The Picturesque and the Beastly: Wales and the Absence of Welsh in the Journals of Lady's Companions Eliza and Millicent Bant (1806, 1808)

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ABSTRACT

In spite of a burgeoning recognition of the Welsh language as part of a wider appreciation of Welsh culture at the beginning of the nineteenth century (see Constantine 2014: 124), Home Tour writing about Wales remained largely Anglocentric (Borm, quoted in Colbert 2012: 85). The journals written by lady's companions, Eliza and Millicent Bant, in 1806 and 1808 respectively, present a complicated view, one in which multifarious and often negative versions of Wales compete, but overall where linguistic otherness is not evident. The lady's companions' various and often contradictory experiences of Wales focalise around a discourse of "otherness", with the significant exception of its language. Welsh, and furthermore the sisters' inability to understand it, is elided from the text. The Bant sisters' lack of comprehension and their representation of its linguistic otherness is, I suggest, instead played out through a representation of Wales as complex, multifarious and impossible to comprehend. Wales is simultaneously "beastly" and "picturesque", a place of industry and nature, beauty and squalor.

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In her journal entry for 14 June 1808, written near Neath in South Wales, lady's companion Millicent Bant writes:

> Beastly Inn, more Beastly Woman, and most Beastly breakfast! Bread full of dirt and feathers. After all this dirt and filth, were not able to see more than one waterfall out of seven … The Guide informed us that they were all well worth seeing, and some extremely fine … The one I saw was quite different to and much more picturesque than any I have yet seen. Lady Wilson could not mount it, being extremely steep. (38–9)

In this extract, the conventional dynamic between traveller and locals is complicated by the observing eye and swift legs of the lady's companion. Bant becomes the "eye" of the party, replacing her employer in observing the picturesque view. In her manuscript travel journal describing journeys to Wales in 1806 and 1808, Millicent Bant occupies a curious interstitial position, describing and commenting on her experiences of Wales and the Welsh, and also on the actions and reactions of the Welsh to her employer, Lady Wilson. The lady's companion's various and often contradictory experiences of Wales focalise around a discourse of "otherness" with the significant exception of its language. Welsh, and furthermore Bant's inability to understand it, is elided from the text. Bant's lack of comprehension and her representation of its linguistic otherness is, I suggest, instead played out through her representation of Wales as complex, multifarious and impossible to comprehend.[1] Wales is simultaneously "beastly" and "picturesque", a place of industry and nature, beauty and squalor.

In recent research redressing the lack of critical attention that had been paid to the representation of Wales in travel writing, particular focus has centred on the shift in the way Wales was understood and presented during the late eighteenth century. It has been argued by Morgan (2001), Constantine (2014), Prescott (2014) and others that during this period a transformation occurred in the representation of Wales in writing by English travellers – changing from, as Sarah Prescott has argued, "a backward and uncivilised land to a place venerated for its ancient bardic culture and sublime landscapes" (108).[2] As Elizabeth E. Wein notes,

> [p]articularly after 1770, Wales became a popular venue for travel; roads had improved, traveling was becoming fashionable, and for Englishmen who could not manage a Continental tour, Wales afforded them a chance to "spend a few weeks amongst foreigners … at home. (1258)[3]

Key to the otherness of the Welsh was their language and, as Mary-Ann Constantine has shown, the Welsh language was concomitant in a wider burgeoning appreciation of Welsh culture and traditions in the eighteenth century (2014: 124). Constantine describes how Thomas Pennant, himself from an area where Welsh was evident but "residual", was one of the foremost "mediator[s] of non-English-language 'British' traditions" (2014: 124). In spite of such appreciation of Welsh-language cultural traditions and Wales more generally by the end of the eighteenth century, Home Tour writing remained largely Anglocentric (Borm, quoted in Colbert 85). The journals written by Eliza and Millicent Bant in 1806 and 1808 respectively, present a complicated view, one in which multifarious and often negative versions of Wales compete, but overall where linguistic otherness is not evident. In her work addressing foreign guidebooks about Wales, Anna-Lou Dijkstra suggests that "a veil of mythicizing exoticism" is evident in the later representation of the country (203). Drawing on the work of Susan Bassnett, she presents a persuasive case for travel writing as itself a translation of local culture.[4] The juxtaposition and

1 Kathryn N. Jones, Carol Tully and Heather Williams note "travel writers' myriad ways of engaging with and representing Wales" but point to the paucity of investigations into the representation of Wales thus far and anticipate the area as a burgeoning field in travel writing in their introduction to the special issue "Travel Writing and Wales" in the journal *Studies in Travel Writing* (102).

2 For a detailed discussion of changes in the representation and perception of Wales, see also Prys Morgan (2001); Mary Ann Constantine (2008); Shawna Lichtenwalner (2008).

3 Wein cites William John Hughes (1924).

4 Dijkstra draws on Susan Bassnett's chapter "Constructing Cultures: The Politics of Travellers' Tales" in *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* (92–114).

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unstable representations of Wales in the journals by the Bant sisters produce a version of the country that is still more difficult to comprehend than the original.

Millicent Bant and her sister Eliza wrote seven manuscript journals, describing tours around Britain with their employer Lady Jane Wilson of Charlton House in Greenwich. Lady Wilson, formerly Jane Weller, inherited Charlton House from her widowed mother. Jane, herself a widow, had married Sir Thomas Wilson in 1767 ("Jane Badger-Weller, Lady Wilson", n.d.). From the evidence provided by the journals, Lady Wilson toured Britain twice yearly, accompanied by Millicent Bant or her sister, Eliza, from 1804 until 1816.[5] There are seven journals housed at the Essex Record Office, which begin in 1804 by Eliza and continue, largely written by Millicent. The two journals on which this paper focuses are by Eliza Bant from 1806 detailing her tour in North Wales and another by her sister Millicent describing a tour of South Wales in 1808.

In foregrounding the experience of the lady's companion, this paper considers what happens to the textual representation of the tour of Wales when the tourist is not a leisured member of the upper classes. The lady's companion, while having some physical agency, as demonstrated in the initial quotation, had little say in her own mobility. The significance of accounts by those who accompanied and facilitated the journeys of the rich was recognised by James Clifford in his 1997 essay, but has been left largely unexplored since. In "Travelling Cultures", Clifford notes that, "a host of servants, helpers, companions, guides, and bearers have been excluded from the role of proper travelers [*sic*] because of their race and class, and because theirs seemed to be a dependent status in relation to the supposed independence of the individualist, bourgeois traveler" (33). Drawing on Clifford's definition, this essay conceives Millicent and Eliza Bant, as "dependent" travellers who came from that extended group, which in terms proposed by Clifford, have "never achieved the status of 'travelers'" (33).

Thus far, scholarship on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel writing about Wales has identified the typical traveller as leisured, independent and from the upper classes. Gruffudd and others remark, in a representative article, that "for travellers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this meant a group privileged through their consumption of élite cultural knowledge" (589). Gruffudd's review of tourism to Wales is predicated on the significance of aesthetic appreciation – an important but not exclusive motivation for the expansion of leisure travel to Wales in the eighteenth century. The Bant sisters' journals, while making reference to the landscape, offer an alternative perspective. In their interstitial role between their leisured employer and the working Welsh people they encountered, the conventional dynamic between traveller and viewed aesthetic subject is modified. This alternative perspective of Wales presented by the Bant sisters takes different forms, both narratorial and representational. The narrative perspective of the journals in both cases places the lady's companion as the intermediary between the employer and the travellee – turning back and forth, it seems, to report the reactions of both to each other.[6] Both Lady Wilson and the Welsh are the objects of the travelling servants' gaze.

However, the account of Wales by the Bant sisters draws on dominant views of Wales from travel writing in the period. The focus of the tours in terms of sights and sites visited are popular ones, and the representation of the Welsh people, their language and culture reflect dominant stereotypes of the period. Critics such as Zoë Kinsley (2008: 9–10) and Jacqueline Pearson have suggested that travel writing offered women an opportunity to challenge established modes representation, "to criticize an Anglo-centric, patriarchal status quo" (Pearson 55). Yet a conventional Anglocentrism persists in the Bant sisters' writing. Language and silence are central to the sisters' diminishing of Welsh culture, as the Welsh are silenced and Lady Wilson's responses are ventriloquised through reported speech. The representation of Wales, its tourist sites and people, do to some extent challenge conventional accounts of the period, with the Bant sisters presenting Wales as a place of juxtaposing, confusing and complex elements, at once "picturesque" and "beastly". Nonetheless, such a representation elides and, as I will suggest, replaces any overt discussion of linguistic otherness or cultural fascination.

5 The National Trust note in their purchase account for a portrait of "Dame Jane Wilson" that she died in 1818, aged 69 ("Jane Badger-Weller, Lady Wilson" n.d.).

6 I use "travellee" in the sense proposed by Mary Louise Pratt as, "the position of the people and places traveled to" (Pratt 225).

THE LADY'S COMPANION AND NARRATIVE POSITION

In their journals, Eliza and Millicent Bant produce a curious and unstable narratorial position in comparison with other accounts of Home Tour travel of the period – a position which, I believe, is a result of their position as dependent travellers. Lady Wilson is identified as "the traveller" at the beginning of the journeys and, in relation to her, Eliza and Millicent become "the journalist". Millicent begins "A Tour into South Wales in the Year 1808" by describing her employer's relationship to travel:

> Lady Wilsson [*sic*], whose passion for making annual Tours to different parts of England, Scotland and Wales, in search of the various beauties with which Nature and Art have so abundantly stored this happy Country and its sister Kingdom and dependencies (increased with her age) – having resolved to make a journey to South Wales for her own gratification in the pursuit of the above objects, her Ladyship, Self and attendants on 21st of May started from Charlton House at an early hour. (1)

Bant places Lady Wilson as the focus of this account, as the agent of travel, and accompanied by her servants. In relation Millicent Bant, the accompanying "Self" here, in the following sentence becomes the "journalist", as she notes how, "In the Evening her Ladyship with her Journalist went to inspect Wycombe Abbey" (1). Arising from this shift in agency and narratorial focus, a peculiar textual dynamic is established as the lady's companion reports the actions and reactions of both "traveller", Lady Wilson, and "travellee". Writing of a visit to Wrexham in 1806, for example, Eliza Bant interprets the site through the eyes of her employer, noting, "August 7th Wrexham – church tower 140 feet high, the finest Lady Wilson ever saw" (n.p.). On other occasions, the narratorial persona is given more authority as Millicent indicates herself watching the Welsh, who in turn are regarding Lady Wilson. On 10 July 1808, at Haverfordwest, she notes how "Lady W went to Church by herself, up a very steep Hill, with four Horses and the Coachman, to the great surprise of the Natives" (67). In this ambivalent account, the Welsh become "the Natives" and Bant shows them surprised by Lady Wilson's grandeur. A few days later, Millicent judges an inn in relation to her employer's status rather than her own, once more situating Lady Wilson as "the traveller". She writes at Llanidloes on 18 July 1808: "The Inn here is fit for no one but their own Country People. I believe Lady Wilson is the first with the title of a lady that has even been in it" (71). Bant's appraisal of the inn is used to make a comparison between the worth of her employer, an aristocrat, and the Welsh indigenous population. The inflection here is that the Welsh are a homogenous group in terms of class status and deserve a lower standard, a view that pertains throughout the accounts of Wales in these journals.

In the Bants' journals, the interstitial position of the lady's companion extends to physical action as well as regarding and reporting the reactions of both employer and locals towards each other. While in Monmouth, Millicent Bant describes her role in a comic anecdote which describes a tussle over a cushion in church. Bant begins in characteristic acerbic tone:

> Now for a specimen of Welsh hospitality to strangers. Lady Wilson went alone [to church] in the morning, was first in the Pew, seated herself on a small Cushion of which there were three. A Dame in Pattens, with her two Daughters, soon entered, (a large Public Pew belonging to the Duke of Beaufort;) seeing her Ladyship on one of the Cushions and probably in the corner usually occupied by herself she looked as black as thunder, pulled out an [*sic*] Hassock, and down she flounced; when the sentences began Lady Wilson got up, and turning toward the parson did not suppose what was going on behind her, but when she sat down, found her Cushion was flown. In the Evening I went with her ladyship; the Dame was going to play me the same trick, but being on the watch, I turned and caught her in the act and she relinquished her prize. (18–19)

Here, the agency and narrative focus transfer between the three parties present in the scene. Lady Wilson is the focus at the beginning, before the Welsh dame takes the central role. In the description, Bant hints that the Welsh dame is overstepping her position, despite being in the public pews; the emphasis on her footwear, with pattens to protect her presumably fashionable shoes, and her "flouncing" indicate this.[7] At the end of the extract, however, Millicent Bant

7 For a history of the use of pattens, see Anne Buck (132).

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takes on the position of subject, and both Lady Wilson and the Welsh woman become actors in the scene. Again the narrator notes how she accompanies her employer in this confrontation, but it is the Lady's Companion, who by effect of her gaze towards the Welsh woman forces her to give up the cushion. The hostility of the silent encounter reflects Bant's view of the relative superiority of her mistress compared to the Welsh "Dame"; such differences in status are played out here through gesture and eye-contact, rather than language. The otherness represented in the scene is one of class rather than linguistic or cultural otherness. Any difficulties in verbal communication are ignored.

In Eliza Bant's account of the journey to North Wales, while Lady Wilson still features prominently in the narrative, her accounts of her employer are less positive. During the 1806 trip to North Wales, it seems that the party have been surprised by the relative low cost of the tour. She notes, with a similarly sharp tone to that employed by Eliza, that on 30 July, the party

> proceeded to Llanrwst while Dinner was getting ready drove to the Abbey. Lord Newberry's a miserable old House of bad situation, nothing to be seen but two very fine large old Evergreen Oak Trees (Lady Wilson not spending her Money fast enough is in the habit of giving Beggars Dollars, instead of Penny pieces.) (20)

The narrator offers her own opinions of the abbey, rather than those of her employer and, furthermore, she distances herself rhetorically from Lady Wilson, commenting on the employer's actions sardonically in parentheses.

WALES, THE WELSH AND AN ABSENCE OF LANGUAGE

The Welsh tour, as part of the tour of Britain, increased in popularity in the late eighteenth century as tourists sought out landscapes that had been prescribed in the dominant aesthetic discourses of the sublime and the picturesque, as Betty Hagglund notes (60).[8] Its mountains and wildness drew visitors to Wales as part of a wider appreciation of the "Celtic fringe" of Britain. A further attraction, curiously juxtaposed with the natural environment, was that of industry and technological sites. As Kinsley notes, sublime in their terrifying scale and noise, mines and factories were a popular destination (151). One of the central aspects of difference encountered on the "Home Tour", particularly to those countries which formed part of the "Celtic Fringe", as Kinsley and Grenier have argued, was that of class (Grenier 20; Kinsley 138). By going into factories and other places of production, as well as traditional working-class homes such as crofters' cottages, middle- and upper-class tourists experienced the "otherness" of the working classes. As "dependent" non-leisure travellers, the Bant sisters disrupt the dynamics of the conventional encounter between the "self" of the traveller and the "other" of the worker, who was the object of interest.

The tours undertaken by the sisters are structured by an attention to the principal features of the "Home Tour"; landscapes notable for their sublime and picturesque perspectives are represented, as are visits to interesting factories and sites of industry. The fact that the organisation of the tours by the lady's companions is largely conventional and following dominant fashions is not surprising, given the fact that their itineraries were planned by Lady Wilson, their employer. The travel journals by Millicent and Eliza reflect the interests of their employer's itinerary. In her later travel journals about their tours in Scotland, for instance, Millicent draws comparisons between the scenery there and the sites she and Lady Wilson visited in Wales. She notes that the landscape on their journey back to Edinburgh from Banff is "very much like the fine scenery about Llangothlen [*sic*], in North Wales" (32–3). Describing the journey on 29 July 1806 through Snowdonia via Beddgelert, which they had made on previous occasions, Millicent describes how the scenery "lost nothing of its effect by a third view, as the scene is truely [*sic*] awful and sublime" (18–19). In addition to the emphasis on picturesque sites, the party also visit places of industrial significance, such as a flint mill near Beaumaris on Anglesey, a slate quarry near Penrhyn Castle and Wilkinson's foundry near Wrexham. Eliza Bant writes in some detail of the visit to the foundry, noting that on 11 August 1808 that the party

8 See Rita Singer (392).

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> drove to Wilkinson's Foundery [*sic*], went over this whole works, there were many very curious Wheels, saw them roll the Iron into sheets and cast the Leaden Pipes three feet long, which are after drawn to 10 feet also saw the Immense Boilers for the Steam Engine, they come to three Hundred pounds each, they much resemble to Welsh Haystacks, there are many curious things. (n.p.)

The inclusion of accounts of industry was a common feature of both manuscript and published Home Tour journals, despite the increasing significance of aesthetic discourse during the period. Paul Smethurst notes that "it was still common during the eighteenth century to combine visits to sites of natural beauty with side-trips to mines, factories, and brickworks" (16). Such visits are evident in the popular texts taking inspiration from Thomas Pennant's tours in Wales. In volume three of the later edition of Pennant's tours, he recommends that the "curious traveller" rides to visit the Penrhyn slate quarries near Bethesda and the copper mines and kilns on Anglesey (14, 19). Smethurst explains the presence of the industrial alongside the increasing interest in the aesthetic, arguing that the discussion of industry was part of a national rhetoric of improvement (113–14). Certainly, in Eliza Bant's account of the slate quarries near Bethesda there is a sense of her appraising the improvements made to the castle and its surroundings by the presence of industry:

> July 26th Left Beaumaris twenty minutes past six, after looking at Miss Myrick's curious collection of English Birds, preserved in a peculiar way, saw the flint mill, where they grind the flints for glazing China ware, also the Rock from Cornwall, the hard stone that grinds them comes from Flintshire at the same place was an Oil and Paint Mill, which we did not go to, as Lady Wilson was afraid of the noise; from there proceeded to the Slate Mill, and quarry, the latter a very curious scene, at the former they saw and split the Slate; went to Penrhyn Castle, Modern except one Tower, grounds beautiful, Stables the best-fitted up of any in Europe, slated inside and out, also an elegant hot and cold sea bath, slated with handsome furnished Apartments for dressing and undressing. (15)

Bant highlights the flint and slate mills, and an oil and paint mill as well as the technological improvements within the castle itself.[9] This abundance of the non-natural jostles in her narrative against the descriptions of Penrhyn estate, its castle and quarries, and its nearby attraction of Miss Myrick's bird collection. Thus, while the journal is informed and structured to some extent by Lady Wilson's chosen itinerary and by the conventional interests of the Home Tour, this example indicates how Bant's account comprises many juxtaposed and competing elements, rendering it hard to make sense of her journey.

In the extract with which this article began, taken from the journal for Millicent Bant's 1808 tour of South Wales, the complexity of the impressions of the region extends to her judgement of the sights she experiences. The journey undertaken by Lady Wilson's party in 1808 had become a standard tour of South Wales since Gilpin had written of its picturesque merits in 1782, and certainly the group visited many of its scenic highlights, including the waterfalls of South Wales. Yet with the Welsh and their domestic life repeatedly described in terms of dirt, filth and "beastliness", Millicent Bant undermines the sense of the picturesque. Elizabeth Bohls and others have discussed travellers' representations of dirt in eighteenth-century Grand Tour travel accounts, using Mary Douglas's influential work, where dirt is "that which cannot be accepted, which must be swept away" (Bohls 200).[10] This discourse of dirt in representations of Wales pervades both texts and indicates the rhetorical "othering" of the region. A similar juxtaposition occurs in Eliza Bant's account of her tour of North Wales in 1806, this time relying on an opposition between the beastly and a reference to Welsh bardic culture. Bant writes:

> July 14th the view from the hill descending into Dolgelly [*sic*] is beautiful beyond description; the town beastly; there is but one Inn, which is surrounded by pig sties;

9 The version of the castle that captivated Eliza Bant had been modernised in 1782. Further extensive renovations, which changed the appearance significantly, began in 1822. See "Penrhyn Castle", *Journey to the Past: Wales in Historic Travel Writing from France and Germany*. Bangor University, Bangor, 2018. http://footsteps.bangor.ac.uk/en/location/penrhyn-castle.

10 Bohls's work is drawn from the influential account by anthropologist Mary Douglas, 1966; For further work on the representation of dirt in travel writing see also O'Callaghan (2005) and Suranyi (2008: 106–8).

> nothing to be got but fried mutton chops, might as well eat a piece of an old goat, nothing made it bearable but Welsh harper, who was playing the whole of the Dinner time. (9)

In this extract, the "beastly" is situated within the beautiful landscape and the ancient bardic culture, as represented by the harper, is sited inside the inn, which is surrounded by pigsties. Travel accounts of the Welsh landscape during this period, as Kinsley notes, are often inspired by a bardic tradition as promoted in Thomas Gray's "The Bard: A Pindaric Ode" from 1757, which was in turn partly inspired by the performance of the blind harpist John Parry (135). Kinsley writes:

> The mountainous setting is made topographically specific through Gray's references in the poem to Snowden [*sic*] and Conway [*sic*]; therefore, it was on the North Wales tour, in the rugged landscape of Snowdonia, that tourists most fervently sought their own bardic experience. (135)

The Bant sisters construct their own version of this convention in their journals. Eliza describes in her journal from 1806 the primacy of the visual landscape and the fitting music, but also notes the distractions of the unpleasant smells and terrible food. The town and its population are intrusions into the ancient, picturesque landscape it seems, and should, to return to Bohls's words, be "swept away".

In the Bant sisters' journals, apart from the descriptions of the noise of industry or the music of the harper, Wales is silenced. Their reference to the harper is to the music, without reference to singing in Welsh, and there is no reference to the party hearing the Welsh language spoken at any point. While Lady Wilson may not have needed to interact with local people, her servants, as intermediaries, would have had to make arrangements for accommodation, food and travel, and yet Millicent and Eliza Bant persist in their portrayal of Wales in Anglophone terms. As discussed in relation to the incident with the dame and her cushion in the chapel, interactions with local people are indicated either by gestures or silencing, and no mention of linguistic otherness is referenced.

The representation of Wales by the Bant sisters echoes that of other British travellers on the Home Tour. In his account of tours of Great Britain and Ireland, Colbert outlines three principal reactions of travellers to the dislocations experienced as they "move beyond borders that demarcate their senses of belonging" (Colbert 2). The first of these he notes as "engaging in proto-colonialist commentary on the civilization, cultivation, or modernity of those whom they encounter" (2). Certainly, the Bant sisters' journals illustrate such a commentary and Colbert's argument goes some way to help us understand the textual complexities of these manuscripts in relation to other printed accounts of the period. The presence of this miscellaneous material, juxtaposing the aesthetic and the industrial, beastly and bardic, is part of a rhetorical "othering" of the region, in which Wales and its population are objectified and subordinated in the quasi-colonial discourse of the English traveller abroad.

In addition to the ideological differences of class and status, which occasionally contrasts in the representation of place, native population and the travelling self between the Bants' journals and those written by leisured travellers, practical matters were at the heart of some significant points of variance too. The in-between status of the travelling lady's companion also results in a rendering of the sisters' proximity to the organisation and practicalities of travel, while such practicalities and difficulties are often elided from conventional accounts of travel in Wales during this period. Wales is figured as a particularly dangerous place by the Bant sisters. At the beginning of the 1806 journal, for instance, Eliza Bant describes driving swiftly away from Rhayder [*sic*], which is "a dirty hole" according to the account:

> It was well we did, as part of the Road was over a very steep Hill, with a Precipice on one side, that had the carriage turnd [*sic*] the least aside we must have gone over and been dashed to pieces; for our consolation one of the Postillions told us a story of a Post Chaise, falling over and met with that fate one of the Horses killed and the Driver almost; her Ladyship's Maid was so much alarmed on hearing the relation that she immediately jumped off the Dicky [seat], indeed I was not much less frightened than herself as the Road in this Days journey was very bad indeed. (6)

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Bant's sarcasm, that one of the postilions told the terrifying story "for our consolation", indicates once again the lively and humorous tone of these journals. The residual impression is, however, the danger of tourist journeys in Wales, especially for servants.

In their intermediary role facilitating the travel of their employer, the lady's companions repeatedly note occasions where they are brought into closer contact with the local people than their employer. As Christopher Hibbert and Jeremy Black have observed, servants were integral to the lives and the journeys of their employers (Hibbert 23; Black 6). Servants encountered many more vicissitudes when travelling than their masters, as they attempted to work in unfamiliar environments and often with a lack of facilities for them to fulfil their duties effectively.

The Bant sisters' journals indicate some of the wide range of tasks that travelling servants might be expected to perform. In his account of servants accompanying Grand Tourists, Christopher Hibbert notes that "the choice of these [servants] was also important, since much was required of them" (23). Servants often had to put up with considerable hardships in terms of their eating and sleeping arrangements, particularly if the route was a popular one. In her description of North Wales, Eliza Bant notes on 28 July 1806:

> Arrive Capel Curig only one Bed to be had, obliged to have one made on the sofa for myself, indeed I thought myself fortunate in getting that as many others who came after us were obliged to sleep on the floor. (18)

At Llangollen, she writes of more practical difficulties due to the popularity of the route. She describes how the party returned from an excursion around the church

> expecting to find the Horses put to, but to our great disappointment was informed by the Landlord with the greatest Sang froid imaginable, that he had sent them with another Carriage and understanding we intended to go to Oswestry, his Horses were just returned and beating to take us back, and would be ready in about an hour, so in consequence was obliged to wait for the return of his, from Nine in the Morning, till a quarter past Three, before we left for Ruthen [*sic*], what rendered our disappointment the more severe was the extreme beastliness of the Inn, and people; and was of course obliged to stay Dinner which at every mouthful turned us sick, however they forgot to charge it in the Bill, and its not to be wondered at that her Ladyship forgot to pay them. (21)

Eliza Bant's details of the difficulties of her travel as a servant would have been omitted from a published account, especially anything criticising the actions of her employers – such as here where she notes her Ladyship's propensity to "forget" to pay. However, in these descriptions of the practicalities of travel, references to the Welsh language are already omitted. Any misunderstandings, such as that of the horses being sent away, are not linked to a breakdown in communication. Bant seems to expect that as an Englishwoman, she is simply understood.

A similarly revealing episode, and one that indicates how servants were brought into close contact with the local population, occurs in Millicent Bant's South Wales journal. Bant describes how during a stay in Fishguard, the party discovers that their employer has no wine to drink.

> July 11th but not a drop of Wine. Sent out Sophia [the Lady's maid] and Coachman on a foraging party, to try their luck; sent them first to the Doctor's, so called here – poor miserable Creature – he had none – Parson of Course had none; enquired for the Lawyer, none resident; at last the Coachman saw something like a poor Gentleman's House, – Sophia knocked, and begged a bottle of wine, saying, whatever they chose should be paid for it, and thanks also, as her Ladyship was in great distress for some; the Boon was granted, and they returned triumphant Coachman beating the prize in his hand. (67–8)

The group of servants are required to negotiate with local people for wine for their employer. Bant elides any difficulties in language that they may have encountered speaking to people in Fishguard at a time when the majority of the population of the town would have been monolingual Welsh (Evans and Fulton 358). This situation again effectively silences the Welsh natives, only reporting the speech of Sophia, the lady's maid.

From the above excerpt we can also see something of the nuances between the various members of the party. It is clear that, as lady's companion, Millicent will not go to fetch the wine herself and instead offers advice and instruction to the lady's maid and coachman. Moreover, we have a further insight into the dynamics of the party and the demands of the employer: "Lady Wilson" is in "great distress" for some wine. In this case, Wales and its people become a backdrop for the actions of the servants, signalling a shift of emphasis in which the practicalities and background to the tour sit alongside conventional sites and tourist attractions.

CONCLUSION

While the Bant sisters' journals confirm and support existing scholarship regarding the extent and focus of early eighteenth-century tours to North and South Wales, what they offer in addition, I suggest, is an alternative perspective on the Home Tour in Wales. The accounts of travel by leisured, independent travellers have been, and still are, given preference over those whose journeys are motivated by work or directed by others. As descriptions of journeys by "dependent" travellers accompanying their employer, the journals of Millicent and Eliza Bant have an interesting and largely unexplored narrative position. They disrupt the conventional binary dynamic of traveller and travellee, offering a complex and contradictory view of the country, and allow us an insight into the practicalities and hardships of travel for those accompanying leisured employers. However, the Bant sisters' journals at the same time reinforce dominant views of Wales from the period in terms of both the focus of their attention and a reporting of conversations and dialogue with Welsh locals which obfuscates the country's linguistic otherness. The Welsh language is central to its cultural construction, and so in their silencing of local people and the lack of attention their journals pay to difficulties with language, the Bant sisters diminish or at least skew the representation of Welshness in their accounts.

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