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# Introduction

SPECIAL COLLECTION:  
MINORITISED  
LANGUAGES AND  
TRAVEL

**INTRODUCTION**

**RITA SINGER** 



## ABSTRACT

This introduction to the MLO special issue “Minoritised Languages and Travel” provides an overview of the pieces in this collection in context with historical travel accounts in German about nineteenth-century Wales.

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It hardly needs noting any more, but the world we knew before the global pandemic hit in early 2020 no longer exists. Except for those living in comparative isolation, whether social, geographical or political, for a time the relative ease with which people socialised in their own and neighbouring communities, not to mention travelling further afield, by and large disappeared. Life became (hyper-)local. This resulted in a rise in what travel writing studies call vertical travel (Forsdick), where the focus turns to “the proximate and also to the past” (Forsdick et al. 2). Lockdown resulted in more intimate interactions with one’s immediate surroundings, burrowing down into a location’s natural or built history, excavating forgotten or overlooked stories, and so rediscovering strangeness in a familiar place. The experience of staying local had some immediately tangible results. During a home renovation project in the first lockdown in 2020, a man in Plymouth discovered a cavern below his house filled with discarded objects and newspaper scraps that were at least sixty years old (Carter and Bett). At around the same time in the Welsh countryside, during the permitted hour of daily outdoor exercise, two friends stumbled on the remains of an abandoned golf course and decided to restore it over the next year with the help of other eager locals (Williams).

In contrast to these more hands-on experiences and encounters with the historical hyper-local, armchair travel proved another coping mechanism during the pandemic. In Wales, several organisations, such as the national heritage body Cadw, created “Virtual Visits” for selected historic locations, combining the visual experience of the travelled site with written text or recorded sound. Similarly, the historical travel writing and heritage website *Journey to the Past* (2018), jointly produced by the AHRC-funded project *European Travellers to Wales, 1750–2010* and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, registered consistent traffic throughout the pandemic, offering readers an escape into a travelled past centuries before Covid. The historical travel writing about Wales by German- and French-speaking visitors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that is featured on the website opens a window to encounters by historical travellers with a peripheral and minoritised culture in terms of geographical location, politics, economy, culture and language.

Chiefly intended for use by present-day visitors to Wales, *Journey to the Past* clusters selected descriptions of over fifty locations across Wales into nine themed trails that highlight Welsh history and culture, the natural beauty of the country as well as its built heritage.<sup>1</sup> By combining historical travel writing with specially curated historical images, the website helps present-day tourists to visualise how Wales appeared to their historical predecessors. In the rural areas, these images, together with the travellers’ writings, often create a sense of continuity for today’s visitors, as little appears to have changed in a sparsely populated countryside. However, for the urban south, especially since the decline of heavy industry in the 1980s, the historical descriptions and images shine a light on recurring discontinuities, ruptures and breaks with the past. Moreover, the concentrated presentation of travel texts by visitors writing in two of Europe’s largest languages uncovers similarities and differences in historical French and German attitudes towards the minoritised Welsh language and its less well-known culture, ranging from mild amusement at Wales’s cultural distinctiveness, to paternalistic condescension if not outright hostility.

This special issue of *Modern Languages Open* focuses on the interplay between and intersection of minoritised cultures and language with tourism, travel and travel writing. In five articles, the contributors lay bare the frictions between travellers and travelleses as well as the inherent instability of social, cultural and language hierarchies. To all intents, the travel writing under observation evidences how (c)overt hierarchies even between variously minoritised actors can effect the transmutation of cores into peripheries and vice versa. This introduction and three of the five articles explore intra- and intercultural experiences with Wales and Welshness. Exploring the personal diaries of two lady’s companions travelling through Wales at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Kathryn Walchester explores the silencing of Welsh travelleses. A century and a half later, Derek Walcott’s travels through Wales and England resulted in several poetry collections. Marija Bergam Pellicani locates the Caribbean poet as a writer of a minor literature in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari. Anna-Lou Dijkstra’s analysis of recent German, French

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<sup>1</sup> *Journey to the Past* and the articles collected in this special issue, “Minoritised Languages and Travel”, are products of the *European Travellers* project jointly undertaken by Bangor University, the University of Wales Trinity St David Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies in Aberystwyth, and Swansea University.

and Dutch guidebooks to Wales uncovers how these publications from a dominant language background pre-emptively interpret the travel destination, resulting in often skewed perceptions of a minoritised culture.

This Celtic nation on the Irish Sea does not constitute the sole centre of attention here, as the articles also explore the Caribbean, northern Africa, India, Nepal, Brazil and Spain. Eimear Kennedy's analysis of Irish travelogues about India explores how travelogues composed in endangered languages, such as Gaelic, can originate from a position of relative sociocultural privilege when placed in contact with the global south. David Miranda-Barreiro undertakes a close reading of Julio Camba's travel writings, thereby excavating an unobvious xenophobia towards Spain's minoritised languages and regions, not only in Camba's own writings but also in past and contemporary critical academic work on the author. The fraught inequality between variously minoritised actors is particularly thrown into relief when Western minoritised cultures and languages meet with the global majority or global south. In this sense, the Welsh case studies in this collection form a point of departure for future discussions of the tense relationship between travel writing and minoritised languages. In some cases this might result in recognising the mechanisms of narrative erasure or, in others, discovering affinities and solidarity between variously minoritised actors.

As a historical foundation piece for this collection, Walchester's contribution takes the reader to Wales as the cradle of domestic tourism in Britain. Investigating the personal diaries of two female servants, Walchester traces how paternalistic attitudes towards Wales were not unique to continental visitors with a dominant language culture background, but were also deeply entrenched in many visitors who made the Home Tour of the north Atlantic archipelago during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In this account of the lady's companions and sisters Eliza and Millicent Bant, who travelled "with their employer Lady Jane Wilson of Charlton House in Greenwich" in 1806 and 1808 (Walchester 3), Walchester examines the interplay of class and anglophone attitudes towards Welsh-language settings. The Bant sisters were clearly financially dependent on their employer, and the two journeys that they made through Wales were not of their own volition; nor did they have any influence over the itinerary. At each stage of the journey, interactions with Welsh locals, fellow servants and members of the hospitality sector were determined by their situation as employees of a wealthy lady traveller. In this regard, the Bants' work as go-betweens kept travellers at arm's length from Lady Wilson, so as not to have her suffer the social and class embarrassment of encountering unfiltered Welshness; they "disrupt the dynamics of the conventional encounter between the 'self' of the traveller and the 'other' of the worker" (Walchester 5). More importantly, however, the sisters appear to have internalised their roles as "disruptors" as they also elide encounters with Welshness in their diaries. This distinct silence suggests a degree of cultural snobbery and classism in their authorial if not aesthetic judgement of what is worthy of being recorded and what is allowed to fall by the wayside.

The third article in this collection by Anna-Lou Dijkstra addresses the legacy of some of the attitudes discussed by Walchester and their retention in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century guidebooks published in Germany and France. Using the representation of Wales's historical and cultural distinctiveness in these publications, Dijkstra shows the often problematic portrayal of non-state, minoritised nations by the continental European publishing and tourism market. Guidebook authors often write for an imaginary readership with a dominant language background, whose identity is consolidated by national state borders. As a result of trying to explain non-state nations and their minoritised and overlooked cultures, more often than not guidebooks have a tendency to activate stereotypes. Despite such shortcomings, Dijkstra points out that guidebooks published outside the travel destination and written for a foreign audience are in a unique position of "supporting marginalised, 'minoritised' stateless areas to gain international visibility" (4). In the case of Wales, however, this visibility is a double-edged sword: while German and French guidebooks labour to establish Wales's cultural distinctiveness, they do so on the back of stereotypes of Wales as a nation of emotional Celts stuck in the past by their desire to preserve the Welsh language. Rather than presenting an objective description of the travel destination, French and German guidebooks reflect the countries' respective self-images, the former as a unifying, centralised and culturally coherent nation-state, and the latter as music-loving Romantic escapists into nature (Dijkstra 12-13). Most notably, however, for both guidebook markets, "Wales and Welshness can only exist in comparison to England

and Englishness”; viewed in a strict hierarchy relative to the domineering neighbour to the east, Wales represents a deviation from the civilised, modern cultural core (Dijkstra 11).

As Dijkstra observes, a large number of the contemporary travel destinations in Wales included in French and German guidebooks were popularised by historical travel writing. Perhaps one of the most influential writers in this respect was the nineteenth-century German Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau (1785–1871), whose account was a bestseller of its day and was translated from the original German into Dutch, English, French and Italian within his lifetime. Travelling through England, Scotland and Wales in 1828 and 1829, Pückler-Muskau was officially visiting out of a general interest in land and people and to further his personal education, but in truth the journey was intended to procure a new wife. After remodelling his home in the kingdom of Saxony, mostly by extending his parklands, he had run into financial difficulties (Rippl 50). He and his wife Lucie therefore dissolved their marriage, formulating a cunning plan that a rich British heiress would refill the prince’s deflated purse. In return, the prospective wife would get the somewhat problematic opportunity to join Hermann and Lucie in a *ménage à trois* (Klein 130). Perhaps unsurprisingly, no eligible British heiress materialised during the prince’s two-year stay in Britain, but Pückler-Muskau’s popular four-volume travelogue *Briefe eines Verstorbenen: Ein fragmentarisches Tagebuch aus England, Wales, Irland, und Frankreich, geschrieben in den Jahren 1828 und 1829* (1830–31) went some way towards resolving his financial troubles.

Some of the attraction of his book was no doubt due to the gossipy and often ironic character sketches and descriptions of social climbers, the upper classes, and his cutting remarks on British politics. However, while Pückler-Muskau’s observations showed his long-standing familiarity with Britain, there is also an observable qualitative difference in his descriptions of Wales. As Kathryn N. Jones, Carol Tully and Heather Williams point out, for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travellers, Wales represented an invisible, unknown or unknowable place wedged between England and Ireland (2). Like the majority of accounts written by his compatriots, Pückler-Muskau’s descriptions represent a paradox: at one and the same time, he describes his Welsh surroundings in meticulous detail and recognises Wales’s cultural distinctiveness, but his disparaging evaluations of the Welsh and their language and culture are distorted by an Anglocentric point of view (Jones et al. 137). In addition to writing from the perspective of a cultural outsider, Pückler-Muskau’s travel account is also coloured by his own class and gender, which shape his analysis of land and people at every step.

One of the early stations of Pückler-Muskau’s venture into Wales was Llangollen, located on Thomas Telford’s recently finished post road connecting Dublin and London via Holyhead. The town’s prime location, an assortment of comparatively accessible medieval ruins littering a picturesque landscape, and nearby examples of innovative civil engineering turned Llangollen into a hotspot for nineteenth-century travellers. Llangollen Bridge, Castell Dinas Brân, Valle Crucis and Telford’s Pontcysyllte and Chirk aqueducts, the Llangollen canal and the horseshoe-shaped lock at its terminus still count among the main tourist destinations in and around Llangollen to this day, as does Plas Newydd, the small property of the Ladies of Llangollen. Relatively speaking, the house and gardens owned by Eleanor Butler (1739–1829) and Sarah Ponsonby (1755–1831) hardly qualifies as a country estate. However, after their escape in 1778 from domineering families, unwanted marriage prospects and the pressure of genteel Anglo-Irish society (Brideoake 8–9), the Ladies quickly attained international fame for their “unconventional” unmarried lifestyle. They upheld an extensive network of correspondents, who contributed to their small library and led a steady stream of visitors to their doorstep (Brideoake 100).

Among these was Pückler-Muskau, who visited Plas Newydd in 1828, recollecting tales about the Ladies that he had “heard once as a child, and again recently in London” (Tour 1 19). His description of the visit demonstrates that he clearly fancied himself among the suitably connected higher echelons of British polite society, as the Ladies were selective hosts (Tour 1 20). At the same time, however, his sardonic description of the elderly women shows that he visited expecting (and finding) a queer spectacle:

Fortunately, I was already prepared by hearsay for their peculiarities; I might otherwise have found it difficult to repress some expression of astonishment. Imagine two ladies, the eldest of whom, Lady Eleanor, a short robust woman, begins to feel her years a little, being now eighty-three; the other, a tall and imposing person, esteems herself still youthful, being only seventy-four. Both wore their still

abundant hair combed straight back and powdered, a man's round hat, a man's cravat and waistcoat [...] a short petticoat and boots: the whole covered by a coat of blue cloth [...] a sort of middle term between a man's coat and a lady's riding-habit. Over this, Lady Eleanor wore, first, the grand cordon of the order of St Louis across her shoulder; secondly, the same order around her neck; thirdly, the small cross of the same in her button-hole, and, 'pour comble de gloire', a golden lily of nearly the natural size, as a star, – all, as she said, presents of the Bourbon family. So far the whole effect was somewhat ludicrous. ([Pückler-Muskau], *Tour 1 20–1*)<sup>2</sup>

Owing to his personal background as a Saxon aristocrat who had experienced military defeat and humiliation in fighting against and then for Napoleon, and now travelling in one of the countries that had emerged as victors over the emperor, Pückler-Muskau has no patience for the Ladies' Francophilia. Even though he praises Ponsonby and Butler's knowledge of French, their politeness and genuine affection for one another, overall he paints a less than flattering image, labelling them misandrists (*Briefe 19*) and turning them into senile children who play at dressing-up in clothes and medals fit only for men. Furthermore, in relating their escape story, he misidentifies them as "Damen in London" (*Briefe 19*), a mistake silently edited out in the contemporary English translation. This telling inaccuracy is exemplary of the prince's generally Anglocentric perspective on his Welsh surroundings throughout the journey. Taking a peripheral view of Wales, he frames Plas Newydd's location at the edge of civilised humanity, rather than immediately located off one of Britain's then best and fastest post roads. Even at the time of his visit in 1828, the house and gardens were at most a leisurely ten-minute walk away from the town centre of Llangollen. By interweaving the Celtic peripherality of the estate with the Ladies' eccentricities, he signals his German aloofness, if not cultural superiority.

A few days after his stay in Llangollen, Pückler-Muskau set out on an exploration of the Penrhyn estate near Bangor owned by George Hay Dawkins-Pennant (1764–1840). His visit extended to the castle and surrounding park as well as the nearby quarries. Dawkins-Pennant had inherited the estate from his second cousin, Richard Pennant (1737–1808), who had reinvested a considerable amount of the income from his Jamaican sugar plantations into the development of the Bethesda quarries. By the time of Pückler-Muskau's visit in the late 1820s, Penrhyn slate quarry had developed into the largest and most lucrative of its kind in the country, if not Europe, and significantly changed the north Wales economy and infrastructure, which, in turn, greatly influenced the culture and heritage of the entire area. Dawkins-Pennant's Jamaican plantations, the founding source of the estate's wealth, and his ownership of 650 slaves go unmentioned in Pückler-Muskau's account (*Gwynedd Council 50–1, 215*). This is not born out of authorial embarrassment over slavery, but most likely ignorance of their existence. Ten years later, Pückler-Muskau himself would buy a 12-year-old girl in the slave market in Cairo. Renamed Machbuba, he brought her as his mistress to his castle in Saxony, where two years later she died, probably of consumption (*Probst*).

Despite his ignorance of the family's slave-ownership and Jamaican wealth, Pückler-Muskau's description of the castle is of particular interest, as he visited the estate during the decades-long phase of extensive renovation and redevelopment that produced the imposing building we know today:

The pure Saxon style is preserved in the minutest details, even in the servants' rooms and meanest parts of the building. In the eating-hall I found an imitation of the castle of William the Conqueror, at Rochester, which I formerly described to you. What could then be accomplished only by a mighty monarch, is now executed, as a plaything,—only with increased size, magnificence and expense,—by a simple country-gentleman, whose father very likely sold cheeses. (*Tour 1 43*)

Exploring the castle, the prince happens to meet the architect, Thomas Hopper (1776–1856), who permits his visitor to inspect the construction plans ([Pückler-Muskau], *Briefe 1 42*). Pückler-Muskau clearly admired Dawkins-Pennant's ability to envision a fairy castle and commission its construction under the guidance of one of the country's leading architects, in order to realise his dream, not just for himself, but even for his servants. However, the enthusiastic portrayal of the

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<sup>2</sup> For this introduction, I have chosen to quote published, historical English translations of the travel accounts where these are available. I have produced my own translations of the Pulszky, Meysenbug and Rodenberg accounts and present them parallel to the original German descriptions.

completed parts of the building mirrors the anti-French undercurrent from his visit with the Ladies of Llangollen. Pückler-Muskau, a native prince in the Kingdom of Saxony, praises the supposed “pure Saxon style” of the castle, even though Hopper’s design was ambitiously neo-Norman – in other words French. Pückler-Muskau does not just describe the castle, but more or less compiles an inventory of the building and details the practicalities of its management in accordance with the best of the English country estates (*Briefe 1 43–4*). The question therefore arises whether the detailed inspection of the castle was undertaken in the spirit of finding an eligible heiress.

Following completion of the extensive renovation period during the 1820s, Penrhyn Castle quickly became a fixture not only with domestic visitors on the Home Tour, but also among foreign travellers. The *European Travellers* project has identified seventeen nineteenth-century accounts detailing visits to the castle, three written in French and fourteen in German. One of these German accounts was produced by Ferencz Aurél Pulszky (1814–97), a Hungarian revolutionary and radical politician. Before his rise to national and political recognition from the 1840s onwards, he undertook an educational, albeit reluctant, tour of Britain following his graduation from law school in 1836. He would have much preferred a tour of the Orient, the “cradle of civilisation” (“Wiege der Menschheit”; Pulszky, *Tagebuch 1*), but instead he headed north to observe modern politics, trade and economy under the guidance of his uncle Fejérváry Gábor (1780–1851).

In London, he struck up an acquaintance with the Bavarian army officer and travel correspondent Karl von Hailbronner (1788–1864), who also published an account of this journey (Pulszky, *Zeit 1 149*). Together, this small group went on an extensive tour throughout Britain, which also included a substantial detour into north Wales and a brief visit to Tintern Abbey and its surroundings, like Pückler-Muskau before them. Pulszky initially chronicled his tour in his native Hungarian, but switched to German following strong encouragement from Hailbronner, who took an interest in his travel companion’s writing and opinions about the jointly visited locations, but did not understand Hungarian (Pulszky, *Zeit 1 150*). Pulszky’s switch from minoritised Hungarian to German, the socioculturally dominant language of Austria-Hungary, is particularly striking when taking his political outlook on the double monarchy and his later involvement in the Hungarian revolutionary independence movement into account, an involvement that resulted in his exile from 1848 to 1864 (*Zeit 3, 1882*).

Language choices and linguistic power relations also surface in this issue. Exploring the travel poems of journeys through England and Wales by the Saint Lucian poet Derek Walcott (1930–2017) a little over a century after Pulszky, Marija Bergam Pellicani highlights how “the long internal conflict that fuels [Walcott’s] poetry” found expression in what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari identify as a major, albeit deterritorialised language (2). Like Pulszky writing in German, Walcott captured his observations not in his vernacular French Creole, but in English, the culturally dominant, imperial language of the country of his visit. Pondering the politics of language use, Bergam Pellicani points out that “no matter how unorthodox and revolutionary the minor usage, it still might be seen as furthering the linguistic hegemony of one standard over another, thus ultimately reinforcing the literary canon and the relative worldview instrumental in the imperialist project” (3).

Indeed, the complete absence of reflection on his switch from minoritised Hungarian to dominant German in Pulszky’s account is striking. The same holds true for the lack of reflection on the circumstances of a minoritised Welsh language culture in a wider Anglocentric British state with a monarch of German extraction. Even though this juxtaposition between Wales and England mirrored Pulszky’s cultural and political circumstances, his reflection on the cultural and linguistic oddities of the Welsh indicate irritation rather than identification with a minoritised people, thus reinforcing Anglocentricity:

Doch trotz dem, daß die Unabhängigkeit von Wales seit Jahrhunderten schon verloren ging, leben dennoch im Gebirgsvolke manche nationale [sic] Eigenheiten fort, die es von den Engländern scharf getrennt erhalten. Hartnäckig halten die Waliser noch immer an ihrer kymerischen [sic] Sprache, mit deren unaussprechlichen Kehllauten sie die Fremden zur Verzweiflung bringen. (Pulszky, *Tagebuch 109*)

[While Wales’s independence had been lost for centuries, some national particularities remain alive among this mountain people, which keep them thoroughly separated from the English. The Welsh still cling tenaciously to their language and its unpronounceable guttural sounds with which they drive strangers to distraction.]

Like Pückler-Muskau, Pulszky and Hailbronner both recognise the cultural particularity of Wales and Welsh-language culture, the country being the “Vaterland des letzten alten brittischen [sic] Urstammes” (“fatherland of the last old Brythonic Ur-tribe”; [Hailbronner 237](#)). However, both Pulszky and Hailbronner describe Wales as a wild retreat, dedicated to the preservation of an indigenous, retrograde culture and language. Since the country lacks its own institutions, political or otherwise, they frequently conflate their travel destination with England, even though Beaumaris Bay reminds them both of the Gulf of Naples ([Pulszky, Tagebuch 110](#); [Hailbronner 238](#)).

Considering the socio-dynamic power relations between the two travellers, it is possible that the older German military officer not only caused the noticeable language change of his young Hungarian protégé, effectively erasing Pulszky’s minoritised, native language from the travel discourse, but also influenced his interpretations of their surroundings. It is perhaps for this reason that any potential comparisons between the two minoritised nations, Wales and Hungary, are elided from Pulszky’s narrative. This theme of elisions and meaningful gaps in travel observations by an author from a minoritised community and language is also taken up by Marija Bergam Pellicani. In her article, Bergam Pellicani reads Derek Walcott’s poetry through the prism of Deleuze and Guattari’s thoughts on minor literatures. She argues that Walcott’s anglophone poems from his travels in Europe contribute to Caribbean poetry in English as a minor literature similar to Franz Kafka’s or, indeed, Pulszky’s earlier examples of writing in German. However, just as Walcott a century later “successfully steers clear of the Scylla and Charybdis of ideologically motivated rejection and reterritorialisation” ([Bergam Pellicani 3](#)), subtle differences in Pulszky’s assessment of places visited indicate a certain discomfort. At these moments, his account mirrors Walcott’s travel poems as “an example of cross-cultural solidarity and the possibilities for political, linguistic and artistic resistance” ([Bergam Pellicani 6](#)).

Such a subtle, qualitative difference between Hailbronner’s and Pulszky’s perceptions occurred at Penrhyn Castle. Hailbronner proclaimed the antiquity of the original, ruined building as dating from the sixth century ([238](#)), not knowing that it originated as a small mansion in the fourteenth century, whose historical structure was almost entirely swallowed up by a major Gothic refurbishment in 1782 ([Haslam et al. 398](#)). Visiting the building towards the end of Hopper’s renovation, he finds that it “breathes the spirit of the most ancient knighthood in its exterior and interior appearance” (“das in seiner äußern und inner Erscheinung vollkommen den Geist desdes ältesten Ritterthums athmet”; [Hailbronner 238–9](#)). In contrast, Pulszky, while detailing interior and exterior particularities of the newly renovated and vastly improved country estate, recognises the faux-Norman pageantry for what it is:

Es ist ein Beweis [...] des Geschmacks des Besitzers Herrn Pentland, der, ein Repräsentant des titellosen Kaufmannsreichthums [...] den Fehdehandschuh hinwarf vor die Geburtsaristokratie des adelstolzen Englands [...] Der Marquis von Westminster aber, der reichste Lord Englands hob den Handschuh auf und erbaute bei Chester Eatonhall. ([Pulszky, Tagebuch 114–15](#))

[It is proof of [...] the owner Mr Pentland’s [sic] taste who, as a representative of untitled merchant wealth, has thrown down the gauntlet before the feet of the born nobility of proud England [...] It was the Marquis of Westminster, the wealthiest lord in England, who picked up this gauntlet and built Eaton Hall, near Chester.]

In short, Penrhyn Castle is not so much an ancient Welsh estate, but a modern example of the gross display of wealth for its own sake. The ostentation in the show of completeness of design, which also extends to bespoke furniture, is as much an attempt to legitimise Lord Penrhyn’s membership among the ruling classes as it is “an important warning shot for aristocracy” (“ein bedeutsames Warnungszeichen für die Aristokratie”; [Pulszky, Tagebuch 115](#)). Despite Hailbronner’s and Pulszky’s subtle if important difference in interpreting Penrhyn Castle’s architectural significance and the danger it represents for English nobility, the Welsh setting of the estate remains a geographical accident owing to Wales’s lack of political relevance of any sort.

A more ambivalent description of gentrified estate life in Wales in the nineteenth century is offered by Malwida von Meysenbug (1816–1903) in her autobiography *Memoiren einer Idealistin* (1869–76). This work was first translated into English by her great-niece Elsa von Meysenbug Lyons (1887–1963), and published in 1936 under the more sensationalist title *Memoirs of Malwida von Meysenbug: Rebel in Bombazine* for the North American market. At the time of her visits to Glyn



Garth on Anglesey, Meysenbug was living in political exile in London, having had to leave Germany owing to her socialist activities. She was a champion of women's education and the Kindergarten movement, which earned her an invitation from the Manchester-based philanthropist Julia Schwabe (1818–96) to her Welsh country home Glyn Garth in 1852 (*Meysenbug, Memoiren II* 32–3).

As a political exile, Meysenbug found herself in a precarious position, one shared by the writers described in the fourth contribution to this special issue by Eimear Kennedy, who investigates the “complex and unstable positioning of Irish-language travel writers as they travel in non-Western (and largely economically underprivileged) locations” across South America, northern Africa, or Asia from the Middle to the Far East (2). While Meysenbug did not write her memoirs in a minoritised language, as did the authors in Kennedy's essay, she arguably held a similarly unstable position as a single woman in exile in the middle of the nineteenth century. Despite her financially constrained situation, Meysenbug nevertheless continued to live a life of social privilege in comparison with other, less well-connected exiles and immigrants, to say nothing of the frequently indigent Victorian working class. She remained an active member of the network of the European social, cultural and political elite, gaining access to the households of affluent hosts and supporters. During her London exile, for example, she moved in with the Russian writer Alexander Herzen (1812–70) to educate his daughters. Herzen introduced her to Guiseppe Mazzini (1805–72) (*Meysenbug, Memoiren II* 156). Moving among a network of exiled political radicals, she also struck up an acquaintance with the “leading ladies of emigration”, Johanna Kinkel (1810–58) and Therese Pulszky (née Walter; 1819–66), the wife of Ferencz (*Meysenbug, Memoiren II* 6, 138). Meysenbug's memoirs show her oscillating between financial dependence on various clients, such as Herzen, who would employ her as a governess and educator of their children or consult her on ideas around reform pedagogy.

This in-between position becomes particularly noticeable in her Welsh excursion. As Kennedy shows, the at-once privileged and marginalised traveller may feel “a certain affinity with the travellers they encounter, [but] they are often at a considerable economic advantage” (3). In Meysenbug's case, the travellers are a less clear-cut category, as her hosts in Wales, the Schwabes, are in equal measure co-travellers as well as residents. Meysenbug certainly does not share the same level of economic advantage as her hosts, while showing some degree of affinity for their philanthropic and pedagogical outlook. However, in comparison to her Welsh surroundings with a mostly rural population drawn from predominantly Welsh-speaking labouring orders, her economic advantage is palpable, as she encounters them entirely through leisurely means of travel either by train or in her hosts' carriages.

Situated on the Menai, the Glyn Garth mansion originated as a cottage before it was bought in the early 1840s by Salis Schwabe (1800–53), a German immigrant and factory owner in Manchester, and his wife, Julia, a noted school founder and philanthropist. The Schwabes were Jewish converts to Unitarianism and were well connected among noted writers, social reformers, composers, politicians and educationalists of their day (*Smith* 191). Although mostly resident in Manchester, where Salis operated his cotton printing company, the Schwabes frequently retreated to their Welsh home, where they entertained internationally renowned guests. Meysenbug provides sharp character sketches of fellow guests at Glyn Garth, such as the writer Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–65), the prison reformer Thomas Wright (1789–1875) and the former Governor-General of India, William Amherst (1773–1857) (*Memoiren II* 41–50; *Memoiren III* 129). In addition to forging strong connections with British reformers and artists, the Schwabes also retained links with their country of origin. They kept their doors open to continental European visitors, especially to political refugees from the German countries, as is also evident from Meysenbug's memoirs.

Due to her financial situation and her eagerness to exchange ideas about women's education, Meysenbug was eager to meet Julia Schwabe in person. She spent almost her entire visit on the thoroughly Anglicised estate where, despite its Welsh name, Glyn Garth, everything was organised according to polite English tastes. Critically observing the organisation of the household, Meysenbug explains:

I was now for the first time in the midst of an English household, although my hosts were of German extraction. No one submits so easily to the customs of a foreign country, accepts foreign customs and a foreign language with such ease, and identifies himself so completely with natives as a German. Almost all German

families in England, especially the richer ones, live like the English, and to such an extent that their children have forgotten their mother tongue and with pride call themselves English.

Mrs. Schwabe's household was conducted according to English custom. (*Memoirs* 132)

Meysenbug's contention with her hosts' "going native" resonates with Kennedy's observation of a similar ethical dilemma in Irish-language travellers in the global south as they oscillate between criticism of Western culture and their own arrogance towards the Westernisation of cultures they deem less materialistically inclined (5). Despite the location, the "natives" to whom Meysenbug refers in her description of Glyn Garth are not Welsh, but English. In the same way, the "foreign customs" that the Schwabes have adopted are English customs, which have enabled them to become members of the social, economic and political elites of their adopted country, securing them social as well as economic advances and privileges. After all, what is more English than a Welsh holiday home. By contrast, Meysenbug's presence in Britain was born of necessity, and she, therefore, sees no intrinsic value in adapting to a new host culture, as she has no intention of settling permanently. It is perhaps for this reason that she resents her hosts' eagerness to please by becoming Anglicised.

As for encounters with Welsh culture, Meysenbug very rarely visited locations beyond the estate. Meysenbug only met her local Welsh neighbours during short visits to the nearby villages and towns, or on day-long trips across Anglesey or further into Snowdonia. On these occasions, her brief descriptions mention the increasingly picturesque beauty of the landscape, but she never frames the visited locations in terms of direct contact with cultural Welshness. As a result, Meysenbug's account of her summer in Wales contains a meaningful cultural gap, as she effectively elides the local population, culture and language in the same manner as the Bant sisters five decades before. Instead, she praises civil engineering projects and sites of industrial production such as the great bridges across the Menai Strait and Penrhyn quarry for their elegance or size (*Meysenbug, Memoiren II* 34, 50).

These occasional glimpses of a Wales beyond Glyn Garth are overshadowed by her many and detailed critical descriptions of the artifices of gentrified estate life, thus showing her greater affinity with this polite culture, rather than that of Welsh country folk. In Kennedy's terms, the estate functions like a "a sort of sanitized bubble in which the wealthy [...] population distances itself from the reality of inequality" (7). At Glyn Garth, clear hierarchies between masters and servants ensure the smooth running of a contented household where everyone knows their place. There is one levelling exercise, however, in the shape of the daily Unitarian morning service. Although Meysenbug questions the lasting effects of this obligatory devotional morning assembly for the household staff, she concedes that

In England aber, dem Lande der hochmütigen Rangesunterschiede par excellence, hatte diese Sitte etwas doppelt Patriarchalisches und Rührendes, weil da wenigstens für eine Stunde jene [Rangesu]nterschiede in einem gemeinsamen Gefühle schwanden. Ich hielt es jedoch für meine Pflicht, Madame S... zu sagen, dass ich nicht mehr bei diesen Morgenandachten erscheinen würde, da die religiösen Formen keine Bedeutung mehr für mich hätten. (*Meysenbug, Memoiren II* 39–40)

[But in England, the country of snobbish differences of rank bar none, this custom was particularly patriarchal and touching because those differences [of rank] vanished at least for an hour in a shared emotion. However, I felt it my duty to tell Madame S... that I was no longer going to appear at these morning gatherings since religious forms no longer held any importance for me.]

This scene is not only emblematic of her overall stay with the Schwabes and her attitude towards her surroundings, but solidifies her self-image as the person who stands apart from society of her own volition. Meysenbug does not reject English or (invisible) Welsh culture, but rather the fripperies of entitlement or an unfounded sense of superiority among the gentry and nobility. She is clearly torn between her genuine affection for the Schwabes, who show her nothing but kindness, and their, at least for Meysenbug, relentless pursuit of belonging to the polite society of their adopted country.

In addition to detailing her hosts' Anglicised manners, Meysenbug also paid close attention to the many visitors to Glyn Garth that summer. Meysenbug quickly realised that Salis Schwabe's submissive behaviour towards his guests was directly proportionate to their nobility, labelling it "die kleine Eitelkeit des parvenu" ("the little vanities of the parvenu"; *Memoiren II* 40). For a brief time, Glyn Garth acted as a small but cosmopolitan hub for social reformers, artists and academics. However, none of these influentials were local or drawn from a Welsh background, thus entrenching the Englishness of the estate and separating it from its Welsh surroundings. This is not to say that the visitors had no interest in their neighbourhood. Meysenbug recounts her talks with Thomas Wright and their visit to a small local prison, possibly Beaumaris gaol (*Memoiren II* 43–6). In light of Wright's continued support for the death sentence and his insistence that criminals could reform if only they had enough will-power and subjected themselves to the grace of God, Meysenbug questions his philanthropic enterprises for their lack of support for thorough social reforms and genuine poor relief as a means of crime prevention (*Memoiren II* 46). Meysenbug's account of her stay at Glyn Garth is characterised not only by her persistent sense of foreignness in her country of refuge, but also by her ambivalence towards the gentrified and self-important lifestyle on landed estates. For this reason, Meysenbug criticises her hosts' demonstrations of wealth when there is so much poverty across vast sections of the population, and thoroughly rejects the social stratification of English society.

For the majority of German travellers in Wales during the nineteenth century, the country represented at best a blank canvas on to which they could project their own desires, imaginations or identities, and at worst an unruly and unknowable corner of England, most commonly perceived through an intermediary English lens. German (and German-speaking) encounters with landed estates of differing sizes, wealth or owners complicate this relation between traveller, travellee and travelled location, especially in terms of the persistent minoritisation of Welsh(-language) culture. Even in those cases where privileged travellers accessed pockets of social, economic or political privilege in Wales, there remains an imbalance of power which reveals itself in their descriptions of travel through the means of a major European language. Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau was searching for a wife, and so his perceptions of "eligibility" were largely influenced by displays of wealth and, to a degree, comely womanliness. He showed little interest in expressions of and encounters with Welshness, certainly not that of the common orders, but rather explored the country out of economic and social self-preservation, effectively erasing the Welsh and their culture from his travel account. Even while being forced to live in exile, the political refugee Malwida von Meysenbug travelled to Wales from a position of relative privilege. On the one hand, she questioned the trappings of social hierarchies of polite English society as witnessed during her time at Glyn Garth. On the other, the account of her journey to Wales holds next to no descriptions of local Welsh people, cultural particularities or her surroundings. Meysenbug had so little to say about Welsh Wales because she hardly encountered it. As a result, her account contributes to the minoritisation of Wales, as the lives of the majority of the population are effectively erased. This power imbalance has several implications not only for locating historical travellers in their own time, but especially so for subsequent academic analysis and critical discourse around them.

In the closing contribution to this special issue, David Miranda-Barreiro not only investigates the Spanish journalist Julio Camba's work on his journeys through the linguistic and cultural periphery of interwar Spain, but more importantly highlights the perpetuation of Camba's own deeply held prejudices in post-Franco critical engagement with his writing. In an astute close reading of Camba's travel essays together with a selection of Spanish literary criticism of his works since the 1980s, Miranda-Barreiro shows "the instances in which [Camba's] celebrated wit creates racist, misogynist and generally inappropriate stereotypes [which] have usually been played down or even justified as playful and ironic", even within academic discourse (3). This illustrates how, at its best, travel writing can produce a deeper understanding of the travelled surroundings and, more importantly, of the traveller. At its worst, it can perpetuate misconceptions and prejudices, to say nothing of outright damage due to power imbalances between (comparatively) privileged travellers and disadvantaged travelles. It is therefore the duty of those who critically engage with travel writing to be aware of one's own unconscious biases not only towards the subjects in a travel account, but also towards their authors. Miranda-Barreiro shows in the example of post-Franco Camba scholarship the shortcomings and failures of critical engagement with his writing owing to a combination of "ton[ing] down his mockery of other cultures (including substate nations within Spain)" and only insufficiently examining

“the underlying ideology of his texts, which shows a centralist form of Spanish nationalism” (18). These shortcomings in Camba scholarship are not due to insufficient research, but instead reflect a “pervasive [logic] in Spanish society and politics especially since the end of the empire, and a pivotal idea in the conception of Spain promoted by Spanish politicians, intellectuals and polymaths [...] since the beginning of the twentieth century” (18). This present collection of thoughtful, insightful and honest reflections on the intersection between travel and minoritised languages and cultures not only reveals a sense of scholarly allyship, but also offers strategies for the amplification and restoration of otherwise repressed voices from diverse backgrounds.

To bring this introduction to the collected essays in this special issue of *Modern Languages Open* to a close, I would like to leave the final words to the German journalist, poet and travel writer Julius Rodenberg (1831–1914), from his account *Ein Herbst in Wales (An Autumn in Wales)*, which perhaps best encapsulates how personal backgrounds shape mutual perceptions of surroundings and encounters between strangers:

Ich aber bereitete [der Haushälterin von Penrhyn Castle] vielen Ärger. Hier blieb ich vor einem Caneletti und Pierro del Vayn, dort – in der Schloßcapelle – vor einem Glasfenster stehen; überall hatte ich mir etwas in's Notizbuch zu schreiben, Nichts war vor mir sicher. Das verdroß sie sehr. Ich gieng immer meine eignen Wege und verirrte mich sogar einmal [...] Kurz und gut – vom Ärger gieng [sic] [sie] zum Verdacht über; und da ich so gar nichts an mir hatte, was Gentleman-like war, vielmehr einen Knotenstock führte und den Hemdkragen breit über dem lose flatternden Halstuch trug, so hielt sie mich für einen heimlichen Dieb. (Rodenberg 248–9)

[I caused [the housekeeper of Penrhyn Castle] much aggravation. First I dawdled in front of a Canaletti and a Pierro del Vayn, then – and in the castle chapel – in front of a stained glass window; everywhere I had to stop and scribble something into my notebook; nothing was safe from me. This made her quite cross. I always ventured on my own paths and even got lost at one point [...] To make a long story short – [she] progressed from annoyance to suspicion. And since nothing about me was gentleman-like, with my knobbly cane and my broad shirt collar folded over a floppy bandana, she took me for a cunning thief, for a burglar in disguise.]

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