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Kathryn N. JONES, Carol TULLY, Heather WILLIAMS, *Hidden Texts, Hidden Nation. (Re)Discoveries of Wales in Travel Writing in French and German (1780-2018)*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020. 304 p. ISBN: 978-1-789-62143-3

As the least-researched of the UK nations in terms of cultural geography and in the broader European cultural context, Wales has long been misrepresented as a “minoritized” (20) and an “elided” (2) state, despite recent work that has done much to increase its visibility and relevance. Welsh global invisibility is also visible in travel writing studies which reveal Wales as an uncharted territory, a neglected place described by Jacques Gury as “the Cinderella of the British Isles” (1). As if reflecting the necessity of cooperation and collaborative work in bringing to light “the hidden texts on a hidden nation” (6), this co-authored book aims to wipe the dust off the common Anglocentric policy of embedding Welsh identity into its own and instead, read Welsh travel writing accounts outside influences of the upland culture of England, its larger neighbour.

Kathryn N. Jones (Swansea University), Carol Tully (Bangor University) and Heather Williams (University of Wales) are to be congratulated on the completion of such a task. They highlight the areas in which this book seeks to offer fresh insights. First, the authors fill a rather obvious gap in travel writing studies by bringing the former peripheral Wales back to the center of Europe and by analyzing all the texts outside the British framework. In doing so, they differentiate their study from other related titles in this field on the grounds that they consider Welsh narratives outside the perimeter of the British (imperial) discourse. Unlike literary scholarship which has resorted to English-language source texts in order to analyze travel writing in the context of the core-periphery axiom, this book enlarges the boundaries to include the texts of European travellers to Wales written in languages other than English.

Second, the whole design of *Hidden Texts, Hidden Nation* stems from the minimal attention Wales has enjoyed in its history, as it has always been perceived as having a peripheral geography and culture in relation

not only to England, but also to Ireland and Scotland. The vertical, hierarchical relationship between Wales and the Mother-country is presented in negative terms from the very Introduction to the study as “compromised,” “dominant,” “infamous,” “complicated,” and full of “tension” (1), which has resulted in mapping “Welshness” as an under-represented identity. By examining the representation of Wales and “Welshness” in texts written in French, German, and Breton by travellers from 1780 to the present day, the authors trace the history of Welsh history and culture from often overlooked perspectives and unexplored sources. Thus they demonstrate how Wales came into existence and even flourished outside of Britain around the middle of the nineteenth century, when progress opened up the possibility of travel by rail to an ever-growing number of British and European passengers.

Third, Jones, Tully and Williams suggest a horizontal approach angle to the narratives which represent Wales and Welsh identity in its national specificity – as an identity separated from England and other Continental Celtic countries. The book erases all dichotomies and hierarchies and performs a horizontal analysis of national relations while looking at how Breton and Welsh travellers connect as peripheral extremities of the same geographical space. By using a comparative approach, the authors draw attention to the modes of representation which accompany travel writing. Travelogues, private correspondences, diaries, photobooks, periodical entries and blogs focusing on Welsh culture written in French, German and Breton are in constant dialogue with travel accounts of Wales. Thus, the authors breathe life into the narrative of Wales, which emerges from the interaction between shadow sources (guidebooks, journals, forgotten French and German texts, etc.) and English-language seminal sources (Gilpin, Pennant, Nicholson and Borrow).

The book traces the evolution of Wales and Welsh identity from the Industrial Revolution to post-devolution era with a view to mapping the historical changes which have altered European perceptions of Wales since the 1780s. A shift in perception and representation of the Welsh nation was identified around this time in connection with the influence that Thomas Pennant’s travelogue *A Tour in Wales (1778-1781)* exerted on the imagination of visitors and writers alike. Most of the travel accounts of Wales included in this volume have been written by

French- and German-speaking travellers. The former includes not only travellers from Belgium and Switzerland, but also from Romania. The latter came from as various German-speaking backgrounds as Austria, Germany, Switzerland and even Latvia and Hungary. The authors use the concept of “tourist gaze” to reflect travellers’ perceptions of Wales, an essential factor in the formation of national and cultural identities of both hosts and guests involved in the process of acculturation. A traveller defines and explains what he discovers in a new territory by comparing what he or she sees with what he or she knows, by appealing to familiar images and common values. Jones, Tully and Williams have captured the essence of this: “How does the depiction of a nation by a visiting traveller in fact reflect the issues, concerns and reality of that traveller’s home environment?” (14). All five chapters respond to this question, being testimony to the fact that a nation narrated by a foreign traveller actually narrates the reality of that traveller’s home context, “as the contact zone is used as an area for reflection, cultural self-understanding and appreciation” (236). Of the five chapters, the most revealing are the second and the third ones, as they acknowledge the nineteenth century as “the century of the Celt” (67), in addition to approaching travel to Wales from both an exotic and an endotic perspective. These two chapters discuss Wales in the context of Celtic nations, acknowledging that French-speaking travellers perceived Wales differently from German and Breton ones due to the specific Celtic background they came from, which explains the complexity of Celticism.

The book is to be lauded for achieving its goals, as it provides fine context for assessing a cohesive narrative of the Welsh nation in the context of the expansion of travel industry. It successfully explores whether a traveller can get to know a minoritised culture outside the dominant discourse which it is usually attached to. It also looks at the persona Welsh inhabitants take in the process (hosts, guide, servants). There is one merit which Jones, Tully and Williams possess besides that of un hiding the hidden texts of a nation – they present to the reader the texts in the original language with an English translation annexed, which changes the book’s readership and surrounding culture. This is an innovative book that combines cross-cultural dialogue with the “tourist gaze” in order to explain the gap between fabricated expectations and real destinations. Drawing on a wide literature and on neglected

– sometimes anonymous – texts in French, German and Breton that the authors took great effort to uncover and recover, *Hidden Texts, Hidden Nation* is a substantial book that should be enjoyed not only by cultural historians of the period in question, but also by students, university teaching staff, translators, specialists in travel literature as well as anyone interested in the topic.

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Benham M. FOMESHI, *The Persian Whitman: Beyond a Literary Reception*,
Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2019. 256 p. ISBN 9789087283353

Similar to what had been done for China, Germany, Brazil and many others (89-90), Behnam Fomeshi's new monograph intends to examine the transformations undergone by Walt Whitman, the "father of American free verse" (89), as the poet's persona, image and work are being translated, ingested and digested in another time and context, thus proving right the poet himself who wrote: "I resist anything better than my own diversity" (*Leaves of Grass*, "Song of Myself"). In brief, it is an exercise in reception studies. But one that takes good care in tracing back the history – material, political as well as literary – of such a cultural transfer where both ends mutually change throughout the process. One that elevates what seems at first to be nothing more than a "case study" of literary reception, i.e. the reception of Whitman in Persia/Iran – the country before and after 1935 (195) –, to a comparative multi-discursive comprehension of a Whitman that is not the poet we had known from traditional American studies, but indeed the "Persian

Whitman". For the book's main highlight, according to its "New Historicist" approach, is the (re)construction or (re)creation process at work in cultural transfers, through an interaction of discourses.

In light of this, Fomeshi's most original and convincing undertaking is the analysis offered in chapter 8 where Whitman's image is examined based on different epitextual and peritextual elements (127). Illustrating the difference between Whitman-the historical figure embedded in nineteenth-century American culture, and Whitman-the world poet who has been radically realigned as various cultures have adopted him into their own literary traditions and have read his works in defamiliarising contexts, Fomeshi demonstrates one of the many ways in which the former becomes the latter. In so doing, this chapter contributes to a better understanding of the interest manifested toward Whitman in a generally anti-US post-1979 modern Iran. Chapter 1 covers the basic companion-style knowledge of Whitman mainly from an American perspective and offers a survey of critical literature. Worth mentioning is the impact of Whitman's "unabashed self-promotion" (19) during his lifetime as a poet, which sets the stage for the later focus on Whitman's Persian image. Chapters 2 and 3 link the concepts of democracy and nationalism as they are intertwined in Whitman's work and socio-political context and serve to present the poet's main literary work, *Leaves of Grass* (1855, 1860, etc.), as part of a democratic national poetics. Chapter 4 presents an overview of Persia's political history in order to situate the first two Persian translations of Whitman, Yūsif I'ṭīšāmī's translation in 1922 and a reprint in 1943, highlighting the difference in interpretation and reception between the two. A new favourable context welcomed more easily Whitman's poetical portrayal of the human body (141-142) and the democratic purpose of this portrayal, as it started being linked to Sufism and mystical Islamic literature's ideas of the healthy body and the perfect human being (84). But more importantly, Whitman's ideas started resonating with the modernizing drive of early twentieth-century Persia. Chapter 5 deals with the poet's critical reception and his elective association with the Persian "father of New Poetry" (93), Nīmā Yūshīj, and with literary modernism, also asserting in a broader scope that "one can trace a relationship between the desire to break with traditional norms of literature and attention to the father of American free verse in various countries" (89). Chapter

6 presents an original comparative analysis (103) of Parvīn I'tiṣāmī's creative reception of Whitman. Chapter 7 reveals the important role of Iranian philosopher Iḥsān Tabarī in linking Whitman to Yūshīj's literary efforts and explores the political reception of the poet, as leftist political forces start to grow in Persia. Chapter 9 takes on the political and power relations "in the post-2009 cultural arena" (149) of Iran, dealing along the way with Whitman's more subversive potentialities, his two-fold image as a mystical apolitical poet and as a revolutionary poet, and the possible use of these potentialities to address issues within the Iranian regime.

Stylistically, the repetition of the same quotes from chapter to chapter – and sometimes also the same original sentences in the same order – might at times seem tedious, a style far from the "new music of modern speed and motion" Whitman ought to have injected in Persian modernism, according to Yūshīj (100). However, one has to bear in mind that each chapter was meant to potentially stand alone (13), thus mirroring Walt Whitman's own literary drive towards a more democratic and simple style. In this sense, Fomeshi's endeavour brings forth a compelling take on the intersection of discourses in a cultural transfer such as Whitman's reconstruction as an American poet in a Persian costume (Chapter 8). Ultimately, Behnam Fomeshi's *The Persian Whitman* manages to offer a fresh and insightful perspective on "the intense and uneasy relationship between Persian poetry and Iranian politics in translating a modern Western poet in a country in transition between tradition and modernity" (161).

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Charles FORSDICK, Zoë KINSLEY and Kathryn WALCHESTER (eds.),
Keywords for Travel Writing Studies: A Critical Glossary. London:
Anthem Press, 2019. 347 p. ISBN: 978 1783089222

Gathered together as a result of many years of fruitful debates, workshops and conference papers, the 100 terms included in the present volume are, as the title indicates, “keywords” which set the critical framework for travel writing studies scrutinised by recourse to theories pertaining to a wide array of disciplines. Intended as a response to the mobility paradigm theorized by Stephen Greenblatt in *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto* (2010), *Keywords* is a welcome attempt to consider travel writing both as a literary genre and as an interdisciplinary practice. Moreover, it stands proof that travel writing has become a fully-fledged discipline able “to designate the textual recording of a variety of practices of mobility, spontaneously in the field or retrospectively on the traveller’s return” (xvii) and to reveal the manner in which cultural identity is shaped by mobility. In this light, the contributors’ aim is not to provide standard definitions of specialized terms but to focus on travelogues and cross-cultural representations of travel, concurrently highlighting the latest changes in meaning that the selected keywords have undergone. Emerging as a discipline in its own right in the 1980s, when the “great tradition” advocated by F.R. Leavis was rejected in favour of non-canonical or marginal texts, and when a substantial body of theory was developed in the then burgeoning postcolonial, gender and globalization studies, travel writing was acutely aware of such shifts, borrowing terms, such as site, boundary, displacement, de-/re-territorialization, mapping, topology, etc., which also responded to the “spatial turn” spearheaded by Henri Lefebvre, Gilles Deleuze, Michel de Certeau and Michel Foucault.

Inspired by Raymond Williams’s *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976), the *Keywords* edited by Forsdick, Kinsley and Walchester reflects on a specialized lexicon that “we use collectively and in a variety of different contexts to express our ideas about the ways in which

travellers write about their journeys” (xvii). Arranged alphabetically, each entry is designed as a sketchy, yet comprehensive presentation written according to every contributor’s expertise, not as an “encyclopaedic overview” (xxv). Although some authors sometimes adopt a terse style or fail to mount a solid argument, the critical analysis of the keywords is patterned after Raymond Williams’s model. Thus, the contributors always begin with a brief discussion of the etymology of each term so as to unravel not only their complexity, but also to emphasize the multiple meanings as well as the implications of meaning they have acquired over time under the pressure of changing social, economic and political conditions. Entries on “coevalness”, “curiosity”, “translation” or “travel” are telling examples. The etymological context is followed by a condensed presentation of the theoretical scaffolding built in tandem with the critical developments that have occurred in the past 30 years in the field of sociology, literary studies, history and geography. This part also includes numerous references to primary texts ranging from ancient to contemporary times. The volume goes even further, foreshadowing “virtual travels” in the future via state-of-the-art technologies which are meant to ensure borderless cybertravels. At the same time, it offers new insights into concepts like “vertical travel”, i.e. dwelling in a specific place with a view to minutely inspecting its particulars, or “traveller/travellee”, a dichotomy which captures the self-reflexive tone of travel writing and, more importantly, distinguishes between an observing/coloniser and an observed/colonised person. “Class” and “history” are two keywords borrowed directly from Williams’s work and applied to travel writing. The authors conclude their short essays with a further reading list, a laudable endeavour which enables both researchers, teachers, students and profane readers to find out more about the terms in question, to establish connections with other geographical and cultural spaces and, last but not least, to rework or revise the “unfinished” (xxiv) keywords project which is expected to stimulate further debates. In this sense, the three editors confess that the understanding of travel writing via the keywords they have selected “will require progressive renewal as twenty-first-century travel writing seeks to factor in new mobilities and open itself to new choices” (xxiv). Notwithstanding the editors and the contributors’ ardent wish to get feedback on *Keywords*, it is worth mentioning that the volume enters into critical dialogue with other

seminal studies dedicated to travel writing studies. In doing so, the editors take every care to signal the originality of the book. For instance, unlike the postcolonial, gender- and genre-related terms proposed in *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies*, edited by Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst (2015), or in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing* (2016), edited by Carl Thompson, *Keywords for Travel Writing Studies* opts in favour of a “keywords approach” (xxi) that allows not only for thematic cohesion, but also for an understanding of travel writing as a transnational and transhistorical network of ideas, phenomena, linguistic and theoretical points of reference. Entries on “contact zone”, “counterpoint” and “polygraphy” are living proof of such a new perspective on travel narratives. In this context, the glossary drawn up by Forsdick, Kinsley and Walchester detaches itself from any other collection of key terms that does not comply with Williams’s model and insists that *Keywords* is their best choice “as a result of the close attention to the shifting semantics and to the materiality of language this term allows” (xxiv).

In spite of the editors’ avowed subjective choice of certain concepts and their acknowledged preference for an Anglocentric view on travel writing, *Keywords for Travel Writing Studies* is a stimulating and compelling guide which keeps us abreast of the latest critical innovations spawned by the “mobility turn” in the humanities. It clearly demonstrates that travel *per se* is an affective-cognitive process whereby travellers translate the (material) culture they encounter into a narrative which is open to cross-disciplinary interpretations. Ultimately, it is an “invitation to further reflection in light of the specific historical and geographical contexts of the particular travelogues those reading this book seek to study” (xxv).

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