is the apparent trans-linguistic communicativeness of Lee. The huntsman’s response to the narrator is interpreted by the latter as though it overflows with intelligible, sympathetic meaning:

The tears into his eyes were brought,

And thanks and praises seemed to run

So fast out of his heart I thought

They never would have done. (ll. 97–100)

Why do Lee’s thanks only “seem” to run out of his heart? Are there Welsh or Welsh-English words being spoken that have no place in the poem’s English diction? Or is this, in fact, silent and inferred communication via gesture and expression, a wordless sympathetic connection briefly transcending the linguistic barriers structured by nation and class? The example of Elizabeth Smith, discussed above, showed how shared action can short-circuit “ordinary” linguistic contact, and it is worth noting that the exchange between the narrator and the old huntsman is as embodied as it is linguistic: the initial offer of assistance is both spoken (“You’re overtasked [...] Give me your tool”) and gesturally “proffered”, and the help is wholly performed.

In 1770, the antiquarian Richard Gough recorded a similar episode of extra-linguistic sympathy in his manuscript account of a tour of north Wales. At a welcoming inn at Maentwrog, on the west coast road to Cricieth, his prose account bursts unexpectedly into rhyme, praising—

The friendly Host who shares my evening walk

Anxious to make me understand his talk

While he shares mine, & in default of Speech

Makes signs expressive to his meaning reach

While his fair daughter sedulous attends

And Information with her Converse blends.[[40]](#footnote-41)

Walking here is the shared occupation, the primary method of companionable communication between the two men, with “expressive” gesture secondary, and language – both languages – clearly present, but subsidiary. The role of the inn-keeper’s daughter as mediator between two cultures is another reminder of the rapidly-growing number of bilingual people in the hospitality industry or working as guides – many of them girls or young women. In 1819, Michael Faraday’s guide to the waterfalls of the Vale of Neath was a “little welch peasant” called Betty, who had “broken and mixed English”, and who, “every now and then […] would ask us the English for a welch word, that she might complete in some way the information she wished to give us”.[[41]](#footnote-42) Learning to interpret Welsh landscape for non-Welsh-speaking visitors becomes a form of education, although the direction of flow remains decidedly one-way. Yet it is another “little welch girl” on that same tour who produces one of the most persuasive examples of sympathetic communication in Welsh tour literature: the child, who took Faraday to the waterfall at Melincourt, had no English at all—”we however chatted together the whole time though neither knew what the other said”. This subtle and complex episode of mutual linguistic unintelligibility leaves Faraday at least (like Simon Lee’s helper) feeling profoundly moved - and seems moreover, to sharpen his experience of an “untranslated” landscape.[[42]](#footnote-43)

***“From a British source”: Poems on the Naming of (Welsh) Places***

How art thou named? In search of what strange land

From what huge height, descending? Can such force

Of waters issue from a British source…? (*CWRT* III: 583)

“How art thou named?”—so begins Wordsworth’s 1824 tour poem “To the Torrent at the Devil’s Bridge, North Wales”. Tim Fulford has usefully contextualised this question as a touristic inflection of Wordsworth’s longstanding “quest…to elicit from nature the name that is proper to it”; the sonnet’s opening invokes the “Poems on the Naming of Places” from the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*, but now his question is posed “differently, as that of a sightseer identifying a view in his guidebook”.[[43]](#footnote-44) Within the poem, however, the opening question remains unanswered, despite the fact that a name from a (Cambro-) “British source” might easily have been supplied by many contemporary guidebooks, such as George Nicholson’s *Cambrian Traveller’s Guide and Pocket Companion* (1808), which identifies the object of Wordsworth’s gaze as the “Mynach falls”.[[44]](#footnote-45)

Geoffrey Hartman’s extended interpretation of this sonnet argues that Wordsworth “must have known the name”: though nowhere do the names “Mynach” for the river and the falls, nor “Pontarfynach” for “Devil’s Bridge”, appear in Hartman’s essay or Wordsworth’s accounts of this particular tour. Hartman’s exploration of the “sublime aphasia” evoked by Wordsworth’s uncertainty does not consider the practical uncertainties of naming in a landscape made bilingual by tourism, nor the quasi-aphasic experiences of a non-Welsh-speaker in Wales—especially one like Wordsworth who, the day before, had “heard service performed in Welsh” near Tal-y-llyn (*LY* I: 278).[[45]](#footnote-46) This was a landscape in which Wordsworth, “poet of nature”, found words he could not speak, write, understand or interrogate. And as in some of his most effectively ambiguous “Welsh” poetry, the sonnet responds to names and voices that cannot quite be grasped by the reader, like the meaning that “seemed to run” from Simon Lee, or the inarticulate “roaring with one voice” heard during the *Prelude*’s Snowdon climax (*CWRT* III: 338). Wordsworth’s reason for asking “How art thou named?” could, therefore, be productively considered as a response to Welsh linguistic difference.

What, after all, is the “true name” of a mountain or a waterfall? Several of the more culturally sensitive tour narratives from this period show awareness of the ways in which the tourist-friendly names studded along their itineraries overlay a landscape whose “meaning” is more accessible through Welsh. Catherine Hutton, looking north towards the mountains from Harlech, regretted that clouds were hiding “Snowdon, here called Y Widdfa, or, the Conspicuous”;[[46]](#footnote-47) William Bingley, whose friendship with the rector of Llanberis informed his descriptions of the area, wrote extensively about the language and, as noted in the Introduction, provided his readers with a list of useful toponyms.[[47]](#footnote-48) For at least one of Wordsworth’s contemporaries, the poet Edward Williams, the historical priority of Welsh in the British Isles conferred indigeneity – a claim to being *the* language of “British Nature”:

It has always struck me forcibly that the knowledge of Nature and of its appearances in the Island and climature of Britain is strongly and prominently impressed on the Welsh Language, in the terms used to express and describe the appearances and operations of Nature, in the adages and proverbial modes of expression, in the popular opinions, and the prevailing ideas of the Welsh we find this intimate acquaintance with what we may term British Nature in a very striking degree, but nothing of this appears in the character of the English Language, a language that was never properly educated in the School of Nature, a language that is, comparatively speaking, but of yesterday, nurtured up and formed in schools of art, and those none of the best or of the most illuminated ages.[[48]](#footnote-49)

In such a context, Wordsworth’s question, “How art though named?” seems both reasonable and profound – an acknowledgement of an underlying linguistic stratum shaping the landscape, pushing up, occasionally exposed. Yet the other question we have made Wordsworth ask in this essay —“How art thou spelled?”—feels rather more petulant, more uncertain, more mundane. Why, after all, should orthography matter? One of the most appealing linguistic exchanges in Welsh tour literature is also one of the most idiosyncratically spelt – a cheerful one-word encounter in which language is clearly acquired through conversation, not guide-books, and which ends not with a knife-blade but with a smile. Returning to the cottage at the foot of Snowdon which had provided them with lodgings before the ascent, Richard Gough and his companions were:

agreeably surprised to find the refreshmt of not the worst bed in the world ^ & excellent milk heightened by a chearfull welcome: This we rewarded by a present of a crown wch the good woman deposited on the press among her china, without the least apprehension that her family wld offer to divide it without her, & not a little pleas’d at our returning her thanks in her own Language \*

\* Jolky: Thank you [[49]](#footnote-50)

Though Gough here performs the same manoeuvre as the anonymous author of the *Letters from Snowdon*, his “glittering ore” and “Welsh words” are anything but offensive – and his blithely inaccurate representation of “diolch i chi” (“Jolky”) is not, in fact, a bad echo of how a Welsh “thank-you” sounds.

Yet the written shape of Welsh – and particularly of its place-names - perturbed many writers besides Wordsworth. For Horace Walpole, Welsh orthography was pure obstruction: Pennant’s Welsh *Tours*, he wrote, are “a patchwork of all sorts of shreds stitched together with unpronounceable words of DDwrr’s and no vowels, so I do not remember much of what I cannot articulate.”[[50]](#footnote-51) For the writer of the *Letters from Snowdon*, that inability to articulate is a joke against the Welsh: he begins his ascent near “Llyn Cychwhechlyn, which I leave you to pronounce as well as you are able”.[[51]](#footnote-52) For the novelist Catherine Hutton it is something to acknowledge, to mitigate, and overcome: “To soften the ill impression of the uncouth assemblage of consonants in the Welsh names of places”, she wrote on crossing the border in 1796, “I will give you a few rules for their pronunciation.”[[52]](#footnote-53) For a great many writers (Walpole notwithstanding), Thomas Pennant’s *Tours in Wales* provided a stabilizing text from which to draw references, meanings and spellings for place-names. It is intriguing - especially given their meeting at Downing, and the fact that Pennant’s own ascent of Snowdon has been considered a hidden and structuring presence in the “Prelude” [[53]](#footnote-54)– that Wordsworth did not resolve his onomastic anxieties in the same way.

We can turn in conclusion to another “place-name” sonnet from the 1824 tour, a poem in which Wordsworth seeks to confer some personally crafted meaning onto the linguistic unruliness of Wales. “To the Lady E. B. and the Hon. Miss P.” is addressed to the Ladies of Llangollen, following a visit to the celebrated Irish émigré couple in their home at Plas Newydd. Or should that be “Plass Newidd, near Llangollin”?[[54]](#footnote-55) Once again, the published title of Wordsworth’s sonnet diverges from the conventions of standard Welsh, through some combination of orthographic alteration for English readers, and the kind of frustration that Dorothy Wordsworth encountered in writing about her brother’s trip to “Llangothlin (I cannot spell these Welsh names)” (*LY* I: 271). Despite these difficulties, Wordsworth’s Llangollen poem takes a diametrically opposed approach to the “Devil’s Bridge” sonnet: whereas the former remains in a state of questioning uncertainty regarding the application of language to landscape, the latter takes the bold step of inscribing a new Welsh name onto the tourist map. Taking inspiration from nearby Glyn Myfyr—or “Glyn Myrvr”, or “Glyn Mavyn”—translated (if not spelled) correctly as “the Vale of Meditation”, Wordsworth proposes the following new coinage for the Ladies’ home valley:[[55]](#footnote-56)

GLYN CAFAILLGAROCH, in the Cambrian tongue,

In ours the *Vale of Friendship*, let *this* spot,

Be named… (*CWRT* III: 583)

It is a remarkably confident onomastic gesture—Wordsworth’s only act of original Welsh-language composition. Here, a place-name is conjured into existence between three anglophones in Wales (Robert Jones, the only Welsh native present, remains unmentioned).[[56]](#footnote-57) As if aiming to shake off the linguistic uncertainties of his surroundings, and quell the accusation of being a “vile Saxon”, Wordsworth takes possession of the Welsh language itself, and the authoritative privilege of fixing meaning upon the landscape. Nevertheless, as in that formative anecdote of linguistic conflict in Montgomeryshire, Welsh letters refuse to do exactly what Wordsworth asks of them: “CAFAILLGAROCH” is once again, to the eyes of a Welsh-speaker, eccentrically spelled. For all the confidence of Wordsworth’s act of naming, this is a word summoned from the touristic contact zone, positioned ambiguously between the languages of residents, readers, travellers and natives. Wordsworth is reaching for communication in a space frequently defined by linguistic confusion (not least his own). He cannot dispel the understandable suspicion that his Welsh, whatever his intentions, might still be “probably wrong”.

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1. For “Liswyn Farm”, from “Anecdote for Fathers”, see *The Poems of William Wordsworth: Collected Reading Texts from the Cornell Wordsworth*, ed. Jared R. Curtis, 3 vols (Penrith: Humanities-Ebooks, 2011), I: 331. For “Rhaiodwor Gawy”, see *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years*, ed. Alan G. Hill, 2nd ed.4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967–88), III: 281. Subsequent poems and letters are quoted from these editions, cited in-text. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Although Welsh orthography in this period (as with English) was hardly uniform, printed norms were well established thanks to the comparatively early emergence of printed Welsh bibles and vernacular print-culture. See Niall Ó Ciosáin, “The Print Cultures of the Celtic Languages, 1700–1900,” *Cultural and Social History* 10.3 (2013): 347–67. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nded. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Murray Pittock addresses this issue in relation to Welsh and other Celtic languages in “‘The Real Language of Men’: Fa’s Speerin? Burns and the Scottish Romantic Vernacular,” in *Burns and Other Poets*, ed. David Sergeant and Fiona Stafford (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 91–106 . For Wordsworth’s attitude to Scots see Nigel Leask, “Burns, Wordsworth and the Politics of Vernacular Poetry,” in *Land, Nation and Culture 1740–1840: Rethinking the Republic of Taste*, ed. De Bolla, Leask and Simpson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 202–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. For the relevance of anglophone nationalism to Wordsworth’s writings on Scottish Gaelic see Steve Newman, *Ballad Collection, Lyric, and the Canon: the Call of the Popular from the Restoration to New Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Paul Wright, “Vile Saxons and Ancient Britons: Wordsworth the Ambivalent Welsh Tourist”, in *Dangerous Diversity: The Changing Faces of Wales, Essays in Honour of Tudor Bevan*, ed. Katie Gramich and Andrew Hiscock(Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), 64–80. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. The importance of the melody is stressed in Nigel Leask’s recent reading of the “Solitary Reaper”, *Stepping Westward,* 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. For Liu’s links between Wales and revolutionary violence in Wordsworth, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 193 and “Trying Cultural Criticism: Wordsworth and Subversion,” inhis *Local Transcendence: Essays on Postmodern Historicism and the Database* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 109–138. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. See Mary-Ann Constantine, *Curious Travellers: Writing the Welsh Tour 1760–1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Donald E. Hayden, *Wordsworth’s Travels in Wales and Ireland* (Tulsa: University of Tulsa Monograph Series Number 20, 1985). See also Herbert Wright, “Wordsworth and Wales,” *The Welsh Outlook* (April 1924): 103–5; D. Myrddin Lloyd, “Wordsworth and Wales,” *National Library of Wales Journal* 6 (1950): 338–50. J.R. Watson offers a thoughtful reading of Wordsworth’s engagement with the landscapes of north Wales, and situates his travels in relation to earlier visits by Samuel Johnson and Thomas Gray in “Wordsworth, North Wales and the Celtic landscape,” in *English Romanticism and the Celtic World*, ed. Carruthers and Rawes, 85–102. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. The most culturally-informed work remains that of Damian Walford Davies, who traces a network of connections and influences linking Wordsworth, Coleridge and Thelwall to key players in the Welsh revival such as Iolo Morganwg, William Owen Pughe and David Williams in *Presences that Disturb: Models of Romantic Identity in the Literature and Culture of the 1790s* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002). See also Richard Gravil, *Wordsworth’s Bardic Vocation, 1787–1842* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Simon Bainbridge, *Mountaineering and British Romanticism: The Literary Cultures of Climbing, 1770–1836* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). Individual studies of Romanticism’s debt to Tintern and Snowdon are legion, and key readings are acknowledged at specific points. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Kathryn Walchester, “The Picturesque and the Beastly: Wales and the Absence of Welsh in the Journals of Lady’s Companions Eliza and Millicent Bant (1806, 1808)”. in *Minoritised Languages and Travel* ed. Rita Singer (Liverpool: Modern Languages Open, Liverpool University Press), 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. William Henry Rees, “The Vicissitudes of the Welsh Language in the Marches of Wales, with Special Reference to its Territorial Distribution in Modern Times” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Swansea University, 1947), 2–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. “W.W. to George Huntly Gordon, 14 May 1829,” *LY* II: 77. Gordon was a protegé of Walter Scott, who had helped him find employment in London after deafness derailed his planned career in the Church. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Hayden, *Wordsworth’s Travels*, 14. Scenes inspired by this excursion appeared in Wordsworth’s *Descriptive Sketches*, published in January 1793. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. The editorial identification in the *Letters* (*LY* II: 77) of a “William Thomas Bryn Merlyn, near Holywell” is wrong. This was Thomas Thomas, a “worthy neighbor and friend” of Thomas Pennant, mentioned in his *History of the Parishes of Whiteford and Holywell* (1796), 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. These volumes were Pennant’s “Outlines of the Globe”, a series of “imaginary” global tours, partly published between 1798 and 1800. The original manuscript volumes are now in the Caird Library at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, P/16/1–25. See Rhys Kaminski-Jones, [Armchair Empires: Thomas Pennant’s ‘Outlines of the Globe’ | Royal Museums Greenwich (rmg.co.uk)](https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/blog/library-archive/armchair-empires-thomas-pennants-outlines-globe). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Liu, “Wordsworth and Subversion,” 76 and *passim*; see also Wright, “Vile Saxons and Ancient Britons”, whose analysis moves swiftly from language to questions of nationality and politics, 76–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Watson, “Wordsworth, North Wales and the Celtic Landscape,” 92; though acknowledging that the date of this episode is most likely to be 1791, he also suggests a connection with Wordsworth’s angry “Letter to the Bishop of Landaff” (Richard Watson), composed in 1793. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Anon., *Letters from Snowdon* (London: J. Ridley, 1770), 86–9; this refers to Thomas Llewellyn’s *Historical and Critical Remarks on the British Tongue* (London: J. Buckland, 1769), 95–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. John Walters, *A Dissertation on the Welsh Language* (Cowbridge: for the author, 1771), 54–5, reprinted with his *English and Welsh Dictionary*, 3rd ed., 2 vols (Denbigh: Clwydian Press, 1828). For the latter’s presence in Wordsworth’s Rydal Mount library, see Chester L. Shaver and Alice C. Shaver, eds., *Wordsworth’s Library: A Catalogue* (New York and London: Garland, 1979), 267. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. *Letters from Snowdon*, 54–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Gravil, *Bardic Vocation*, 65. Cumbria spoke a version of Brythonic into the early middle ages. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, rev. Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill, 2nd ed., 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969–70), I: 175. “Nash” and “Knill” are place-names near Tom Hutchinson’s Radnorshire home, Hindwell. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. This is the only poem of Wordsworth’s that contains two Gaelic words that are not place-names. The boy shouts: “Lei-gha” (“leig dha”, “leave it!”). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. For a shift from “Bethkelet” to “Bethkelert”, see MS. A (DC MS. 52), f. 323r, reproduced and transcribed in Mark. L. Reed, ed., *The Thirteen Book Prelude* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), I, 1131; II, 961. For the final substitution of “g” for “k”, see MS. D, Book XIV, p. [1], reproduced and transcribed in W. J. B. Owen, ed., *The Fourteen Book Prelude* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 1112–13. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Jonathan Wordsworth, “The Climbing of Snowdon,” in *Bicentenary Wordsworth Studies in Memory of John Alban Finch*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth(Ithaca: Cornell, 1970), 457; Bainbridge, *Mountaineering and British Romanticism*, 74; Richard Schell, “Wordsworth’s Revisions of the Ascent of Snowdon,” *Philological Quarterly* 54, 3 (1975): 592–602. For the climb itself, see Jim Perrin, *Snowdon: the Story of a Welsh Mountain* (Llandysul: Gomer, 2012), 110–19. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Coleridge and two companions were led by the young (English-speaking) Ellis Griffith of Bron Fedw Uchaf; the cottage is vividly described by Joseph Hucks, who spent an uncomfortable night in a chair reading a Welsh dictionary and “declined the enterprise” of the climb the following morning. J, Hucks, *A Pedestrian Tour through North Wales in a Series of Letters (1795)*,ed. Alun R. Jones and William Tydeman (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975), 44–6. See Perrin, *Snowdon*, 130; Dewi Jones, *The Botanists and Mountain Guides of Snowdonia* (Pwllheli: Llygad Gwalch, 2007), 90–4. For a list of all known Snowdon guides see Michael Freeman: [Yr Wyddfa / Snowdon guides | Early Tourists in Wales (wordpress.com)](https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/attractions/snowdon/snowdon-guides/). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. See, e.g., the mountain-climbing section of the Welsh phrasebook by Thomas Roberts Llwynrhudol, *The Welsh Interpreter* (London: Samuel Leigh, 1831), 98–109. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. *Fragments, in Prose and Verse, by Miss Elizabeth Smith, lately deceased*, ed. Henrietta Bowdler, 2nd ed., 2 vols (London: Cadell and Davies, 1809), 106. The episode is discussed further in Constantine, *Curious Travellers*, 232–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. William Williams, *Observations on the Snowdon Mountains* (London: E. Williams, 1800), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. For Davies, the language was “an impregnable fortress, where a rivetted, cordial antipathy against the English, caused by the cruelties of Edw. I and of the Lancastrian family, dwells as commander in chief”: “A Statistical Account of the Parish of Llanymyneich, in Montgomeryshire,” *Cambrian Register for 1795* (London: E. and T. Williams, Strand, 1796), 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Edward Pugh, *Cambria Depicta*: *A Tour through North Wales Illustrated with Picturesque Views* (London: E. Williams, 1816), 193–4. For an intriguing linguistic analysis of an encounter with tourists depicted in one of Pugh’s paintings see John Barrell, *Edward Pugh of Ruthin 1763–1813: “A Native Artist”* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Llywellyn, *An historical account*, 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Richard Warner, *A Walk through Wales, in August 1797* (Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1798), 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Compare Dorothy Wordsworth’s almost avian description of a Scottish boy’s “half-articulate Gaelic hooting” in *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, ed. Carol Kyros Walker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 114; and, closer to home for Wordsworth, the boy who “Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls” in the “Prelude” (Bk. V, *CWRT* II: 87). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. See Damian Walford Davies, “‘At Defiance’: Iolo, Godwin, Coleridge, Wordsworth,” in *Rattleskull Genius: The Many Faces of Iolo Morganwg*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins(Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 169–72; David Simpson, *Wordsworth’s Historical Imagination: The Poetry of Displacement* (London: Methuen, 1987), 151–5; Peter Bement, “Simon Lee and Ivor Hall: A Possible Source,” *The Wordsworth Circle* CXIII, no. 1 (1982): 35–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Simpson, *Historical Imagination*, 152; Walford Davies,“‘At Defiance’,” 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. Matthew Jones, “Uncertain Notice: Unearthing Wales in William Wordsworth’s ‘Simon Lee’ and ‘Tintern Abbey’,” *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English* 9 (2022): 12 (DOI: 10.16995/wwe.9358). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. Richard Gough, “Tour of North Wales 1770,” Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS Top. Gen e. 26, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. *Michael Faraday in Wales,* *including Faraday’s Journal of his Tour through Wales in 1819*, ed. Dafydd Tomos (Denbigh: Gwasg Gee, 1972), 28–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. *Ibid.*, 44. This episode is discussed further in Constantine, *Curious Travellers*, 144–45. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Tim Fulford, *The Late Poetry of The Lake Poets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. George Nicholson, *The Cambrian Traveller’s Guide and Pocket Companion* (Stourport: Longman *et al*., 1808), 513–14. See also Benjamin Heath Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography of South Wales,* 2nd ed., 2 vols (London: Longman *et al.,* 1807), II: 101; Anon., *An Account of the Principal Pleasure Tours in England and Wales* (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1822), 241. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Geoffrey H. Hartman, “Blessing the Torrent: On Wordsworth’s Later Style,” *PMLA* 93.2 (1978): 197–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Catherine Hutton, “Tour of Wales, 1796,” ed. with an introduction by Mary-Ann Constantine, in *Curious Travellers Digital Editions* (https://editions.curioustravellers.ac.uk/doc/0011), Letter 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. William Bingley, *A Tour round North Wales, performed during the summer of 1798*, 2 vols (London: E. Williams, 1800), II: 295–7; and above, 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Edward Williams, “Note on the Plan of the Ruins near Caer Rhun,” NLW MS 13103B, p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Gough, “Tour of North Wales 1770,” 63–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence with William Mason*, ed. W. S. Lewis, 2 vols (Oxford, 1955), I: 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. *Letters from Snowdon*, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Hutton, “Tour of Wales, 1796,” Letter 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. Perrin, *Snowdon*, 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Wordsworth, *Last Poems, 1821–50*,ed. Jared Curtis, Apryl Lea Denny-Ferris and Jillian Heydt-Stevenson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 40–1. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. For the two variant spellings, see *Last Poems*, 425n; *LY* I: 277. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. For Jones’s presence, see *LY* I: 277. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)