

Explaining the Unexplainable
The French Revolution, Welsh Revival and Romanticism's Impact on
Representations of Brittany
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By

Zane Newitt
Student No. 1604554
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Introduction

18th Century Brittany - 3 Forces, 1 Question

Modern travelers, enthusiasts and tourists are entranced by what they perceive as Celtic culture, spirituality, and history. Transcending a mere fad, the clichés and stereotypes connected to the Welsh, Scottish, Irish, Cornish, Manx, Galicians and Bretons have persisted for hundreds of years. Among these are; The Celts deep connection with their native lands, to which they are uniquely connected, and to the forces of nature itself, a radical resilience, an ancient oral and written literary and musical heritage, conjuring thoughts of knights and damsels, dragons and wizards, stone circles, an obsessive fascination with meter and the number three, a special affinity to family, death and the afterlife, woad painted warriors, noble savages, goddess worship, the messianic hope of heroes to return to thwart their oppressors, and a very peculiar blend of primal Christianity and what is now labeled neopaganism.

Students and Scholars of Celtic Studies, however, raise concern that what is celebrated and believed to be ancient, may in reality be a construct dating back less than only two hundred and forty years. The late 18th century saw a confluence of three movements greatly impact the Celtic nations in the form of the French Revolution, Romanticism and the initial seeds of a Welsh revival that gave way to the Celtic Revival and popular notions of the present day.

The peninsular country of Brittany, because of its geography in relationship to other provinces in France, and its deep cultural and historical ties to Wales and Cornwall, was uniquely impacted by the blow of these forces, resulting in a literary, linguistic, and cultural response that connects to, and fuels the clichés, stereotypes and present day understanding of the Celts in general and the Bretons in particular.

Through the representations of Brittany by the Breton philologist Théodore Claude Henri, vicomte Hersart de la Villemarqué, and of equal importance the counter positions suggested by his critics, and through the end-of-life reflections by French scholar and prolific writer Joseph Ernest Renan, this work examines the question:

'Is the 'Brittany' encountered in literature invented? Does it tell more about Romanticism, than about the real place?

Unity

Elevation of the Glorious Past or Extinction by Way of Assimilation?

In the late 18th century, France was Europe's epicenter of what British Historian Eric Hobsbawm coined *'The Age of Revolution'*.¹ The long-standing forms of Government and

¹ Wikipedia Contributor, *'Age of Revolution'*, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 4 November 2023, 05:17 UTC, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Revolution> [accessed November 24th, 2023]

controls over the means of production found in Monarchy, Theocracy and Feudalism were to be thwarted in favor political theories springing from the Protestant Reformation, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment.

German to this essay is the French Revolutionaries' concept of *unity*, and its impact, or pressures upon Brittany. Words wield power, and taking authority over the meaning of words, as revolutionaries do, can alter the past, present and future. Phrases and representations can carry surface level mundane, neutral, or even positive motivational connotations. But beneath, the same word can hold sinister or even occultic double meanings.

'Unity' for example, conjures the noble notion of a coming together, a band of brothers going to combat for a glorious cause.' However, a totalitarian, tyrannical concept of unity also arises, its true meaning being an intent to ensure that the new ruling order disallows dissent, debate, or opposition; often using military might to enforce assimilation. In this regard unity is an involuntary conformity, antithetical to the concept of the liberty it shares space within the French motto. German to this essay is the French Revolutionaries' concept of *unity*, and its impact on Brittany, primarily from a literary perspective.

Towards the Bretons, this polarity of unity was fast at work. A famous quote regarding is given by modern composer John Corigliano (1938-present), 'The French Revolution is ultimate modernist statement. Destroy everything. Don't build on the past. There is no past.'² From this lens, Brittany, part and parcel of France's past, might be regarded as primitive or 'from the backwoods', a people needing to modernize or vanish under the new consolidated, centralized unity of the New France. Therefore, the French Revolution represented an existential threat to Brittany's language, literature, and history.

More at Work Than Revolutions Romanticism

While revolutionary flames set the Western World ablaze, the late 18th century experienced another movement; this one of quill and ink rather than musket and saber. A genre was born where art and literature, reacting to the blandness of the Industrial Revolution, and the soullessness of Rationalism, accentuated inspiration, matters spiritual, the experiential and the primacy of the individual. 19th century French Poet Charles Baudelaire defines this movement as Romanticism, calling it in his poem *Salon de 1846* 'precisely situated in neither choice of subject nor exact truth, but in way of feeling.'³

In Britain, Romanticism ignited a feeling of appeal to the commoner, a turning from the dank, grey dampness of factory to more rustic, spiritual elements of nature. Ed Vermue, who has thirty years of experience collecting, preserving, and archiving art and literature from the

² John Corigliano Quotes. BrainyQuote.com, BrainyMedia Inc, (2023) <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/john_corigliano_390526> [accessed November 24, 2023]

³ Charles Baudelaire, and Michel Levy, 'Salon 1846' in *Complete Works of Charles Baudelaire*, Volume II, (1868), p. 85 <https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Curiosit%C3%A9s_esth%C3%A9tiques/Salon_de_1846#II._E2.80.94_Qu.E2.80.99est-ce_que_le_romantisme.3F> [accessed November 23, 2023]

period on behalf of Oberlin College, gives this summary in a short article on the web portal for accessing the college's collection:

Romanticism ushered in its own revolution for literature against a backdrop of the "Age of Revolution." It coincided with the rise of political Liberalism, social reforms, philosophical idealism, as well as a rising attraction to spirituality, myth, and mystery. Romantic poetry turned away from an England which is increasingly urban and industrial, and instead retreated toward rustic nature in a search for beauty and meaning.⁴

Whereas the Protestant Reformation encouraged the individual to read and be persuaded in their own minds, or to think, Romanticism encouraged the individual to feel. In Wales, this, along with an increased sense of forced 'unity' into the recently declared United Kingdom (1707) and the ascent of the English Empire, resulted in a double portion of efforts in language preservation, manuscript rediscovery, and romantic writing. But, prior to the 1830s, not so with Wales's companions on the Continent.

That would change when a zealous young man of less than thirty years published his great work, a collection of songs, stories and epic poetry from the oral tradition ascribed to the ancient Bards of Brittany. *Barzaz Breiz* (the Ballads of Brittany) was published in 1839 by Théodore Claude Henri, vicomte Hersart de la Villemarqué. He fervently and deeply loved both Wales and Brittany (his own nation), producing the work in what Dr. Mary-Ann Constantine, the leader of the Iolo Morganwg Project at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Celtic Studies and author of several works of scholarship, including *Breton Ballads* (1996), describes as 'born of a vacuum, an absence.'⁵ During his studies in Paris, the Breton noted the void in a Breton literary tradition, and driven by Romanticism and patriotism, Villemarqué turned to Wales to discover, or fashion, Brittany's literary tradition.

"Je Suisse en Bardel!" : The Welsh Factor and Villemarqué's Representations of Brittany

Professor Constantine translated and analyzed letters written by Villemarqué, from Wales and England, during his extended touring visit there between 1838-1839. During that time, a long four-month stint that included time with Lady Charlotte Guest and Lady Llanover, both significant forces in the Welsh literary revival movement of the time, he could feel the heavy contrast between the treatment of his native Breton tongue, considered, as Constantine states 'widely regarded as barbaric in France,'⁶ with the popular embrace of Welsh material in Cymru. "If you could only see" wrote La Villemarqué to his father, "what efforts are made here

⁴ Ed Vermue, 'British Romanticism' in *Oberlin College Libraries* (2003) <<https://libraries.oberlin.edu/collections/special-collections/british-romanticism/historical-context>> [accessed November 22, 2003]

⁵ Mary Ann Constantine, *The Truth Against The World Iolo Morganwg And The Romantic Tradition in Wales*, (Cardiff : University of Wales Press, 2007) p. 165

⁶ Mary-Ann Constantine, "'Impertinent Structures': A Breton's Adventures In Neo-Gothic Wales", *Studies in Travel Writing*, 18:2, (2014) p. 135, <DOI: 10.1080/13645145.2014.896076>

by the common people and the aristocracy to preserve the ancient language and traditions! We are a long way from that in Brittany".⁷

So strong was the Welsh inspiration upon La Villemarqué that he began to over-emphasize the similarities between Wales and Brittany, and, when honored to attend and participate in the Eisteddfod in Abergaveny in 1838, he gleefully produced a song for the occasion, *Kan Aouen Eistevod*. It was produced in a peculiar language, said to be a hybrid of both Welsh and Breton, claiming that speakers of the former and the latter could each understand one another with minimal difficulty. The song was published and popular, becoming instantly part of the Celtic mythos between Wales and Brittany. However, critics, especially those writing much later such as travel writer O.M Edwards, actively opposed and exposed the wishful thinking and weightiness of the connection. Through the medium of his travel novel *Troy n Lldaw* he takes occasion to test the theory of what he calls *the language myth*.⁸

Whereas Edwards overly devalues the Welsh connection, critics from Brittany greatly support La Villemarqué's work:

Breton author Yann Queffelec in an interview published in 2015: We ought to kiss the feet of La Villemarqué, who combed the countryside in the nineteenth century to collect large numbers of extremely ancient popular songs, published in his *Barzaz Breiz*. He passed on to us a whole fabulous literature of poetry, histories, tales. In it [the *Barzaz Breiz*] we find historical accounts, reveries, lessons on life and death, a collection of extremely rich materials. Without him, an entire swath of our history and our literature would probably have disappeared.⁹

If actively disproving him intentionally dialogues in a travel piece are one extreme, and kissing his feet the other, Professor Mary-Anne Constantine provides the reasonable, scholarly, and middle ground, recognizing the complexity of the matter, she writes (of *Barzaz Breiz*):

It is a collection of folk songs, gathered, he claimed, from the lips of the Breton paysans, which, arranged chronologically, document the history of Brittany from the time of the druids through the glorious pageant of the middle ages to the present, taking in most of the main events and all the big names. As his notebooks show, La Villemarqué was indeed a fine collector of songs, but the published texts are rather different from the originals.¹⁰

⁷ Mary-Anne Constantine, "Impertinent Structures": A Breton's Adventures In Neo-Gothic Wales', *Studies in Travel Writing*, 18:2, (2014) p. 137, <DOI: 10.1080/13645145.2014.896076>

⁸ Heather Williams, 'Travelling Ideas Between Wales and Brittany', *VTU Review : Studies In Humanities And Social Sciences*, Volume 2, Issue 1 (2018)

⁹ Ellen Badone, 'Folk Literature and the Invention of Tradition: The Case of the *Barzaz Breiz*' *Journal of American Folklore*, Volume 130, Number 516, Spring 2017, p 205. <<https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/article/657566/pdf>> [accessed November 21, 2023]

¹⁰ Mary-Anne Constantine, "Impertinent Structures": A Breton's Adventures In Neo-Gothic Wales', *Studies in Travel Writing*, 18:2, (2014) p. 141, <DOI: 10.1080/13645145.2014.896076>

La Villemarqué's representations of Brittany feature and unbroken mystical and druidic tradition that both match and merge with that of Wales. His Brittany is that of a spiritual people full of ancient wisdom. Although a Viscount, he greatly regards the purity and innocence of peasants or commoners, elevating and honoring them in his writings. La Villemarqué's Brittany is deeply *Arthurian* with unapologetic claims to Merlin, the Lady of the Lake, and Taliesin. So enamored is he with the Arthuriad that, writing his sister, he promises to name his firstborn Arthur and baptize him with water from the Chalice Well in Glastonbury.¹¹ Professor Constantine includes a translation of a complete poem taken from *Barzaz Breiz*. If a forgery, it is a window into La Villemarqué's representation of Brittany, if fully or partially authentic then equally a window into his sentiments:

The Druid

Fair one, bright son of the Druid, speak Fair one, what will you have?
What shall I sing you?

Twelve months and twelve signs, the last but one is the Archer, shooting his
barbed arrow. The twelve signs battle: the blessed Cow, the Black Cow with the
white Star

Is coming from the Forest of Plunder. The barbed arrow in her breast, her blood
flowing everywhere, lowing, her head raised up. The horn sounds: fire and
thunder! Rain and wind, thunder, and fire! Nothing remains, not a single Series..

Eleven armed priests, coming from Vannes: their swords are broken, their robes
are bloodied, and their crutches are of hazel. Of three hundred only eleven
remain.

Ten ships seen coming from Nantes: Woe unto you! woe unto you, men of
Vannes!

Nine little white

hands on the table in the courtyard near

the tower of Lozarmeur, and nine mothers groaning. Nine korrigan dancing with
flowers in their hair and woollen cloaks, around the spring in the light of the
moon. The sow and her nine piglets by the door to her sty, grunting and
snuffling, snuffling and grunting. Little ones! Run to the apple tree, the old boar
will teach you a lesson.

Eight winds whistling; eight fires with the Great Fire, in May, on the mountain of
War. Eight heifers white as foam grazing on the Deep Island; eight white heifers
of Our Lady.

¹¹ Mary Ann Constantine, *The Truth Against The World Iolo Morganwg And The Romantic Tradition in Wales*, (Cardiff : University of Wales Press, 2007) p. 173

Seven suns and seven moons: the chicken has seven planets; there are seven elements in the flour of the air (atoms).

Six little children made of wax brought alive by the power of the moon: if you don't know it, I do.

Five zones of the earth; five parts of eternity; five rocks upon our sister.

Four stones for whetting, Merlin's whetstones, sharpening the swords of the brave.

Three parts in this world, three beginnings and three ends, for men and oak alike. Three kingdoms of Merlin, with golden fruit and bright flowers, little children laughing.

Two oxen harnessed to ashell: they heave, they strain. See, what a wonder!

No series but Necessity: Death, father of suffering. Nothing before, nothing after.¹²

Controversial, and thoroughly compared in structure and sometimes guilty of direct 'import' from Welsh literature by Professor Constantine, La Villemarqué nevertheless describes the work as the very words passed down amongst the peasants from father to son, a sacred and old song.¹³

Swept away with the magic of Wales, a patriot of Brittany wanting to ensure France's 'unity' didn't mean an end to his own people's literary and linguistic legacy and, in some ways a product of the era, it is a fair assertion to answer, with some reservation that:

'Yes, if La Villemarqué's is considered a pioneer of the Brittany we know today, it was indeed invented in the Romance period of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.'

The Romanticism is Real – The Late in Life Representations of Brittany of Ernan Renan

France would experience more revolutions. The throne would be lost, then restored yet again. By 1848 a period of civil unrest brought about foundation of the Second French Republic; a short-lived government that lasted four years and, though fueled by many undercurrents and factions, was essentially a movement of liberal ideologies determined to overthrow Europe's monarchies. Counterrevolutions occurred, stamping out the shorted lived republic after just four years. This was the formative backdrop for another Breton born scholar, Ernest Renan,

¹² Mary Ann Constantine, *The Truth Against The World Iolo Morganwg And The Romantic Tradition in Wales*, (Cardiff : University of Wales Press, 2007) pp. 173-179

¹³ Ibid, pp. 178-179

who is born in 1828 in Treguiar, Brittany but whom, after losing his father at just five years of age, spent the sum of his youth and young adulthood in Paris.¹⁴

Renan's interests were theological and philological. And in some seasons of his life, political and philosophical. Sent by his mother to become a priest, Renan's studies caused him to doubt the veracity of divine revelation as presented in the Hebrew Bible. Brilliant and well-traveled, he led an *Indiana Jones* styled life, traveling the world to study artefacts, collect manuscripts and even quest for Phoenician relics on direct commission from Napoleon III.¹⁵ At some chapters in his life he championed individual liberty and self-determinism, at others wrote extensively from a worldview that would today be described as Identity Politics where race determined identity and destiny. During the time of the Second French Republic, he greatly advocated freedom, later in life he favored authoritarianism. A peculiar, complex scholar, Renan's writings were prolific, controversial, and influential. His *Life of Jesus* (1863) denied the divinity of Jesus Christ and sought to separate His ministry, wholly, from Judaism. Critically loathed and admired, Renan's work was impactful. Oscar Wilde wrote 'The nineteenth century is a turning point in history simply on account of the work of two men, Darwin and Renan, the one the critic of the Book of Nature, the other the critic of the books of God.'¹⁶ Although Breton borne, Renan was no particular friend of the literary or political causes of his homeland. Although he did write a prose styled history of the Celtic people in his thirties (he would not write about Brittany again until the end of his life, giving the subject six chapters in his memoirs), the world traveler also wrote a history of Israel, wrote extensively about Greece, Rome, the Middle and the Near East besides. When visiting the question '*Is the 'Brittany' encountered in literature invented? Does it tell more about Romanticism, than about the real place?*' Renan is an intriguing counter-balance to La Villemarqué, bringing a cosmopolitan and, due to the process of time and field of interest, objectivity to the subject.

The Count was a passionate advocate of Brittany, the language, the linguistics, and the preservation of what he truly believed to be a mystical, bardic tradition that harkened back to the dawn of time. The Matter of Little Britain was his life's work. By sharp contrast, Renan was more aligned with Parisian politics, and believed that Brittany, though admired and beloved, was a vestige of the past, soon to fade away. His interests in Celtic matters were fleeting, and of low priority.

His representations of Brittany are certainly written in the Romance style, and feature several clichés and motifs associated with the Bretons. First amongst these are the Breton's close association and fascinations with death and the afterlife. Although the flare and style of writing is romanticized, Renan gives practical reason for this. As the Celtic races collectively have survived wave after wave of attack from invaders and oppressors, it is natural that the people, especially the commoner ('the peasant'), ever having to survive annihilation from a Roman, a Saxon, a Viking et al would develop a closeness with death. In *Recollections of My Youth* (1897), he writes:

¹⁴Ricorso.Net, *Ernest Renan*, (2004) <http://www.ricorso.net/rx/az-data/authors/r/Renan_E/life.htm> [accessed November 22, 2023]

¹⁵ Ricorso.Net, *Ernest Renan*, (2004) <http://www.ricorso.net/rx/az-data/authors/r/Renan_E/life.htm> [accessed November 22, 2023]

¹⁶ John Wilson Foster, 'Against Nature? Science and Oscar Wilde', in *Between Shadows: Modern Irish Writing and Culture*, (Dublin: IAP 2009) p.38.

There is a widely spread belief in that country, that blood speaks, and that two relatives, unknown one to the other, in any part of the world wheresoever it may be, recognize each other by the secret and mysterious emotion which they feel in each other's presence. Respect for the dead rests on the same principle. Nowhere has reverence for the dead been greater than among the Breton peoples: nowhere have so many memories and prayers clustered about the tomb.¹⁷

Ever under attack and driven to their current places of long-standing habitation (for the Britons, to the western part of the Isles, and to the Continent where they became the Bretons), following, and not unrelated to the death motif, is that of the Messianic theme, or the Breton's hope for revenge. There is a ring of historical reality to this representation as, although in fighting amongst tribes and internal strife abounds, Renan is correct when writing (of the Celts in general):

Destitute of the means of expansion, alien to all idea of aggression and conquest, little desirous of making its thought prevail outside itself, it has only known how to retire so far as space has permitted, and then, at bay in its last place of retreat, to make an invincible resistance to its enemies.

A resilient people who never attacked another race, their hope lies the future return of a hero to avenge and usher in justice. In his memoirs, Renan labels it as such, 'Thence *Celtic Messianism*, that belief in a future avenger who shall restore Cambria, and deliver her out of the hands of her oppressors, like the mysterious Leminok promised by Merlin, the Lez-Breiz of the Armoricans, the Arthur of the Welsh.'¹⁸ As with La Villemarque, the representations of Brittany are deeply Arthurian with Renan, and are written of as 'fact', giving the impression that any reader of Breton or Welsh literature is fully aware of the veracity of Arthur, Merlin et al.

But alongside hope, Renan puts forth the notions of futile fatalism. Admiring the Bretons in one hand, but representing their cause as lost in the other, Renan believes that *Progress*, not Saxons or Romans, will be the final victor over the Celts. 'Moreover, it does not appear that the peoples which form it are by themselves susceptible of progress. To them life appears as a fixed condition, which man has no power to alter.'¹⁹ Pronouncing them a thing to be marveled and respected, but vanishing, he pronounces, 'Alas! it too is doomed to disappear, this emerald set in the Western seas. Arthur will return no more from his isle of færy.'²⁰

A final example of Renan's representations of Brittany as *feminine*. At first analysis this appears to be complimentary as he notes that the Bretons have never attacked another race, are

¹⁷ Ernest Renan, *Recollections Of My Youth*, (The Project Gutenberg Ebook (2004), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/12748/12748-h/12748-h.htm#link2H_PREF> [accessed November 23, 2023]

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ernest Renan and W.G Hutchinson, 'The Poetry Of The Celtic Races,' in *Harvard Classics, Volume 32, of 51, Literary And Philosophical Essays, French, German and Italian*, (New York, USA : P.F. Collier & Son Company, 1909), <<https://www.bartleby.com/lit-hub/hc/literary-and-philosophical-essays/the-poetry-of-the-celtic-races>> [accessed November 23, 2023]

²⁰ Ernest Renan, *Recollections Of My Youth*, (The Project Gutenberg Ebook (2004), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/12748/12748-h/12748-h.htm#link2H_PREF> [accessed November 23, 2023]

gentle, concerned only with their family and their community and moreover carry a mystical, nurturing spirit about them. In his *Poetry of the Celtic Races* (1854) he writes, 'If it be permitted us to assign sex to nations as to individuals, we should have to say without hesitance that the Celtic race, especially with regard to its Cymric or Breton branch, is an essentially feminine race.'²¹ Later his allusions shift to connotations that are less complimentary of woman than apparent during his surface level doting; 'Imaginative power is nearly always proportionate to concentration of feeling, and lack of the external development of life.'²² He concludes the line of thought with :

In the fine *Mabinogi* of the *Dream of Maxem Wledig*, the Emperor Maximus beholds in a dream a young maiden so beautiful, that on waking he declares he cannot live without her. For several years his envoys scour the world in search of her; at last, she is discovered in Brittany. So is it with the Celtic race; it has worn itself out in taking dreams for realities, and in pursuing its splendid visions.'²³

The equivalence of Brittany to femininity might be intended as a glorious celebration of a past culture fading into the unit of progress. But Renan has sharp critics, such as Celtic Scholars Patrick Sims-Williams and Dr. Simon Rodway of Aberystwyth University. These contemporary Academics, when trying to properly understand the veracity and origins of Celtic Literature, call some of Renan's descriptions 'pseudo-scientific racism' and would suggest that he is patronizing the Bretons and using *feminine* to equate to weakness. In the article *Mabinogi and The Shadow of Celtic Mythology*, Dr. Rodway explores this, finding that:

'It might be objected that Ernest Renan, the first to produce a synthetic account of the Romantic Celt, was a Celtic-speaking Breton. This is true, but he had completely aligned himself with the French national project.²⁹ He was, if you like, poacher turned gamekeeper, and he presented his French audience with exactly the sort of Celts they wanted: sensitive, poetic, child-like, feminized, spiritual and safely marginal.'²⁴

As with La Villemarqué's zeal and patriotism, Renan's philosophies, and worldview, especially as related to racial topics, which undulated over a very long life, harm the credibility of his representations of Brittany.

Conclusion

"The Bridge"

²¹ Ernest Renan and W.G Hutchinson, 'The Poetry Of The Celtic Races,' in *Harvard Classics, Volume 32, of 51, Literary And Philosophical Essays, French, German and Italian*, (New York, USA : P.F. Collier & Son Company, 1909), <<https://www.bartleby.com/lit-hub/hc/literary-and-philosophical-essays/the-poetry-of-the-celtic-races>> [accessed November 23, 2023]

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Simon Rodway, 'The Mabinogi And The shadow Of Celtic Mythology'. *Studia Celtica*, 52(1), p.8, <https://pure.aber.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/28897291/the_mabinogi_and_the_shadow_of_celtic_mythology.pdf> [accessed November 23, 2023]

Near the end of his life, Renan documented the profound sense of transformation when a traveler crosses from Normandy into Brittany, 'A cold wind arises full of a vague sadness, and carries the soul to other thoughts; the tree-tops are bare and twisted; the heath with its monotony of tint stretches away into the distance; at every step the granite protrudes from a soil too scanty to cover it; a sea that is almost always sombre girdles the horizon with eternal moaning.'²⁵ He goes on to suggest that a similar change occurs when one crosses the border from England into Wales. This writer, having afore never heard of Renan, has experienced the 'change' crossing the bridge from England to Glamorgan, which is as passing through a door from the mundane and the bleak into a place akin to Tolkien's Middle Earth.

Although Renan's 'crossing' portrays the brooding sadness of a dying, but resilient race connected ever to death and despair, but clinging to Messianic hope, his recollection does answer the academic question. Romanticism did not invent the Brittany we know today. Although layered and beset with embellishment and license, it simply tried to express and define, something ancient, unique, and real.

²⁵ Ernest Renan, *Recollections Of My Youth*, (The Project Gutenberg Ebook (2004), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/12748/12748-h/12748-h.htm#link2H_PREF> [accessed November 23, 2023]

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