**INTRODUCTION**

**Romanticism, Travel and the Celtic Languages**

Mary-Ann Constantine and Nigel Leask

“I am for the first time in a country where a foreign Language is spoken – they gabble away in Gaelic at a vast rate”.

John Keats, Loch Awe, 1818.[[1]](#footnote-2)

“Indifference to the question of language”, claims Michael Cronin, discussing critical studies of twentieth-century travel writing, “has led to a serious misrepresentation of both the experience of travel and the construction of narrative accounts of these experiences”. This, as he shows, is problematic: “the scandal of translation is to show that the origin is fragmented, that *monoglossia* is always provisional, that other languages precede, ghost, or compete with the dominant idiom in any society”.[[2]](#footnote-3) That tendency to ignore interlingual situations has been equally marked in Romantic scholarship, and is especially telling in accounts of Ireland, Wales and Scotland, countries with a powerful influence on Romantic literature and culture, but which are still rarely portrayed from perspectives located inside their respective cultures. As the editors of an influential study of Scottish Romanticism put it in 2004, “rather than being a site of Romantic production, Scotland’s fate is to have become a Romantic object or commodity”, and the same might be said for Ireland and Wales. [[3]](#footnote-4)

Reflecting changes in the field, *Studies in Romanticism* has done much to challenge canonical readings focused on the “six white male English poets” school, so that archipelagic or four nations’ approaches, alongside postcolonial revisions of Romanticism, are now well-established across the discipline. These modes of reading all displace or complicate the traditional cultural centrality of London and the English Lakes, and disrupt a periodisation commencing with Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* (1789) or *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), rather than, say, *The Poems of Ossian* (1760–63). Romanticists have largely risen to Murray Pittock’s challenge of “broadening space and deepening time” and it now feels axiomatic that “the principles of pluralism should embrace [...] gender, empire, environment, and education”. Nevertheless, as Pittock goes on to urge, we need to be attentive to “dialogues between cultures, particularly in the context of “sources that fall outside the socially dominant discourses” not just by virtue of political exclusion, but also by reason of their cultural, linguistic, and indeed national agendas”.[[4]](#footnote-5) Of these “agendas”, real engagement with the linguistic diversity of Romantic-period Britain has been the hardest to pursue.

The reasons for this are various. Most fundamentally, a firmly anglophone-centred system of education within the “British” Isles has done little to cultivate basic knowledge and understanding of, or even stimulate curiosity about, the cultures of England’s nearest foreign language neighbours. Even today one encounters perceptions that they are somehow inherently arcane or difficult, or simply (the lingering Arnoldian trope) not “useful”.[[5]](#footnote-6) The complicated association of the Celtic languages with nineteenth- and twentieth-century currents of nationalist thought, and the dramatic collapse in the numbers of speakers in the modern period, have also created a lens through which it can be hard to perceive the less existentially anguished linguistic terrain of the long eighteenth century. Furthermore, “Romanticism” itself, at least in its old-school guise, has until relatively recently proved a very poor fit for the Celtic-language literary traditions of the period: boundaries, canons, themes, media and audiences simply did not translate. This has also meant that (perhaps unlike their colleagues studying the plurilingual contexts of many medieval texts) most scholars of the period 1760–1830 working within Celtic-language literatures have not felt much compulsion to deal with traditional conceptual categories of English Literature which could at best only frame their material in terms of absence or belatedness. Only with the advent of new historicism, post-colonial studies and an increasingly interdisciplinary field of research could meaningful comparative frameworks begin to be constructed: and even then, as recent work by Thomas Clancy has shown, there are many pitfalls to avoid when exploring apparent equivalences.[[6]](#footnote-7) It is not, perhaps, surprising that leading journals, books and articles in the field have done little to challenge the assumption that Romantic-era Britain was a largely homogenous anglophone culture.

Things are changing. This special issue situates itself within a broader and increasingly visible project enmeshing approaches from Romantic criticism and Celtic studies. That broader project has its roots in works such as Joep Leerssen’s groundbreaking comparative study of the multilingual literary histories of Ireland, and has recently manifested itself in a number of pluralist projects redefining Welsh and Scottish literature: a new openness to writing literary histories of the Celtic-speaking countries which acknowledge and combine material from their different linguistic traditions has also created scope for future intra-cultural dialogues between anglophone and Celtic-language texts.[[7]](#footnote-8) Bringing insights from both sides of the debate, this volume’s particular (and narrower) aim is not an extensive multi-focus literary history, but rather a kind of enactment of the critical problem. Our focus on travel writing means that many of our contributors are concerned with the problem of representation – of what happens when anglophone writers come into contact with the Celtic languages and their speakers, but have little or limited understanding of them. Most of these essays begin with actual encounters on the ground, and are situated in landscapes which themselves contribute to the writers’ perceptions of being in a different space. They return the “experience of travel” to what Cronin rightly sees as its significant and discomforting points of linguistic contact – its ghostings, silences and interpellations.

***Encountering “Celtic” in Romantic-period Britain and Ireland.***

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Celtic languages in Britain and Ireland (which for the period 1760–1840 effectively means Welsh, Irish, Gaelic and Manx) were still spoken by a substantial proportion of the population of the archipelago.[[8]](#footnote-9) It is estimated that in 1800 there were about two and a half million speakers of Irish out of an Irish population of between 4 and 5 million (just over 50%); half a million Welsh speakers out of a population of 0.6 million (83 %), and 300,000 of Gaelic out of a Scottish population of 1.6 million (18.5%).[[9]](#footnote-10) Out of a total and fast-growing population of around 15 million, therefore, about three and a quarter million people spoke Celtic languages in Britain and Ireland—hardly an insignificant number. Encounters with Celtic languages, in speech or in print, were possible anywhere in British and Ireland, and depended on various factors such as class and occupation. Welsh-speaking drovers and sellers of milk and vegetables could be heard on the streets of London and Bristol; Highland “cadies” (“licensed porters”) thronged the streets of Edinburgh, oiling the wheels of commerce and sociability, “their bond of fraternity [...] strengthened by their common origin, and use of the Gaelic tongue”.[[10]](#footnote-11) In London the more coherent diaspora communities formed societies through which Welsh and Scottish (less so, Irish) identities could be asserted and performed. Many of these did not operate exclusively or even significantly through their native languages, but some would become the dynamic nerve-centres of cultural revivals, filling (particularly for Wales) the lack of institutional infrastructure in their home territories.[[11]](#footnote-12) As Niall Ó Ciosáin has shown, the dramatically varying levels of print culture across the Celtic-speaking countries (a phenomenon driven by the active role of Protestant churches in Wales and Scotland) meant that the availability and visibility of these languages in print also varied widely. [[12]](#footnote-13) But it is worth remembering too, that Celtic-speaking literary cultures were less predicated on print, and that manuscript and oral tradition played a vital part in composition and education, as well as in preserving literary reputations. Compared to Scottish Gaelic, printed verse collections in Irish from this period are “exceedingly rare”, but “contemporary handwritten miscellanies of verse abound[ed] and are to be numbered in their hundreds”. [[13]](#footnote-14)

Nationalist historiography and literary critics have often interpreted Wales, Scotland and Ireland as “internal colonies” dominated by England.[[14]](#footnote-15) That model has been increasingly problematized as more attention is paid to the historical and ideological differences determining Welsh, Scottish and Irish incorporation into the British imperial state. Although the case of Ireland (and parts of the Scottish Highlands) display clear affinities with the colonialising and racializing ideologies imposed by British imperialism on its territories in the Global South, critiques of “Celtic” identities have demonstrated (as the final chapter of this collection reminds us) that all parts of the British and Irish archipelago were nevertheless drawn into, and many profited from, the orbit of British colonial expansion.[[15]](#footnote-16) Another crucial point to emphasize is that for this period, national, religious and political affiliations heavily outweighed any sense of shared kinship across the language groups. Indeed, the linguistic family tree first outlined by Edward Lhuyd in *Archaeologia Britannica* (1707) became, especially in the wake of the *Ossian* controversy, the contentious playground of scholars concerned to prove the priority, superiority and indigeneity of their own particular branch of Celtic.[[16]](#footnote-17)

Nevertheless, at a time of consolidating Britishness, the counter-hegemonic power of the Celtic-speaking cultures was often revealed in its “dangerous histories” – narratives focused on figures of resistance (Gray’s Bard, Ossian, Owen Glyndŵr, Brian Boru) that disrupted larger narratives of British and imperial identity.[[17]](#footnote-18) There is no doubt that anglophone literary works created around these figures of legend were responsible for a surge in awareness of (and enthusiasm for) Celtic-speaking cultures in the late eighteenth century. Of these, the *Ossian* phenomenon proved the most complex and extraordinary in its reach and impact– not only across the British and Irish archipelago but across the world.[[18]](#footnote-19) It generated fierce debates and a plethora of imitative songs and poems, but also journeys – attempts to locate (or, in the sceptical shape of Samuel Johnson, *not* locate) the literary creation in the landscape and culture. Gray’s poem, too, enticed tourists to try to identify craggy bardic settings “o’er old Conway’s foaming flood”, while Edward I’s Welsh castles provoked reflections on earlier conflicts and alternative histories of Britain.[[19]](#footnote-20) While violence in Wales was contained and deep in the past, Scotland, only a generation after Culloden, was a relatively recent war-zone, and Ireland a current one: in 1798, proving the irrelevance of any notional “Celtic” solidarity, Welsh and Highland regiments crossed the Irish Sea to put down the Irish Rebellion, rubbing shoulders with tourists as they did so.

The influence of the Celtic-speaking countries on English Romanticism has long been acknowledged and discussed. In 1997 Katie Trumpener went so far as to posit that “English literature, so-called, constitutes itself in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century through the systematic imitation, appropriation, and political neutralization of antiquarian and nationalist literary developments in Scotland, Ireland and Wales”, a process she dubs “bardic nationalism”.[[20]](#footnote-21) For all its revisionary energy, huge erudition, and ambitious remapping of the Romantic literary canon, her book is over-reliant on a simplified opposition between a modernizing and expansionist “English” drive to improvement (epitomised by enlightenment “surveys” of the sort conducted by Arthur Young in Ireland), and a bardic nationalism “represent[ing] the resistance of vernacular oral traditions to the historical pressures of English imperialism and whose performance brings the voice of the past into the sites of the present” (p. 33).[[21]](#footnote-22) As the editors of the 2003 essay collection *English Romanticism and the Celtic World* pointed out, there is a risk here of binary thinking, and of “losing sight of the extent to which Celticism was used as a tool in the construction and expansion of the post-1745 British state”, a central theme of their own volume.[[22]](#footnote-23) When Walter Scott recuperated the symbols of Jacobite rebellion by wrapping Lowland Edinburgh in tartan for the “King’s Jaunt” (George IV’s visit to Edinburgh in 1822), he proclaimed “We are the CLAN, and our King is THE CHIEF”.[[23]](#footnote-24) Recent scholarship has explored this ideology of “Highlandism”, described by Alan Macinnes as “the association of tartan with military prowess and imperial service, a peculiar weave that came in the course of the nineteenth century to represent Scotland’s distinctive presence within the British Empire”.[[24]](#footnote-25) Unsurprisingly, there seems to have been no equivalent to “Highlandism” in Irish-speaking Ireland*,* but numerous Welsh-language ballads, poems, and songs (such as those of John Parry discussed in Chapter 4 below) declared the British loyalty of Welsh patriots against the background of threatened Napoleonic invasion.[[25]](#footnote-26)

***Being “not-at-home” on the home tour***

Using travel writing as a lens, and embracing multiple perspectives, this collection of essays aims to further explore the entangled relations between the cultures of these islands. The home tour of Britain and Ireland has, in recent years, been considered in the light of picturesque aesthetics, improvement, gender, “natures in translation”, the European grand tour, and British identities.[[26]](#footnote-27) Yet although tours of Ireland, Scotland, Wales or the Isle of Man were strictly speaking “domestic”, following the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707 and the British-Irish Union of 1801, the term is problematic when “home” represented a place of multiple, sometimes conflicting cultural identities. That very unintelligibility played its part in how these countries were experienced and described. While many British tourists in continental Europe had passable French, those who visited large parts of Wales, Scotland and Ireland were often dependent on guides and interpreters, with a very few making attempts to learn the language. In 1800, the Borders poet and linguist John Leyden spent ten weeks touring the Highlands in quest of Ossianic traditions: although he mastered Icelandic, Persian, Hebrew and Arabic (he was appointed Professor of Hindustani in Calcutta in 1807), Leyden struggled with Gaelic, which he described as “equally necessary and difficult”.[[27]](#footnote-28) Yet even his willingness to tackle the language, and his identity as a Border Scot, did not preclude that sense of being somewhere utterly foreign: in a letter to a friend he congratulated himself from “a safe escape from the Indians of Scotland, as our friend Ramsay [of Ochtertyre] denominates the Highlanders”.[[28]](#footnote-29) Keats’s sense of the strangeness of being “in a country where a foreign Language is spoken” is replicated over and again, and, as the essays in this collection suggest, experiences of defamiliarisation on the “home tour” are diverse and variable.

Discussing the connections between travel writing and the Irish “national tales” of Sydney Owenson and Charles Maturin, Ina Ferris has named the distinctive structure of feeling experienced by English travellers (or fictional protagonists in that role) as “discomfort”, somewhat different from the “othering” experienced in colonial space. Discomfort reflects “the pressure of something outside of themselves […] a rubbing up against something that makes them feel not-at-home rather than, say, as moments of transport or coercion or some other affective mode of encounter”.[[29]](#footnote-30) Nowhere is this discomfort more apparent than when the “imperial grammar” of English ceases to be a point of reference, as anglophone travellers cross into Welsh, Irish or Gaelic language zones and enter the realm of sound.[[30]](#footnote-31) While Romantic tourists in search of the picturesque have a well-developed language for visual aesthetics, “there is no comparable vocabulary for the soundscape”. [[31]](#footnote-32) Several encounters in this collection of essays underline Ferris’s point that “as an emanation of culture […] sound denotes the estrangement of disparate languages that do not understand one another”.[[32]](#footnote-33) That estrangement can be poignant, as in William Wordsworth’s rhetorical question of the Gaelic song of the “Solitary Reaper” (“Will no one tell me what she sings?”), but it can also manifest itself as an instinctive recoil, as when Dorothy Wordsworth describes the innkeeper in Glencoe, “screaming in Erse, with the most horrible guinea-hen or peacock voice I ever heard”; the “sounds” made by Welsh Methodist preachers inspire a similar revulsion, especially when they preach out of doors and gesticulate. In such moments, arguably, tourist discomfort borders on something yet more unsettling—the “home” tour becomes *unheimlich.* Perhaps more in keeping with the Romantic penchant for Rousseau’s privileging of the affective and sonic over the semantic qualities of language is Dorothy’s account of being arrested in her tracks on Loch Lomond side at dusk by “the sound of a half-articulate Gaelic hooting from the field close to us”. The source was a young *buchaille* (herdboy) wrapped in a grey plaid, calling his cattle: to the English tourists, his “naturalised” cry was “in the highest degree moving to the imagination: mists were on the hillsides, darkness shutting out the huge avenue of mountains, torrents roaring, no house in sight to which the child might belong”. For William, this epiphanic experience of language and landscape contained “the whole history of the Highlander’s life – his melancholy, his simplicity, his poverty, his superstition, and above all, that visionariness which results from a communion with the unworldliness of nature”.[[33]](#footnote-34) Here an alien language and landscape combine to create a quintessentially Wordworthian effect of imagination, in which the boy’s Gaelic speech – a metonymy for his culture as a whole – is firmly placed on the side of nature rather than culture. As with the encounter with the Highland reaper, the tourists are eavesdroppers, and don’t engage with the boy: however, there are also occasions – such as the lively “conversation” between Michael Faraday and the little Welsh girl who shows him Melincourt waterfall—where lack of mutual intelligibility seems no bar to a sense of meaningful connection.[[34]](#footnote-35) And beyond the anglophone-Celtic divide lie occasional moments of extraordinary “transperipheral” communication, such as a contemporary account of Edmund Burke discussing East India Company politics with a Highland minister during his Scottish tour of 1785: while Burke spoke to him in Irish, the minister (Reverend Joseph Macintyre) “answered in Erse; and they understood each other in many instances, from the similarities of these two ancient Celtic dialects”.[[35]](#footnote-36) Recent research, particularly from Irish language and history scholars, has challenged previously accepted understandings of the English- and Irish- speaking worlds as being hermetically sealed off from one another, focussing instead on the porous bilingual frontier zones and the complex issue of intentional silences between them.[[36]](#footnote-37)

Most significant of all, however, is the fact that the majority of tourist encounters with Celtic languages occur *in situ*: landscapes and environments, many of them new and some of them challenging, form not just the backdrop to the experience of language contact – as in a painted theatre screen – but are part of it. How do travel narratives express this? The extent to which language and landscape are perceived as a whole, or are split and processed separately in the mind of the perceiver, forms a key thread in the essays presented here. Naming is an essential part of this process, and visitors’ abilities to enquire after, describe, and understand the places in which they find themselves depend on a variety of factors – not least the unfamiliar orthographies of Welsh and Gaelic.[[37]](#footnote-38) To native speakers of the Celtic languages, the relationship between landform and toponomy is, compared to the multilayered and historically compacted place-names of England, very often one of great transparency. As William Bingley perceived in his 1798 tour of North Wales, to understand even basic elements of the language is to have access to the native descriptors of the landscape which is the object of the tourist gaze. In order for them to “read” their environment correctly, he provides his readers with “a list of primitive words, which … very commonly occur in the names of places”, such as “*Aber*, a confluence, the fall of one river into another, or into the sea, as *Aberdovey*, the conflux of the river Dovey […] *Gwern*, a watery meadow […] *Llech,* a flat stone or crag; a smooth cliff.”[[38]](#footnote-39) Where a significant proportion of names across much of English-speaking Britain might preserve obsolete terms for landscape features in various combinations of early Celtic, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Norman French, those in Celtic-speaking areas are often formed of elements still in current use – creating the sense of congruity between language and landscape which often underlies contemporary notions of indigeneity.

Yet as particular landscapes and sites became increasingly incorporated into the itineraries of tourist routes, tours start to reveal an overlay of anglophone-friendly names which sometimes translate, and sometimes pull free from their earlier Celtic toponyms – and which, themselves, are subject to reinvention and re-interpretation. Dean MacCanell suggests that such naming is a first step in the “sacralization” of tourist sites.[[39]](#footnote-40) Often, local tradition provided the basis for this process, as in the naming of “Fingal’s Cave” on Staffa by Joseph Banks in 1772; his English-language version was based on the Gaelic name “Ouwa Eehn” [Uamha Fhionn], with its obvious Ossianic appeal. The stunning basaltic cave quickly became the most celebrated site of Ossianic topography, even if many subsequent travellers preferred an alternative etymology, “the melodious cave”, popularised by the French vulcanologist Faujais Saint Fond.[[40]](#footnote-41) By contrast, the full local name for Ireland’s equivalent site, the Giant’s Causeway, *Clóchan na bhFhomaraigh* ( “the stepping stones of the Fomorii”, alluding to the Fomorians, a legendary race of giants), seems to have been largely disregarded by visitors, even though it had been consecrated as a tourist venue as far back as the seventeenth century.[[41]](#footnote-42) William Williams discusses the “whimsical” English names given to some of the Causeway’s basalt formations, such as “the Honey Comb”, “the Giant’s Gateway”, and “the Giant’s Ball-Alley”, arguing that “naming at tourist sites is often inspired by the inner dynamics of tourism itself and so may draw little or nothing from local traditions or language”. [[42]](#footnote-43) Language also affects the reading of space. All traditions nuance types of space differently: they have culturally specific ways of describing it and patterns of using it. Some languages have many words for distinct spaces, materials, elements, climates; others, hardly any. The language used to read space matters: it affects which spaces are considered the most important, the most significant, the most symbolic.

Naming and orthography feature prominently in the opening essay by Mary-Ann Constantine and Rhys Kaminski-Jones, which explores William Wordsworth’s contact with, and representation of, the Welsh language in the broader context of the Welsh tour. It starts with the young poet’s rather startling encounter with an irate Welsh clergyman, before exploring some of the ways in which Welsh is occluded or made visible – sometimes awkwardly so – in the poems and letters. While acknowledging the mediating role of Robert Jones, Wordsworth’s Welsh-speaking friend and travel companion, the essay focuses on the potentially destabilising effect of Welsh and its orthography on a writer who claimed to speak and write the “real language of men”. A similarly disruptive process is analysed in Lucy Cogan’s account of the elderly Maria Edgeworth’s 1833 journey into Irish-speaking Connemara, where she confronts “the alienating reality that she was in a part of her own country in which her native language marked her out as a foreigner”. To contextualise this experience, Cogan explores Edgeworth’s attitude to Irish from the 1780s, when (holding views close to those of her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth) she saw it as a dying, unimprovable language, and gave it relatively little place in her writings. As these views shift to a “cautious” interest in the Irish-speaking subject, Edgeworth’s imagination gradually engages more with Ireland’s majority but elided culture and its landscapes – an engagement which, like Edgeworth’s sense of her own “Irishness”, is put to the test at various points on the Connemara tour by the perturbing, occasionally threatening, presence of Irish speakers in a thoroughly intractable terrain. The representation and frequent elision of Irish from anglophone accounts of the country is further explored by Finola O’Kane, in an essay which reads eighteenth-century travel narratives for traces of and responses to the language, while also considering how landscape itself, especially designed landscape, might encode and represent the country’s complex sociolinguistic dynamics. Ireland, Scotland and Wales have long and rich bilingual traditions of language and landscape. They also contain many sites where Romantic writing shaped the ways in which landscapes should be described, assessed and valued. Building on Patricia Palmer’s notion of the “clamorous silence”, O’Kane examines a cluster comprising textual, built and landscaped features at Cill Chais (Kilcash Castle), unpicking some of the ways in which a place might itself express or deny its conflicted, bilingual, Irish identities. The language in which a landscape is read, imagined and described shapes later processes of interpretation and evaluation: this observation leads her to ask how the assessment and management of a country’s heritage might accommodate questions of language, possibly the most intangible yet significant of its attributes.

Developing the idea of “soundscape”, the relationship between language, place and music is addressed by Elizabeth Edwards and Kirsteen McCue, who consider how geocultural and linguistic identities are captured, translated and performed through the period’s obsession with national song. Tracing the genesis of three important collections of early nineteenth-century “national airs”, they uncover a mesh of activities involving research, travel and correspondence: it is within this space, they argue, that the efforts of John Parry, George Thomson and Alexander Campbell to repurpose Welsh and Gaelic language songs for anglophone drawing rooms became entangled in wider debates about national identity and its relationship to both landscape and language. One of the contributors of purpose-made English lyrics to Scottish and Gaelic collections by both Thomson and Campbell was the writer Anne Grant of Laggan, whose own work is the subject of Pam Perkins’s chapter. Perkins shows how Grant, whether as a tourist herself, or as a kind of self-appointed interpreter of the places she loved, was acutely aware that “the aesthetic appreciation of landscape is difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle from the cultural grounding of the observer”. Her insights stem from her relatively unusual position as a learner of Gaelic, and it is in the acts of translation and mediation that she comes closest to questions of how to represent the localized and the specific in a language and for an audience outside the tight ecology of the community, especially where this relates to features such as a particular type of plant, or a local landform.

In our final essay Nigel Leask and Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh take that “local” vision and twist the lens outward, presenting “the only surviving travel journal written entirely in Scottish Gaelic during the period”, one which provides “a unique Gaelic perspective on the colonial Caribbean”. This is the manuscript account of the Lismore-born soldier, Dugald MacNicol (Dùghall MacNeacail), and covers a short but eventful period of his life (1809–13) which sees him leave Scotland with the British army for Barbados, where he composed his journal. Contextualising this work with reference to MacNicol’s own Gaelic poetry and to two other contemporary travel accounts by young Gaelic-speaking men, Leask and Ó Muircheartaigh explore how MacNicol draws on the period’s tropes of tourism and life-writing to represent his experiences of nostalgia and colonial dislocation. Here, indeed, is a reminder that many Highlanders (like many Welsh and some Irish) were not merely the objects of a Romantic gaze or the subjects of Romantic production, “passive victims in their own history”,[[43]](#footnote-44) but themselves active players in the economies of exploitation which sustained that production itself. The essay collection thus closes with the ironic vision of members of a “suppressed and minoritized culture […] servicing Britain’s colonial empire” who also made a distinctive contribution to the archive of Romantic era travel writing.

***Conclusion***

In an thought-provoking Afterword which spins some of the volume’s key themes outwards into new, post-Romantic contexts, Joep Leerssen argues that criticism focused on the implicit power-structures of the ‘Gaze’ should also make us more alert to the power dynamics of the ‘Tongue’: “on whose terms is the world expected, and by whom, to make itself understood?” This provides the wider context for Janet Sorensen’s call for a greater attentiveness to examples or intimations of language in action: “a focus on writing about representations of and evidence of language practices can tender a more nuanced reading of the internal differences within those amorphous entities of Gael, Scot, and Briton”.[[44]](#footnote-45) Our special issue, with its focus on representations of language in tours and the literary works which derive from them, explores those power dynamics and interrogates some of those internal differences. In asking how visitors negotiated their “interlingual” situation and its various forms of discomfort and connection, our contributors consider what is said, and, crucially, what is *not* said about those encounters: as William Williams notes, “the unwritten history of Irish tourism lies in what the Irish speakers said to each other as they reversed the tourist gaze and regarded the strangers who walked uncomprehendingly amongst them”.[[45]](#footnote-46) And there is so much more that could still be done with the “clamorous silence” of the Celtic languages in Romantic-era Britain and Ireland. As an ongoing enterprise, it calls for collaboration: between scholars of Celtic languages and literatures, and those working in the broad interdisciplinary mesh that Romantic studies has become. It calls for an increased curiosity about and understanding of the “other” cultures of the British and Irish archipelago; it also calls – why not? – for more learners of those languages, and better resources from government and educational bodies to challenge the ongoing narrative of inexorable decline. Cross-cultural collaboration was at the heart of some of the richest and most enduring travel writing of the period: Thomas Pennant travelled in the Highlands with the Gaelic scholar, John Stuart, and compiled his Welsh tours with assistance from his friend John Lloyd; even Johnson had his *entrée* into Highland society through James Boswell and the Skye minister Rev Donald MacQueen.[[46]](#footnote-47) There is, under the surface, often far more cultural entanglement in the writings of anglophone “visitors” than any simple binary model based on “the colonial gaze”: as we learn more about print culture, journals, the sharing of manuscripts, translation, correspondence, the soundscape, migration, military travel and indeed the practice of domestic tourism itself, it becomes clear that here are many channels through which these Celtic cultures, so often framed as “backward” and “peripheral”, actively participated in creating British and global modernity in the Romantic period.

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1. Carol Kyros Walker, *Walking North with Keats* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Michael Cronin, *Across the Line: Travel, Language and Translation* (University of Cork Press, 2000), 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Leith Davis, Ian Duncan, Janet Sorensen, eds., *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Murray Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. For perceptions of Celtic-speaking cultures through time see Terence Brown, ed., *Celticism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), and esp. Joep Leerssen, “Celticism,” 1–20; for Arnoldian tropes see Patrick Sims-Williams, “The visionary Celt: the construction of an ‘ethnic preconception’,” *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 11 (1986): 71–96. See also Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: the Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Athlone Press, 1964), and the essays in Gerard Carruthers and Alan Rawes, *English Romanticism and the Celtic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Noting that earlier Gaelic literature “contained stances and perspectives, themes and genres that became characteristic modes within Romantic literature”, Clancy argues that “Gaelic romanticism” should be seen not as “mere sub-set of Scottish romanticism, but rather a problematic counterpart to it”: “Gaelic Literature and Scottish Romanticism,” in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. Murray Pittock(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 49–60, at 49. For discussion of how shifting critical parameters have enabled meaningful comparisons with 1790s Welsh literature see the Introduction to Mary-Ann Constantine and Dafydd Johnston, eds., *“Footsteps of Liberty and Revolt”: Essays on Wales and the French Revolution* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), 1–10. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. See, for example (in addition to works cited above), Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, its Development and Literary Expression prior to the Nineteenth Century* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1986); Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); Silke Stroh, *Uneasy Subjects: Postcolonialism and Scottish Gaelic Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011); Nigel Leask, *Stepping Westward: Writing the Highland Tour, 1730–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); volumes in the University of Wales Press series *Iolo Morganwg and the Romantic Tradition in Wales*; and two literary histories with deliberately plurilingual agendas, Robert Crawford, *Scotland’s Books: A History of Scottish Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) and *The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature*, ed. Geraint Evans and Helen Fulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. By 1760 encounters with Cornish as a spoken language are vanishingly rare; Breton, a Brittonic language closely related to Cornish and Welsh and spoken in the north-west of Brittany, France, was still thriving as a rural community language, but falls outside the “home tours” scope of our volume. Scots, Ulster Scots, and Hibernian English, all of them related to English and therefore non-Celtic languages, were dominant idioms in Lowland Scotland and large parts of eastern and northern Ireland. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Niall Ó Ciosáin, “The Print Cultures of the Celtic Languages,” *Culture and Social History* 3/10 (2013): 347–67; Derick S. Thomson, *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 109–14; Charles W. J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland, 1698-1981: The Geographical History of a Language* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1984), Geraint H. Jenkins, ed., *The Welsh Language before the Industrial Revolution* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997); *idem*, ed., *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains 1801–1911* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. John Stoddart, *Remarks on the Local Scenery and Manners in Scotland*, 2 vols (London: William Miller, 1801), I: 38. See Charles W.J. Withers, *Urban Highlanders: Highland-Lowland Migration and Urban Gaelic Culture, 1700-1900* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Notably for Wales, the Cymmrodorion (est. 1751) and the Gwyneddigion (est.1770): see R. T. Jenkins and Helen Ramage, *The History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion 1751–1951* (London: The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1951); R.J.W. Evans, “Was there a Welsh Enlightenment?”, in *From Medieval to Modern Wales: Historical Essays in Honour of Kenneth O. Morgan and Ralph A. Griffiths*, ed. R. R. Davies and Geraint H. Jenkins (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), 142–60; Emrys Jones, ed. *The Welsh in London 1500-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001). New perspectives are explored in Rhys Kaminski-Jones, *Reframing Welsh Revivalism: True Britons and Celtic Empires, 1707–1819* (Boydell & Brewer, forthcoming). The London Highland Society was founded in 1781 by “chiefs, clan gentry and other interested parties” to promote the composition of Gaelic poetry, contribute to the *Ossian* debate and support the SSPCK Gaelic teacher-training college in Inverness; the Edinburgh Highland Society (est. 1784) focused on economic improvement but also “the preservation of the Language, Poetry, and Music of the Highlands”. Ronald Black, “The Gaelic Academy: the Cultural Commitment of the Highland Societies of Scotland’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 14 (1986), 1-38, and Robert Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero: The Image of the Highlander, 1745–1830* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), 132–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. In the eighteenth century 1,900 titles were printed in Welsh, 59 in Gaelic, but only 20 in Irish. The figures for the following century show similar ratios: 8,500 items in Welsh, 1,000 in Gaelic, and fewer than 150 in Irish. Ó Ciosáin, “Print Cultures,” 348–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh, “From manuscript to print and back again: two eighteenth-century anthologies of Irish Verse,” in *Manuscript and Print on the North Atlantic Fringe, 1500–1900*, ed. Matthew Driscoll and Nioclás Mac Cathmhaoil (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2021), 225–54, at 225–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. See Michael Hechter’s influential study *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1975); the model is modulated in Jane Aaron and Chris Williams, eds., *Postcolonial Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005); see also Heather Williams, *Postcolonial Brittan*y: *Literature Between Languages* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007) and Jane Ohlmeyer, *Making Empire: Ireland, imperialism and the modern world* (London and New Haven: Yale, 2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Andrew Mackillop, *Human Capital and Empire: Scotland, Ireland, Wales and British Imperialism in Asia, c.1690–c.1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. See Ian B. Stewart, “The Mother Tongue: Historical Study of the Celts and their Language(s) in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland,” *Past & Present* 243/1 (2019): 71–107. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. See, e.g., Mary-Ann Constantine, “‘To trace thy country’s glories to their source’: Dangerous History in Thomas Pennant’s *Tour in Wales*,” in *Rethinking British Romantic History, 1770–1845*, ed. Porscha Fermanis and John Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 121–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. From a vast bibliography see, e.g., Fiona Stafford, “‘Dangerous Success’: Ossian, Wordsworth, and English Romantic Literature,” in *Ossian Revisited*, ed. Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 49–72; Howard Gaskill, ed., *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004); Dafydd Moore, ed., *The International Companion to James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. See Mary-Ann Constantine, *Curious Travellers: Writing the Welsh Tour 1760–1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xi. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 3. This model, which also underplays the agency of cultural producers within the Celtic-speaking countries, is critiqued by Ian B. Stewart in, “Celticism and the Four Nations in the Long Nineteenth Century,” in *Four Nations Approaches to Modern “British” History: A (Dis-) United Kingdom?*, ed. N. Lloyd-Jones and M. Scull (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 135–59. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Carruthers and Rawes, *English Romanticism and the Celtic World*, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Leask, *Stepping Westward*, 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Alan McInnes, “Contrasts and Tensions: Highland and Lowland in the 19th Century,” in *Gael and Lowlander in Scottish Literature*, ed. C. Maclachlan and R. Renton (Glasgow: ASLS, 2015), 1–21. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. See, e.g., Vincent Morley, *The Popular Mind in Eighteenth-century Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2017); Ffion Mair Jones, ed., *Welsh Ballads of the French Revolution* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. See, for example: Benjamin Colbert, ed., *Travel Writing and Tourism in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Zoë Kinsley, *Women Writing the Home Tour 1682–1812* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); William H.A. Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism: The First Century, 1750–1850* (London: Anthem Press, 2010); Finola O’Kane, *Ireland and the Picturesque: Design, Landscape Painting and Tourism 1700–1840* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2013); Mary-Ann Constantine and Nigel Leask, eds., *Enlightenment Travel and British Identities: Thomas Pennant’s Tours of Scotland and Wales* (London: Anthem Press, 2017); Leask, *Stepping Westward*;Constantine, *Curious Travellers*. A recent special issue on “Minoritized Languages and Travel”, focused mainly on a later period and on European visitors rather than ‘home tourists’, offers useful paradigms of linguistic contact for the Romantic era: see especially Rita Singer, ‘Introduction’ in *Minoritized Languages and Travel*, Modern Languages Open, 2023 (1) DOI: https:// doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.472, and the article by Kathryn Walchester discussed in Chapter 1, below. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. John Leyden, *Journal of a Tour in the Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland in 1800*, ed. James Sinton, (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1903), 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Leyden, *Journal*, 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Ina Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. The notion of “imperial grammar” is drawn from Janet Sorensen, who critiques the linguistic binarism associated with Hechter’s model of “internal colonialism” in *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 16, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Jeremy Prynne, *Field Notes: “The Solitary Reaper” and Others* (Cambridge: for the author, 2007), 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Ferris, *Romantic National Tale*, 64–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Dorothy Wordsworth, *Recollections of a Tour in Scotland 1803*, ed. Carol Kyros Walker (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. See Constantine, *Curious Travellers*, Chapter 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Robert Bissett, *The Life of Edmund Burke, Comprehending an Impartial Account of his Literary and Political Efforts*… 2 vols (London, 1800), II: 249. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. See O’Kane’s discussion of bilingual contact in Chapter 3 of this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. See John Murray, *Reading the Gaelic Landscape/ Leughadh Aghaidh na Tìre* (Caithness: Whittles Publishing, 2014), which “intends a semantic recapture not only of a lost landscape, but also of a landscape which has been lost to us” (214). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. William Bingley, *A Tour round North Wales, performed during the summer of 1798*, 2 vols (London: E. Williams, 1800), II: 295–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. Cited in Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*, 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. Leask, *Stepping Westward*, 80–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Alasdair Kennedy, “In search of the ‘true prospect’: making and knowing the Giant's Causeway as a field site in the 17th Century,” *British Journal for the History of Science* 41/1 (March 2008): 19–41. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*, 109–10. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Kenneth McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire: Writing the Highlands, 1760–1860* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007), 16. McNeil criticises what he sees as a flaw in Peter Womack’s influential *Improvement and Romance.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Sorenson, *Grammar of Empire*, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*, 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Leask, *Stepping Westward*, 157–65; R. Paul Evans, “Reverend John Lloyd of Caerwys (1733–93): Historian, Antiquarian and Genealogist,” *Flintshire Historical Society Journal* 31 (1983–4): 109–24. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)