

Langue : <b>Anglais</b>	Niveau : <b>5</b>	Date : 7 JANVIER 2023	Durée : 1h30
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## The untranslatable word that connects Wales

By Lily Crossley-Baxtern, 15th February 2021, BBC (edited)

A small harbour I know well appears on an Instagram story, catching me by surprise with its flash of familiar cobbled streets and blue skies. It's Wales: the land I grew up in and home to memories of afternoons spent fishing for crabs on that very harbourside in Porthmadog, long sand-dune walks along the north-west coastline and the inescapable smell of the sea.

- 5 Almost 6,000 miles away in Japan, my home for the past six years (...), I sit, a deep longing settling inside me. (...) The pull on my heart is known in Welsh as *hiraeth*. Deeply connected but not tied to Wales itself, the feeling is a longing for something greater than a spot on a map.

- 10 Hiraeth is often likened to nostalgia in English or *saudade* in Portuguese, and it shares qualities with the German concept of *sehnsucht*, but none quite match exactly. It combines elements of homesickness, nostalgia and longing. Interlaced, however, is the subtle acknowledgment of an **irretrievable**<sup>1</sup> loss – a unique blend of place, time and people that can never be recreated. This unreachable nature adds an element of grief, but somehow it is not entirely unwelcome.

"It's a kind of longing for a person, a place or a time that you can't get back to, a kind of unattainable longing," explained Marian Brosschot, a Welsh language officer (...).

- 15 Formed from "*hir*", meaning long, and "*aeth*" meaning sorrow or grief, hiraeth's literal translation offers some insight but fails to convey the term's complex nuance. "Hiraeth is one of these terms that's impossible to translate because it has so many cultural **overtones**<sup>2</sup>," said Sioned Davies, professor emeritus and previous chair of the School of Welsh at Cardiff University.

- 20 Often connected to a deep pain, the word appears in the earliest of Welsh records and has been a constant weight for poets throughout the ages. In the early Welsh verses, known as Hen Penillion, an unknown poet pleads for the purpose of this "cruel hiraeth" that breaks his heart and wakes him in the night. Imbued with grief, it's often seen as an ode to the loss of a homeland, a language or traditions – but could also serve as the key to their revival.

- 25 A vital period that cemented these losses was the dismantling of Welsh identity and subsequent revival of a heavily romanticised medieval Welsh culture in the 19th Century. Under attack from British rule, the Welsh were stigmatised following the publication of an education report in 1847 that soon came to be known as the Treason of the Blue Books. Denouncing the Welsh as immoral, ignorant and held back by an antiquated language, the report profoundly impacted not only England's impression of Wales, but that of Wales itself for years to come. Following its publication, the Welsh were given a new, more **palatable**<sup>3</sup> identity, **proffered**<sup>4</sup>
- 30 by the influential English poet, cultural critic and school inspector Matthew Arnold.

His characterisation of the "Celtic genius" was, specifically, "the British imperial concept of the sentimental, feminine, artistically gifted 'Celt' who is incapable of governing, thinking practically or conquering foreign lands," explained Dr Marion Loeffler, reader of Welsh history at Cardiff University. Overall, she said, the Welsh were considered a civilisation that "while venerable, had long passed their zenith".

- 35 Simultaneously dismantling an entire culture while glorifying a romanticised past, the British succeeded in replacing the Welsh identity with that of the melancholic, unprogressive Celt. Hiraeth for all they had lost, in an intensified form, was an inevitable response.

40 Seeking an opportunity to preserve their threatened culture and language, many joined the small but steady line of Welsh emigrants heading to the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, among other destinations. [...]

The significance of hiraeth to emigrants and the recognition of the things that might inspire it were recognised at the time, noted Bill Jones, professor of Welsh Modern History and specialist in Welsh emigration during the 19th Century. "While promoting emigration," he said, "some 19th-Century Welsh emigrant guidebooks acknowledged that emigrants would experience hiraeth for Wales, their relatives and friends, and the landscape and ways of life of the localities they had left." This may go some way in explaining Wales' high rate of "back migration": the return of emigrants to their homeland. [...]

Also far from home – and for many years unable to return – the Cardiff-based, Cameroon-born poet Eric Ngalle Charles offers an insight into the hearts of those who left the shores of Wales. Having experienced exile, the concept of an impossible longing for home was all too familiar (...).

50 Through poetry, he explores the meaning of hiraeth along with a similar word from his mother-tongue Bakweri – *erzolzoli* – in a collection of poems from both small nations. Noting a rare but shared combination of language-loss and a deep love of mythical pasts between the lands, Charles believes the Welsh language and strong links to the past are key to the continued presence of hiraeth in contemporary Wales. [...]

55 "Everywhere you go in Wales there are stories linked to the land," agrees Davies (...). From Llyn y Fan in the Brecon Beacons, which is home to the folklore legend of the Lady of the Lake, to the water demon of Llyn Barfog who **plagued**<sup>5</sup> the town of Aberdyfi before being captured by King Arthur himself, there are few spots without a folktale to surround them, she said.

60 In Wales today, this connection, which fosters hiraeth, is seeing a revival with increasing numbers of people learning and speaking Welsh and storytelling festivals (...) growing in popularity. Davies (...) is confident the recent revival of folklore tales will have a lasting impact: "They help give a sense of identity and there's an underlying moral code of conduct, if you like, which means they're still relevant to life today."

**irretrievable**<sup>1</sup> = impossible to regain or recover - **overtones**<sup>2</sup> = implicit meanings, connotations - **palatable**<sup>3</sup> = acceptable to the mind - **proffered**<sup>4</sup> = presented for acceptance - **plagued**<sup>5</sup> = caused great harm

**Examen Terminal - examen écrit - Semestre 1 2022-2023**

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**WRITE ALL YOUR ANSWERS ON THE EXAM PAPER SHEET, THANK YOU**

**A/ COMPREHENSION - 180 words (± 10%) - (10 points)**

Define the concept of Hiraeth and describe how it has been shaped by Welsh history and culture, as well as the ways it still resonates today, according to this document.

*Note that you are expected to write an organized answer based on the key ideas developed in the text. Use your own words (you can quote key words from the text but not extensive passages) and structure your answer, using appropriate linkers.*

**B/ WRITTEN EXPRESSION - 300 words (± 10%) - (10 points)**

Choose **ONE** of the following subjects and write a well-organised essay/story. Give strong, convincing arguments to support your ideas; choose relevant examples; and make sure your English is sophisticated enough.

**>> Indicate which topic you have chosen.**

1) Constantine Sedikides, a professor of social and personality psychology, talks of nostalgia as the “perfect internal politician, connecting the past with the present, pointing optimistically to the future” and a mental state “absolutely central to human experience.” Explain and discuss Sedikides’s ideas.

2) “Of course advertisers (...) and political speechwriters (...) have long understood the power of collective nostalgia. Is it not the fact that such feelings can also manipulate us into doing things, buying things, voting for things, that in more coldly rational states we might resist?” Explain and discuss this quote by Tim Adams, a British journalist and writer.

3) Are you familiar with one of the concepts mentioned in the text — *saudade*, *sehnsucht*, or *erzölirzoli* — or a concept related to nostalgia and melancholy from another language or culture? Introduce this concept and discuss its place in the culture and/or the community where it originates from.

4) “The archival power of the internet has given rise to a movement of temporal and cultural preservation — now that we have the power to capture time in a bottle and re-examine it whenever we’d like, we don’t really have to let it go. It’ll be interesting to see how the first digital generations relate to nostalgia and the past, given its abundance in today’s culture.” Explain and discuss this quote by Asher Isbrucker, a writer and video producer.