

NINETEENTH- TO TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY BRETON LITERATURE: AUTHORS OF A COMBATIVE LITERATURE AND THEIR EVOLVING MOTIVATIONS

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This article proposes an analysis of motivations for writing in the Breton language, from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. In various manners, all the authors seek to defend the existence of Breton and contribute to its future. Depending on the period, this combative writing develops in different socio-political and sociolinguistic contexts, produced by different groups or individuals with sometimes similar and sometimes divergent intentions.

In the first third of the nineteenth century, literature in the Breton language embarked on a phase of self-definition characterized by a drive for singularization, narcissistic thinking or even a combative attitude,¹ depending on how one chooses to define it. While French literature, which was becoming autonomous during the same period,² no longer had the role of defining the nation and was asserting its existence for its own sake,³ Breton literature, which

¹ Terms used by Benoît Denis and Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, *La littérature belge: Précis d'histoire sociale* (Bruxelles: Editions Labor, 2005); Yves Le Berre, "La littérature du breton: mère abusive et fille indigne de la littérature française," *Qu'est-ce que la littérature bretonne: Essai de critique littéraire (XV^e-XX^e siècles)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006) 15; and Pascale Casanova (ed.), *Des littératures combatives: L'internationale des nationalismes littéraires* (Paris: Raisons d'agir, 2011).

² Alain Viala, "Pour une périodisation du champ littéraire," *L'histoire littéraire: Théories, méthodes, pratiques*, ed. C. Moisan (Québec: Presses Universitaires de Laval, 1989) 93-103; and Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art: Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (1992) (Paris: Seuil, 1998) 104-105.

³ Denis and Klinkenberg, 31-32.

French literature helped to marginalize, was one of the defining features of the new nation whose right to exist was being advocated. With the rare exception of writers operating on its fringes,⁴ literature in Breton has developed since then in a combative mode: existing for itself, distinct from French literature, and in opposition to the real, symbolic or imagined domination of centralized literature embodied by Paris.⁵

Taking into account social changes (the demise of a self-sufficient peasant society and the industrialization of Brittany);⁶ the socio-linguistic context (the substitution of Breton by French, the transition towards a Breton-French diglossia, the end of intergenerational transmission of the language and the policy of revitalizing the language notably among young people via schools);⁷ the declining influence of the nation state and the enhanced profile of regions on a European scale; and globalization which facilitates the movement of people and cultural property, writing in Breton is by definition a conscious choice. Although it is difficult for Breton literature to be anything other than combative, what are the various factors motivating authors who have been committed to writing in Breton for two centuries?

Writing as a Form of Self-definition

Demarcation

Analysis of the literary history of Breton reveals two major periods: the divisive point being, broadly speaking, the year 1830. In the first period, 1350 to 1830, during which Breton literary output developed considerably, there is one conspicuous feature: no nationalist claims were made. Brittany, its language and people, were never topics of literature. Although texts were written in Breton

⁴ These include, for example, writers such as Jean Conan, Guillaume Ricou, Paul Le Breton, Guillaume Le Coat, Alexandre Lédan, Hervé Burel, and Julien Godest to some extent, and authors of devotional works, who are more committed to the struggle for the Catholic faith than for Breton literature. These authors are different because despite using Breton, they have not produced any metalinguistic discourse or a combative work in “defence and illustration” (*pace* Joachim Du Bellay, 1549) of the language.

⁵ Pascale Casanova, *La république mondiale des lettres* (1999) (Paris: Seuil, 2008) 47.

⁶ See, for example, Michel Philipponneau, *Le modèle industriel breton, 1950-2000* (Rennes: PUR, 1993).

⁷ For quantitative data, see, for example, Fañch Broudic, *La pratique du breton de l’Ancien Régime à nos jours* (Rennes/Brest: PUR/CRBC, 1995). For a qualitative analysis, see, for example, Yves Le Berre and Jean Le Dû, *Métamorphoses: Trente ans de sociolinguistique à Brest (1984-2014)* (Brest: CRBC, coll. Lire/Relire, 2019).

(the language of 98% of the population of Lower Brittany), the stories took place both in Brittany and elsewhere. Characters' names were sometimes Breton, but Brittany was simply a backdrop, not a deliberately cultivated identity.

The French Revolution and the foundation of the Republic had far-reaching repercussions, albeit indirectly, on the history of Breton literature. The adoption of this new political regime went hand in hand with the introduction of a new systemic model of establishing and disseminating norms via strong institutions (the army, schooling, legal system, etc.), an institutionalization which was probably not unrelated to the growing drive for autonomy in the field of French literature during the same period. By defining itself, French literature also set its boundaries; in other words, it defined its content and parameters, it included and excluded. Prior to this phase of assertion of independence, Breton authors did not feel included in or excluded from the field of literature as it was not really delineated as such. Thus when France defined itself as a nation (which involved issues around language in particular) and French literature established its values and conventions, this triggered a debate, notably in Brittany, on issues of national identity, language, and literature.

At this point, Breton literature entered a period of self-definition. The key player in this process was Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué (1815-1895), a Breton nobleman who moved widely in Parisian literary and intellectual circles and was therefore familiar with the issues of the time. In the publication of *Barzaz-Breiz* (1839, 1845, 1867, a collection of Breton popular songs) and in his own essays, he was the first person to raise the idea of a distinct Breton literature and to define it in contrast to the history of French literature.⁸ The history of Breton literature was therefore articulated in terms of its distance from French literature and as a struggle to assert the existence of Brittany as a distinct national, linguistic, and literary entity.

This developed primarily through the *bretoniste* agenda. At the end of the first third of the nineteenth century, when members of the Breton nobility born after the French Revolution reached maturity, the trends of *bretonisme* can be observed in the writing of several Breton scholars living in Paris, under the influence of their master Jean-François-Marie Le Gonidec, the heir to the Celtomania of the seventeenth and eighteenth century,⁹ and notably in the writings

⁸ Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué, "La langue et la littérature celtiques sont-elles entrées comme éléments dans la formation de la langue et de la littérature de la France?" (1835), presented and annotated by Jean-Yves Guiomar in *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique du Finistère*, CXVII (1988): 61-93.

⁹ Under French absolutism (seventeenth and eighteenth century), the Breton nobility, which was geographically marginalized, commissioned works to counteract the

of La Villemarqué. *Bretonisme* was based on a literary or historiographic vision of a Brittany which had become a desert at the end of the Roman invasion, and was re-Celtified by Bretons from Great Britain. This embedded Brittany in an exclusively Celtic past viewed through the prism of insular Celtic countries, in opposition to the Romanist view of Armorica as an extension of Gaul, and thus a province of the Roman Empire and a fundamental part of the history of France.¹⁰ *Bretonisme* therefore developed through the optic of a strong distinctiveness vis-à-vis France. The Breton Celtic past offered a new direction for the image and history of Brittany and for literature in the Breton language, which was striving to set itself apart.¹¹

Glorification

Heavily influenced by anti-Enlightenment thought, this trend towards separation from France accompanied by strengthening the connections to the insular Celtic world offered a means of expressing opposition to the political and social structures of post-revolutionary France and resistance to major dogmatic institutions (the Church of Rome, the Bible, and the French state). According to this view, Breton oral literature and customs expressed Celtic origins predating these institutions. The *bretonistes* alleged that ancient Celtic societies were based on the natural strength of national, religious, and poetic feelings, and hence advocated a form of “rewilding” through a return to nature as opposed to reason. This explains the promotion of primitivism and medievalism in this period.¹² The *bretonistes* invoked the argument of anteriority already expressed by Celtomanists, and promoted purity – notably linguistic purity – which was developed by Le Gonidec in particular in his *Grammaire* and *Dictionnaire* in 1807 and 1821 respectively. Accordingly, they strove to purify Breton by removing all words of Latin or French origin and replacing them with Celtic neologisms, often inspired by Welsh. In addition, their ideology included at least three other

omnipresence of classical antiquity in the history of the peoples of Europe to prove the anteriority of Breton nobility compared to French nobility, and hence its historical legitimacy. Connecting Breton history with Celtic ancestors and a Biblical topos amounted to the creation of a political founding myth. See Joseph Rio, *Mythes fondateurs de la Bretagne: Aux origines de la celtomanie* (Rennes: Ouest-France, 2000) 156-70.

¹⁰ Jean-Yves Guiomar, *Le bretonisme: Les historiens bretons au XIX^e siècle* (Mayenne: Société d’histoire et d’archéologie de Bretagne, 1987).

¹¹ Nelly Blanchard and Mannaig Thomas, “Qu’est-ce qu’une périphérie littéraire?” *Des littératures périphériques* (Rennes: PUR, coll. Plurial, 2014) 20-21.

¹² Nelly Blanchard, *Barzaz-Breiz: Une fiction pour s’inventer* (Rennes: PUR, 2006).

significant elements which would all contribute to making Brittany a topic of literature: firstly, the enhancement of the image of the Breton people as a means of ensuring this ancestral Celtic cultural continuum; secondly, the strong connection between the Breton people and nature; and thirdly, the idea of a new inter-Celtic unity and brotherhood.

These elements were developed in particular by Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué in the already mentioned collection *Barzaz-Breiz* and played a significant role in creating an image of Brittany as a place of stability and permanence, as a sort of refuge from history and a locus of resistance to modernity, which was radically changing primitive frameworks. Playing with a vision of time which was superficially focused on decline, but had a sort of racial continuity at its core, the author established correspondences between contemporary Bretons and the ancient Celts, between singers and bards, between peasants and Celtic warriors, and between priests and druids. La Villemarqué believed that Celtic ancestry could be discerned in contemporary Breton culture and that every aspect of current Breton culture was the expression of an ancient, pure, unique, strong, and natural Celtic spirit. What La Villemarqué actually attempted to express was the unchanging and resilient soul of a harmonious indigenous Breton people, reflected in their language and culture.¹³

Furthermore, the author grafted onto this idea a vocabulary of kinship (brother, family, etc.) bringing together, in a temporal confusion, Bretons/Armoricians and Welsh/Cambrians. Several decades later, these ideas found expression in the Breton neo-bardic movement, modelled on the Welsh neo-bardic and neo-druidic movement. Launching a trend of neo-bardism after a trip to Wales in 1838-1839, which had inspired him,¹⁴ La Villemarqué encouraged the Breton poetry society *Breuriez Breiz* to publish anthologies of poems written in Breton and praising Breton costumes, traditions, religion, and language. However, they eventually appeared primarily in bilingual editions with a French translation on the opposite page. Examples include *Doue ha mem Bro / Dieu et mon pays* (1844) by Abbé Jean-Marie Le Joubioux, *Bepred Breizad / Toujours Breton*

¹³ Ernest Renan, in "La Poésie des races celtiques," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 2.5 (1854): 473-506, also made a significant contribution to the dissemination of this vision of a timeless Brittany and a mystical people influenced by nature rather than reason.

¹⁴ See Mary-Ann Constantine and Fañch Postic, "'C'est mon journal de voyage': La Villemarqué's Letters from Wales, 1838-1839," *Hal*, 2019, <https://hal.univ-brest.fr/hal-02350747> (accessed 6 January 2020). La Villemarqué's trip inspired other Bretons to travel to Wales, notably François Jaffrennou, future grand druid of the Breton Gorsedd, who made a trip in 1899, from which he returned as a bard with the name Taldir ab Herninn. The Breton Gorsedd dates from 1900-1901.

(1865) by François-Marie Luzel, *Bombad Kerne*, *jabadao ha kaniri* (1866) by Prosper Proux, *Telenn Remengol / La harpe de Rumengol* (1867) by Jean-Pierre-Marie Le Scour, which were all self-translated by bilingual authors from the upper classes who belonged to the first rural generation to practise Breton-French diglossia.

Inventing a National Literature

A Rejection of Attributions and Domination

After two decades of relative calm on the part of the players involved in championing Brittany in the late nineteenth century, an impetus for organization around institutions arose in 1898 through a Breton movement which was retrospectively labelled *emzao*,¹⁵ in order to try to project a uniform and coherent image by using a single term. The first phase of this institutionalization brought together a variety of parties around the issue of regionalism: the newly created Union régionaliste bretonne, the Association des étudiants bretons, the Gorsedd de Bretagne, Ti Kaniri Breiz (a group involved in propaganda through the medium of song), and organizations in which Taldir-Jaffrennou (1879-1956) played a key role. Their aim was to popularize regionalist views, notably by promoting intellectual and literary works by their members. Most supporters hailed from the affluent classes and included the nobility, priests, and members of the middle class, and they were soon joined by young university graduates, many of whom were now working as journalists and teachers. Breton regionalists emphasized the unique role of every region in the French State and promoted the development of inter-Celtic bonds with the aim of reviving Brittany's Celtic past. At the same time, they were influenced by a form of neo-paternalistic ruralist ideology.

However, this ideology was swiftly called into question by the new interwar generation, who condemned regionalism as folkish and therefore obsolete, inauthentic, and ineffective.¹⁶ These young activists wanted modern Breton literature. This oscillation between a focus on the past and a call for modernity,

¹⁵ Nelly Blanchard, "Le calme avant la tempête? Analyse de la gestation d'une nouvelle étape du domaine littéraire de langue bretonne, 1880-1914," *Formation de la culture / Formation des cultures*, ed. Elsa Carillo-Blouin (Brest: CRBC, 2017) 73-96. On the history of the Breton movement/movements, see Michel Nicolas, *Histoire du mouvement Breton* (Paris: Syros, 1982) and Alain Deniel, *Le mouvement breton (1919-1945)* (Paris: Maspero, 1976).

¹⁶ Nelly Blanchard, "La littérature bretonne de l'entre-deux-guerres. Quelques réflexions à partir de données littéraires et sociolittéraires," *La Bretagne Linguistique*, 22 (2018): 177-92.

typical of all the movements defending a Celtic Brittany, should be viewed in parallel with the very rapid development of cultural and linguistic practices in Lower Brittany in the twentieth century. This development included the accelerated abandonment of traditional agricultural self-sufficiency, the rapid transformation of landscapes and rural-urban relationships, and the demise of the transmission of Breton between generations. Whether by openly advocating the preservation of the harmony of the past – the rural way of life of the nineteenth century and the Ancien Régime, or an explicitly Celtic Golden Age – or alternatively by violently rejecting the recent past in favour of a form of modernity drawing on original Celtic roots,¹⁷ all the movements striving for Breton emancipation at that time emphasized the idea of Celtic ancestry.

The Nationalization of Breton Literature

The younger nationalist generation not only differed from the regionalists concerning the relationship between Brittany and France (the nationalists favoured separatism), but also in the way they imagined the Breton people. For regionalists and nationalists alike, Celtic ancestors were a common point of reference reflecting ancient roots, purity, distinctiveness, and resistance. All of these criteria were based on an essentialist vision of Brittany. The idea of the “Breton people” was used by both movements to justify their actions, but the ruralist ideology of the regionalists, which often referred to a “sleeping” or “unconscientized” people as the repository of the essence of the Breton soul in need of reawakening by the élites, was rejected by nationalists who viewed the people as “corrupted” by French culture and language. Accordingly, the nationalists believed that a wholesale regeneration was required, led by the élites. They envisioned a Celtic “Pangaea,”¹⁸ a utopian Brittany in which language, people and territory would be one and pure, in a futurist and sometimes even fascist optic that led some members of the Breton movement to collaborate with the Nazis.¹⁹ The “Celtic World” represented for them the ideal of a regenerated West.

¹⁷ On the idea of the movement as a local expression of modernity, see Sébastien Carney, *Breiz Atao! Mordrel, Delaporte, Lainé, Fouéré: une mystique nationale (1901-1948)* (Rennes: PUR, 2015).

¹⁸ See Ronan Calvez, *La radio en langue bretonne: Roparz Hemon et Pierre-Jakez Hélias: deux rêves de la Bretagne* (Rennes: PUR, 2000) 33.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Sébastien Carney and Ronan Calvez, “Une esthétique nationaliste bretonne?” *Dire la Bretagne*, ed. Nelly Blanchard and Thomas Mannaig (Rennes: PUR, 2016) 123;

It was with this agenda that Roparz Hémon (1900-1978) and Olivier Mordrel (1901-1985) published, in 1925, the literary manifesto “Premier et dernier manifeste de Gwalarn en langue française.”²⁰ The aim of the writers of the Gwalarn school was to develop a modern Breton literature of a high standard. And for this, they argued for drawing a line between the past and the present as Breton literature from previous centuries had no value in their eyes – religious literature was to be excluded and popular literature was linguistically corrupt. Rather, they advocated creating a national literature purified, unified, and regenerated by and for an élite. Through this nationalist optic, the relationship between Breton literature and the French language was transformed by the rejection of translation into French. A similar attitude was evinced towards bilingualism, which was considered to be a sign of French domination over Breton and an indication of the decline of the spirit of Breton people. In this view, bilingualism constituted an obstacle to the construction of a national language.

The main aim of nationalist authors in the interwar period was to dispense with French, but this did not mean doing away with translation as such. In order to accentuate the national status of the Breton language and to highlight its autonomy from French, the Gwalarn literary movement opted to translate international works into Breton. This marks the introduction of unprecedented variety into the source languages for translation, which had previously been restricted to Latin, ancient Greek, and French. Between 1925 and 1945, although 38% of translations into Breton were still done from French, translations appeared also from English (J.M. Synge, W. Shakespeare, T.C. Murray, B. Potter), Dutch (G.H. Rotman), Danish (H.C. Andersen), Russian (A. Blok), Italian (G. Boccaccio), Welsh (D.T. Davies, B.E. Davies), German (R.M. Rilke), and Spanish (P. Calderón de la Barca), published predominantly by Gwalarn.²¹

This essentialist vision, which was a product of the interwar period, continued to be promoted in the following decades. After World War II, the publishing house Al Liamm continued the work of monolingual Breton publishing and translation from a wide range of languages initiated by the Gwalarn school. Under the influence of the French emancipation movement of

Calvez, *La radio en langue bretonne*; and Christian Bougeard, *La Bretagne pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Brest: CRBC, 2002).

²⁰ Roparz Hémon and Olivier Mordrel, “Premier et dernier manifeste de Gwalarn en langue française,” *Breiz Atao*, 74 (February 1925): 524.

²¹ The translation data used in this article are taken from Nelly Blanchard, “Evolution du phénomène de traduction dans le domaine littéraire de langue bretonne,” *Nottingham French Studies*, special issue, *New Dialogues: Breton Literature as World Literature*, ed. Heather Williams and David Evans (forthcoming in 2021).

May 1968, and as a reflection of the notion of an “unconscientized” and “corrupted” people, the idea arose in the 1970s, notably in the Union régionaliste bretonne (UDB) party, of a people colonized and alienated by state institutions and the central unifying capitalist power, which was also destroying the local ecological balance. Based on the model of the Algerian people’s struggle during the Algerian War, this vision of Brittany espoused a Third World ideology by condemning the oppression of the people by those wielding power. Proponents of this ideology saw France as a colonizer of Brittany, thus promoting the need for an awakening and resistance on the part of Bretons. They believed, however, that this awakening could only occur if the message of emancipation could be understood by Bretons, ever fewer of whom could now speak Breton. On the basis of this sociological fact, bilingual publishing resumed and several Breton-French anthologies were produced (edited by Yann-Ber Piriou, Paul Keineg, Youenn Gwernig etc.).

At that time, the balance between the relative weight of social aspects (considering the speakers) and identity (considering the language) as a motive for Breton-language authors to write, seemed to have tilted more heavily towards identity. A number of authors perceived the diglossic state of linguistic practices among the population in Lower Brittany to be unnatural and believed that self-translation and bilingual publishing were signs of collusion with this process. Some authors felt torn between two positions: resigned acceptance of a state of domination, or rejection of writing in French to mark their exclusive allegiance to Breton.²²

A Militant Literature Poised between Post-vernacularity and Globalized Culture

The Challenges of Visibility and Legitimacy

In 1977, French president Valéry Giscard d’Estaing announced the creation of regional cultural charters, which in Brittany took the form of the introduction of the first regional policy to promote local heritage. Breton language activists at the time decided to join regional institutions to attempt to put forward their

²² Erwan Hupel, “Le cœur et l’esprit: déchirements et stratégies d’autotraduction chez quelques auteurs bretons,” *Glottopol*, 25 (2015): 125, http://glottopol.univ-rouen.fr/telecharger/numero_25/gpl25_complet.pdf (accessed 6 January 2020). On self-translation in Breton, see also David ar Rouz, “De l’autotraduction à la traduction de soi,” *Glottopol*, 25 (2015): 103-23, http://glottopol.univ-rouen.fr/telecharger/numero_25/gpl25_complet.pdf (accessed 6 January 2020).

arguments which were now espousing an increasingly multicultural ideology. Still based on an essentialist and unitary vision of Breton culture, this approach paradoxically advocated linguistic standardization inherited from Celto-Bretonist linguistic purism and the Celtic philologists of the late nineteenth century, and finally the linguistic nationalism of the interwar period. The assertion of singularity as justification, the condemnation of cultural domination, and the new dangers posed to cultural diversity meant that it was possible to reactivate the vocabulary of justice developed around these issues by nationalists in the interwar period (rights, freedom, autonomy, peace, etc.), while encouraging openness to other cultures presented as a sign of modernity.

The regional territorial and Breton language development policy which has been in place for approximately twenty-five years, based on advice from a specialist regional tourism marketing company, is developing an image which tries to align the criteria of the ancient nature of Breton culture with its modernity in a sort of identity-focused business model. By drawing on communications plans, public and private funding,²³ on media coverage by the two regional mass distribution dailies and their two magazines, and on a chain of agents working for and through Brittany as a region,²⁴ this development process is becoming highly institutionalized and can capitalize on a relatively large market. For example, tourism plays an important role, by creating a standardized image of “Brittany” for outward presentation and internal purposes on a regional scale, extending beyond and overriding local commune and departmental divisions; by accentuating the symbolic aspect based on an essentialist approach (specific, uniform, and indivisible) inherited from the historical use of the Celts; by providing support for the tourist industry to raise the profile of the region’s special characteristics; through travel grants for Celtic musicians to make trips abroad, etc.

Within this framework, language and literature must become visible and legitimate. Public authorities have tasked the Office public de la langue bretonne with introducing Breton signposting across the whole of Brittany, including the historically Gallo-speaking zone (geographical conquest), with disseminating prescriptive linguistic standards, supported by a translation project which is as systematic as possible, even if it is sometimes difficult for Breton speakers to

²³ Some projects are funded by the Institut de Locarn, which brings together major Breton business owners who invest in the image of Brittany, or the “Produit en Bretagne” [Made in Brittany] label.

²⁴ Such as the Office public de la langue bretonne, and the non-profit association Bretagne Culture Diversité.

access,²⁵ and with promoting the use of Breton in the economic and leisure fields (conquest of linguistic registers).²⁶ In order to confer visibility and legitimacy on Breton literature, prizes have been created, a translation programme has been developed, and publishing in Breton is heavily subsidized.

Inventing an Anti-diglossic Literary Resocialization

Since the period 1990-2000, the number of hereditary speakers of Breton has declined sharply: the latest figure is an upper estimate of 207,000 declared speakers, of which 176,000 live in Lower Brittany (12.5% of the population) and 60% of whom state that they speak Breton less than once a week.²⁷ Moreover, almost 80% of these speakers are over the age of sixty and can neither read Breton nor write in it. Since hereditary Breton speakers are not the readership targeted by authors of current literature in Breton, and the activist and student communities who might potentially be affected now only number several tens of thousands of people, contemporary literary expression is developing in a virtually post-vernacular context and is constructing a small network, placing its hopes in a potential readership which does not constitute a market able to support itself without public funding.

The linguistic policy introduced by the Breton regional authorities to fight this phenomenon of declining language use and to promote a future readership is characterized by investment aimed primarily at producing young first-generation Breton speakers, notably through the school system; the revival of the idea of combatting diglossia by offering subsidies in the literary field for monolingual publications in Breton, which are twice as high as those for bilingual publications;²⁸ and since 2012, funding for a programme of translation

²⁵ Nelly Blanchard, Ronan Calvez and Mannaig Thomas, "Signe et sens en balance. Le breton affiché dans la ville de Brest," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 223 (2013): 137-52.

²⁶ For example, the 2019 national festival of the Breton language, *Gouel Broadel ar Brezhoneg*, had a digital and economic hub (*Pol Niverel hag Ekonomiezh*) which officially launched the *stal.bzh* application, a digital platform indexing companies using the Breton language. This festival also featured yoga and circus activities in Breton.

²⁷ TMO-Bretagne, Région Bretagne, *Les langues de Bretagne: Enquête sociolinguistique: Sondage 2018*, 6 October 2018, <https://www.bretagne.bzh/app/uploads/Etude-sur-les-langues-de-bretagne.pdf> (accessed 6 January 2020).

²⁸ Currently, the Regional Council of Brittany subsidizes 50% excl. tax of publications in Breton or Gallo (up to a ceiling of 3,000 euros) and 25% of the cost of publishing a bilingual book (up to a ceiling of 1,500 euros). Finistère General Council subsidizes 20%

of classics of world literature into Breton established by the Office public de la langue bretonne (OPLB).²⁹ The primary stated aim of the programme is enhancing the image of the language,³⁰ the secondary aim being to cater for the needs of young people who have attended bilingual schools.

If we consider the phenomenon of translation, it is remarkable that the translation of picture books for children has flourished since the late 1970s and is characterized by its vibrancy and sudden growth, mirroring the development of Breton-language learning in schools when intergenerational transmission has come to an end. Furthermore, bilingual editions are scarce and most publications are in Breton alone, thus aligning themselves with the anti-diglossic policy concerning a young bilingual readership whose mother tongue is French. The content of the works is rarely connected to Brittany; we are currently experiencing a backlash against narcissism in Breton literature, which marks another phase of the love-hate relationship to Brittany as a theme since the nineteenth century.

Filling the Gaps and Creating a Counter-cultural Network

If we return to the phenomenon of translation as an optic for approaching literature in the Breton language, we can observe that the main characteristics documented over the long period from the fifteenth to the twenty-first century bring together extremely diverse phenomena. The first of these is the fringe status of Breton literature, in which translations are mostly imported (77% of translations are into Breton; some thirty languages are translated into Breton; 90% of publications are monolingual) rather than exported (23% of translations are from Breton; Breton is translated into some fifteen languages; 40% of

of the cost of publishing a book in Breton for young people (10-14 years) with a ceiling of 3,000 euros, and 30% of the cost of translating a book into Breton (up to a ceiling of 1,000 euros). The same policy of promoting the monolingual format applies also to other media, notably the radio. See “Langue bretonne – Radios associatives brittophones ou bilingues,” *Région Bretagne*, <https://www.bretagne.bzh/aides/fiches/fonctionnement-radios-associatives-breton-bilingues-francais-breton/> (accessed 21 May 2020).

²⁹ “Liste des ouvrages retenus au titre de l’aide à la traduction littéraire en langue bretonne,” *Région Bretagne*, 25 September 2018, https://www.bretagne.bzh/app/uploads/liste2018traduc_litt_br.pdf (accessed 6 January 2020).

³⁰ “Cette aide vise à affirmer la place du breton comme langue d’expression culturelle” [These subsidies are intended to consolidate the place of Breton as a language for cultural expression]. See “Langue bretonne – Traduction littéraire,” *Région Bretagne*, <https://www.bretagne.bzh/aides/fiches/traduction-litteraire-breton/> (accessed 6 January 2020).

publications are bilingual). The second phenomenon reflects the importance of French in the linguistic and literary construction of Breton society. French is the main target language (74% of translations from Breton are into French), source language (55% of translations into Breton are from French), and intermediary language facilitating translation into other languages via French and not directly from Breton. A third characteristic is that Breton literature is largely confined to the oral realm and to poetry, songs, and tales, the three genres most widely translated from Breton. On the other hand, children's literature is the genre most frequently translated into Breton.

In order to combat these phenomena, which are perceived as evidence of imbalanced cultural relationships, Breton-speaking authors and translators are focusing on opening up their horizons to other world literatures.³¹ Similarly, they are trying to avoid localism and strive to become part of the globalization of literature or "world-literature" to which Breton writing can bring its own element of universality, with aesthetics and art taking precedence over any socio-economic or political context. This trend accurately reflects a desire to correct what could be perceived as literary injustice and incorporates the generous idea of linguistic and cultural pluralism and the importance of preserving Breton literature as a proof of the richness of human creativity. However, it is also the expression of a literary "cold war" against the centralism of French literature (in relation to Breton), by flying the flag for multiculturalism. Breton literature currently has a programme in place to translate international masterpieces, but in its present advanced stage it is promoting twentieth-century Anglophone novels, thus demonstrating the very significant new central role of English culture, which the Breton language cannot escape.

Still within the field of translation, we can observe an increase in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and especially since the 1980s, in the number of languages translated into Breton, and in particular the relatively significant place given to languages which are less widely disseminated and outside the mainstream, thus suggesting the formation of a network of "small" and minority literatures written in languages whose speakers are in rapid decline. These include Welsh in particular, but also Irish and Scottish Gaelic, Catalan, Basque, Occitan, Galician, Sorbian, Yiddish, and also, concerning

³¹ "Il a également décidé à travers le plan de politique linguistique voté en 2012 de pallier le déficit d'œuvres de la littérature mondiale traduites en breton." [It has also been decided via the language policy plan approved in 2012 to compensate for the dearth of works of global literature translated into Breton.] See "Édition," *OPLB*, <http://www.fr.brezhoneg.bzh/147-edition.htm> (accessed 6 January 2020).

languages of lesser centrality at the current global level, Modern Greek, Russian, Icelandic, and Armenian. These militant networks championing minority languages and literatures are a potential locus for counter-cultural expression.

As both cultural property and objects reflecting identity, Breton literary works emerge in an unprecedented era in the literary and sociolinguistic history of Brittany, as the significant decline in the number of hereditary Breton speakers means that they are now very remote from the readership and speakers in the name of whom combative Breton literature has developed over a long period of time. They are now looking ahead to a substantial neo-Breton-speaking readership in the future, which is still a dream at this stage.