Wales and the French Revolution

Welsh Ballads of the French Revolution 1793–1815

Ffion Mair Jones

University of Wales Press

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General Editors: Mary-Ann Constantine and Dafydd Johnston

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FFION MAIR JONES

UNIVERSITY OF WALES PRESS
CARDIFF
2012

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www.uwp.co.uk

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-0-7083-2461-5
e-ISBN 978-0-7083-2462-2

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Typeset in Wales by Eira Fenn Gaunt, Cardiff
Printed by CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham, Wiltshire

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WALES AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The French Revolution of 1789 was perhaps the defining event of the Romantic period in Europe. It unsettled not only the ordering of society but language and thought itself: its effects were profoundly cultural, and they were long-lasting. The last twenty years have radically altered our understanding of the impact of the Revolution and its aftermath on British culture. In literature, as critical attention has shifted from a handful of major poets to the non-canonical edges, we can now see how the works of women writers, self-educated authors, radical pamphleteers, prophets and loyalist propagandists both shaped and were shaped by the language and ideas of the period. Yet surprising gaps remain, and even recent studies of the 'British' reaction to the Revolution remain poorly informed about responses from the regions. In literary and historical discussions of the so-called 'four nations' of Britain, Wales has been virtually invisible; many researchers working in this period are unaware of the kinds of sources available for comparative study.

The Wales and the French Revolution Series is the product of a four-year project funded by the AHRC and the University of Wales at the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. It makes available a wide range of Welsh material from the decades spanning the Revolution and the subsequent wars with France. Each volume, edited by an expert in the field, presents a collection of texts (including, where relevant, translations) from a particular genre with a critical essay situating the material in its historical and literary context. A great deal of material is published here for the first time, and all kinds of genres are explored. From ballads and pamphlets to personal letters and prize-winning poems, essays, journals, sermons, songs and satires, the range of texts covered by this series is a stimulating reflection of the political and cultural complexity of the time. We hope these volumes will encourage scholars and students of Welsh history and literature to rediscover this fascinating period, and will offer ample comparative scope for those working further afield.

Mary-Ann Constantine and Dafydd Johnston
General Editors

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Preface

Welsh Ballads of the French Revolution 1793–1815 forms part of the research into Welsh responses to the Revolution in France and the subsequent wars, carried out by a dedicated team housed at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies (CAWCS) in Aberystwyth. The project, led by Mary-Ann Constantine, began in January 2009, and aims to bring to public view texts from the period produced in Wales, in both Welsh and English, and in a range of different genres. It will also be accompanied by a fully-bilingual website, 'Wales and the French Revolution', *http://frenchrevolution.wales.ac.uk*. The present volume is an anthology of Welsh-language ballads composed between 1793 and the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815. It draws on collections of printed ballads housed in major collections in Wales (at Bangor University Library, Cardiff City Library and the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth), many of which have been rendered significantly more accessible since the research on this volume began. The database 'Welsh Ballads Online' includes most of the texts found in Cardiff and Aberystwyth, while a fully searchable database of the titles of eighteenth-century Welsh ballads (including those found in Bangor) is available on the web resource, 'Cronfa Baledi'. In view of this wider degree of accessibility, my task has been to draw out the most engaging and most representative texts from among those available. These highlight the variety that exists in Welsh balladry of the period, in spite of a strain within Welsh scholarship which denigrates the authors as avid Tories, incapable of producing anything of real interest. While their politics (with a few notable exceptions) cannot be described as radical or reformative, this anthology seeks to show the vibrancy of Welsh ballad writers' responses to the huge upheavals of the period in question. By offering translations of the Welsh texts into English, it seeks to reach as wide an audience as possible, demonstrating to the English-speaking world how Welsh people, often side-lined in British scholarship of this period, reacted to events

in France. At the same time, it is hoped that the edited Welsh texts will be widely read and enjoyed by Welsh speakers, for whom they form a vital part of their national heritage.

The research carried out builds on the foundations for the study of the Welsh ballad first laid down by J. H. Davies, who meticulously catalogued the vast majority of eighteenth-century Welsh ballads at the beginning of the twentieth century. Besides the major web-based projects mentioned already, work by Tegwyn Jones, Siwan M. Rosser and Ben Bowen Thomas, some of which has been published within the last decade, has been of great help in preparing this anthology. Where relevant, the wider ballad traditions of England and Ireland have also been taken into consideration, with the Bodleian Library Broadside Ballad collection, together with recent research on these other song traditions by Tom Dunne and Mark Philp, among others, proving to be extremely helpful. I have benefited hugely from working within a team of researchers, all with their individual but interconnected points of interest. I am grateful to Mary-Ann Constantine, Cathryn Charnell-White, Elizabeth Edwards, Marion Löffler and Heather Williams for providing me with inspiration and encouragement. The fruit of their individual research will appear in the form of anthologies dedicated to serial literature, Welsh-language poetry, English-language poetry and travel diaries from the period, in addition to further work on the issue of translation. Work produced by Alaw Mai Edwards of CAWCS and A. Cynfael Lake of Swansea University on the earlier eighteenth-century ballad writer, Huw Jones of Llangwm, was generously made available to me prior to its publication, and greatly aided me in setting the ballads of 1793–1815 within their literary context. Dafydd Johnston, the director of CAWCS, made invaluable suggestions on the translations of the ballads, and Mary-Ann Constantine, editor of the series, undertook the task of reading the work in its entirety. I am extremely indebted to them both. My decision to include musical settings of a selection of the texts on the tunes named by the ballad writers has involved research into Welsh traditional music. This was greatly facilitated by the publications of Phyllis Kinney and Cass Meurig, and both Phyllis Kinney and Meredydd Evans enthusiastically helped me to locate any missing tunes. In setting the ballads to the music I have been greatly assisted by Dylan N. Jones of Gwasg Nereus, Bala, to whom I am very grateful.

Further thanks are due to Dafydd Glyn Jones for his generosity and his unflagging interest in my work; to Branwen Ioan, Wendy Morgan and Scott Waby of the 'Welsh Ballads Online' project at the National Library of Wales; to Huw Walters of the same library for helping me locate ballad texts; to members of staff at Cardiff Central Library, Cardiff University Salisbury Library and the National Library of Wales; and to members of the 'Wales and the French Revolution' project advisory panel. In preparing the work for the

press, I have relied heavily on Gwen Gruffudd of CAWCS, together with Sarah Lewis, Siân Chapman and Dafydd Jones of the University of Wales Press. My thanks to them all. Lastly, I take this opportunity to thank family and friends for their support and interest in my work, most especially my parents, my husband, Dylan, and my daughter, Heledd, to whom (on her own special request) I dedicate this volume.

February 2012 Ffion Mair Jones

Acknowledgements

Digital Landscapes / Jon Isherwood and Marion Löffler: Fig. 1

The National Library of Wales: Figs. 2, 3, 4

Abbreviations

Bangor	Cerddi Bangor (collection of printed ballads at Bangor University Library)
BBCS	*Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*
BC	Baledi a Cherddi (collection of printed ballads at the National Library of Wales)
BLBB	Bodleian Library Broadside Ballads: The *allegro* Catalogue of Ballads at *http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ballads/ballads.htm*
BWB	J. H. Davies, *A Bibliography of Welsh Ballads printed in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1911)
CGPLE	Casgliad o Gerddi Prydyddion Llŷn ac Eifionydd (collection of printed ballads at the National Library of Wales)
Cronfa Baledi	Database of eighteenth-century Welsh ballads at *http://www.e-gymraeg.org/cronfabaledi*
DWB	*The Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940* (London, 1959)
EHR	*English Historical Review*
ELH	*English Literary History*
GPC	*Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (4 vols., Caerdydd, 1950–2002)
JDL	J. D. Lewis, Casgliad o Faledi (collection of printed ballads at the National Library of Wales)
JHD	Number given to eighteenth-century Welsh ballads in *BWB* and by later cataloguers (see, for example, Cronfa Baledi)
JWBS	*Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society*
LW	Eiluned Rees, *Libri Walliae: A Catalogue of Welsh Books and Books printed in Wales 1546–1820* (2 vols., Aberystwyth, 1987)
NLW	National Library of Wales
NLWJ	*National Library of Wales Journal*

ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at *http://www.oxforddnb.com*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* at *http://www.oed.com*
TCHB	*Trafodion Cymdeithas Hanes y Bedyddwyr*
Welsh Ballads Online	Ballad database on the National Library of Wales website at *http://cat.llgc.org.uk/ballads*
WHR	*Welsh History Review*

Introduction

> I have written a Ballad for the Blackguards to bawl about the streets, imitated from Newberry's well known Chapter of Kings; written at first to teach Babies the English History, but lately set and sung at Catch Clubs, Bow Meetings, etc.[1]

A confirmed conservative, Hester Lynch Piozzi was quick to see the potential of the ballad to spread an anti-French and anti-radical message among ordinary 'Blackguards'. The song to which she refers in this extract from a letter written in September 1794 warned its audience that, in spite of the bold attempts of the Revolutionaries across the Channel to replace their king with alternative governors ranging from Lafayette to the National Assembly and then 'nothing at all', the result was that 'They all lose their heads in their turn'. Modelling her song on 'A Favorite Historical Song Sung by Mr. Collins in the Evening's Brush', Piozzi deliberately sought an accessible style, contrasting the happy-go-lucky successes of the British monarchs in the original song ('Yet barring all Pother the one and the other, / Were all of them Kings in their Turn') with the inevitability of French failure.[2] Whether the streets in which she intended the song to be 'bawl[ed]' were those of Denbigh in north-east Wales, from where she wrote the letter quoted here, is uncertain.[3] Her words, however, display the elite's increasing interest in the ballad as a genre during the 1790s, as the French Revolution turned bloody and popular radicalism gained ground in Britain. Piozzi was not alone in recognizing the role balladry and song might play in guiding the responses of ordinary people. A correspondent of John Reeves, founder of the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers, wrote on 4 December 1792 'that any thing written in voice & especially to an Old English tune . . . made a more fixed Impression on the Minds of the Younger and Lower Class of People, than any written in Prose'.[4] 'In [the] struggle for the loyalty of the British public, songs and music played a crucial, but thus far little discussed, role', writes Mark Philp, charting the rise and fall in the fortunes of loyalist and radical songs between 1792 and 1805.[5] Across the Irish Sea, and on the other

side of the political divide, the United Irishmen encouraged literacy 'as the first step to emancipation' and engaged in publishing English-language material including ballads and songs to spread their message of hope for a free Ireland.[6]

In England, loyalist ballads outnumber radical ones by some considerable margin, the latter limited in the chronological scope of their appearance by the tightening of repressive laws and, possibly, as some commentators have suggested, because there was not such a broad base for popular radicalism as there was for popular loyalism.[7] The circulation of loyalist propaganda was boosted by the involvement of elite figures such as William Jones of Nayland and, most famously of all, Hannah More. Many broadsides produced in the critical year of 1803, when the scare of a Napoleonic invasion was at its height, had first appeared in reputable journals such as *The Gentleman's Magazine* or *The British Neptune*, which gives an indication of their pedigree.[8] A host of poems and songs relating to the troubled politics of the Revolutionary decade and beyond was copied by Elizabeth Baker, a wealthy Englishwoman resident in Dolgellau in rural Merionethshire, including material taken from *The Sun* and *The True Briton*.[9] It is unclear whether Baker collected this material for herself alone, or whether she was involved in circulating it within the district: an exploration of her papers suggests the latter.[10] Elite interest in and use of ballads and songs were also well-supported by the work of numerous 'minor scribblers', including clergymen and magistrates, who contributed to the production of anti-radical songs.[11] Work on Hannah More demonstrates that, for reasons of evangelical piety and with an eye on reforming manners, the Mendip-based author and social reformer instinctively mistrusted popular culture; indeed, according to one recent study, 'Popular ballads were the major provocation for the Cheap Repository Tracts campaign'.[12] This view seems to be corroborated by a diary entry of More's, detailing 'a Plan for abolishing ballad singing, & trying to substitute religious Papers – Hymns, ~~Communions~~ – happy deaths'.[13] While some scholars have concluded, largely on the basis of the shortage of directly anti-radical ballads and tracts within More's work, that she was concerned 'less [with] an attack on Tom Paine than on Simple Simon', others argue that she was responding to a 'twin threat', both 'moral and political'.[14]

More's commentary on popular balladry in ballads and pamphlets which she herself composed typically involved denigration of their 'wickedness' or of their 'vicious' moral influence, an influence which invariably lead those who listened to them into the throes of drunkenness, ribaldry and irresponsibility.[15] She also produced songs addressing issues of social unrest and disorder, using the genre to dissuade the poor from rioting and complaint.[16] These latter songs may be identified with a significant stream of protest poems, indicating tension between social classes, within traditional eighteenth-century

English balladry, which in turn may well have fed into the mistrust of ballads evidenced in the attitudes of More and others.[17] Over the border in Wales, ballad writers in the early to mid-eighteenth century were more likely to be subjected to scorn and derision for the quality of their work than judged for its immorality – understandably so in view of their penchant for producing what the Augustan poet Goronwy Owen described as 'trifling godly songs for young men and women to learn, so as to lighten the burden of the priest' ('mân ddyriau duwiol i hoglangciau a llangcesi i'w dysgu, i ysgafnhau baich yr offeiriad').[18] This changed, however, with the spread of Methodism, which threatened the survival of various aspects of popular culture, reputedly killing off the popular dramatic genre of the 'anterliwt' (notorious for its evocation of sexual licentiousness among other sins) by the early years of the nineteenth century.[19] When anxiety about the possible influence of the French Revolution upon the masses at home hit the elite in Wales in late 1792 and early 1793, it does not appear that ballads were seen either as a particular threat to social stability or as a medicine to correct any unrest. Although, as Hywel Davies has demonstrated, massive effort was put in by the ruling classes at the turn of the 1790s to ensure that loyalist propaganda reached ordinary Welsh people in their own language, ballads were apparently not seen as a potential avenue for distributing the message. Richard Poole, the clerk of the peace for Anglesey, rejected the proposal that he should have a number of loyalist ballads produced under the aegis of Reeves's Association translated into Welsh, although translating fervour was widespread throughout the land, with editions of key English tracts and pamphlets making appearances in Welsh.[20] With the exception of two free-metre (or ballad-type) poems, one of which was sponsored by the aristocrat Paul Panton of Plas Gwyn in Anglesey, and neither of which appears to have been printed in ballad form, Welsh balladry seems to have been largely left to its own devices in the early years of the Revolutionary decade.[21]

The ballad tradition in Wales, as demonstrated in recent work by Siwan M. Rosser, shares many features with balladry in England and beyond.[22] The relaxation of restrictions on the printing trade in 1695 had a profound effect on the ballad trade in Wales as well as in England, enabling print culture to take an early hold on the genre.[23] Thomas Jones, a Welsh almanac-maker and printer resident in London at the time, was quick to see that a move to the town of Shrewsbury on the Welsh border would provide him with enhanced business opportunities.[24] Others joined him: Jones included, there were five active ballad printers in Shrewsbury at various times during the first half of the eighteenth century; at least two in Chester; and one in Hereford.[25] Two ballad printers ventured into west Wales during the same period, setting up presses at Trefhedyn in Cardiganshire and in the busy market town of Carmarthen.

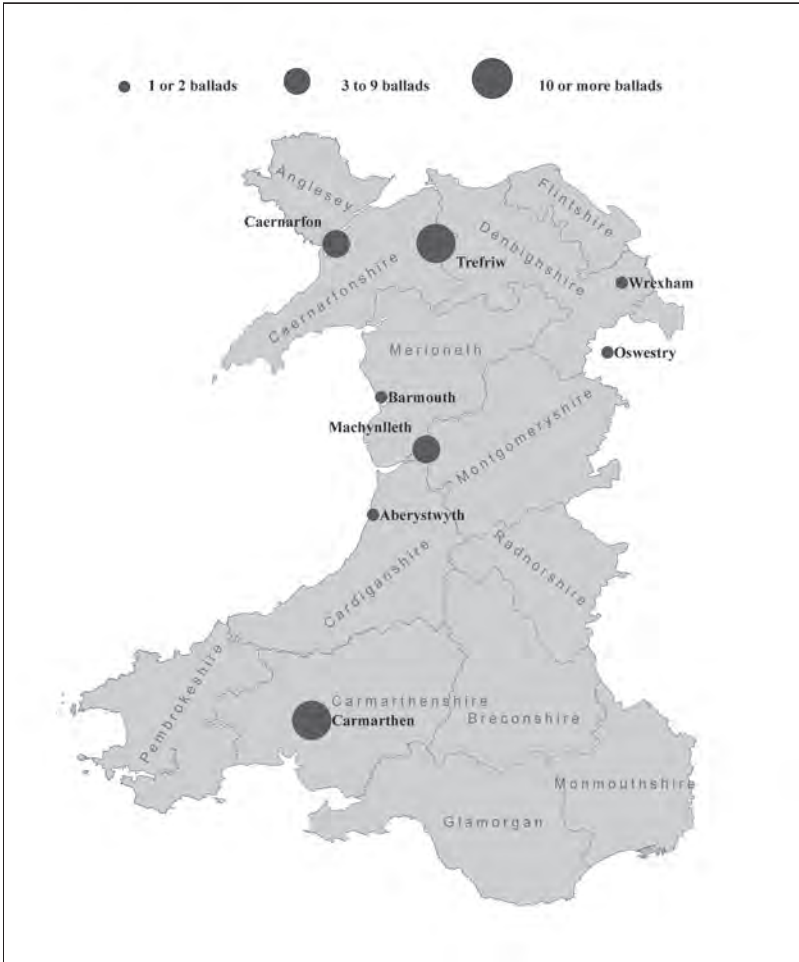

Figure 1. Towns where ballads in this anthology were printed

By the end of the eighteenth century there were presses involved in ballad printing in as many as eight towns, six of which were located in Wales itself, and five of these in the north of the country.[26] Commentators have often tried to account for the relative paucity of the ballad tradition in south Wales during the eighteenth century. J. H. Davies argued that the strength of a sequence of religious revivals in south Wales during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries dampened the appetite for balladry, channelling creative energy into the production of hymns instead.[27] Rosser follows Thomas Parry's suggestion that the trade simply lent itself to the geographical features of the

north, with the movement of itinerant tradesmen and drovers to and fro from England into the vales of Edeirnion, Uwchaled, Clwyd and Conwy, facilitating the dissemination of material suitable for ballads as well as providing a standard route for the distribution of ballad texts, once printed.[28] There is no doubt that a single printing family based in Trefriw near Llanrwst was also crucial to the development of the trade in the north. Dafydd Jones (Dewi Fardd; active during 1776–85), followed by his son, Ishmael Davies (1785–1816), and grandson, John Jones (Pyll Glan Conwy; 1817–65), established a buoyant business, to which balladry was central.[29] The youngest member, John Jones, argued for the importance of producing accessible poetry in ballad-style in the preface to an anthology of poetry in 1812. His words might be taken as the manifesto of three generations of his family:

> [Yr wyf] wedi bod yn fwy gofalus am foddhau pobl y wlad yn gyffredin gyda Charolau, Cerddi, &c nag yn chwilio allan Awdlau &c, i foddhau y rhodresgar: yr wyf yn meddwl mae Carolau a Cherddi sydd fwyaf gwasanaethgar yn yr amser presenol na dim arall o waith Prydyddion. O ba lês y bydd Awdl clogyrnaidd i'r werin, na fedrant ddeall (ond odid) air o ddeg ynddo?[30]

> (I have been more careful to satisfy the ordinary people of the country with carols, songs, &c. than to look for *awdlau*, &c. to satisfy the conceited. I believe that carols and songs are more useful at the present time than anything else produced by poets. Of what benefit will a bungling *awdl* be to the common people, who can barely understand one word out of ten in it?)

Central to the early success of the Trefriw press were a small number of renowned ballad writers (or 'prydyddion') whose sellers (known as the 'baledwyr') relied heavily upon it for their printing needs.[31] Paramount among these was Ellis Roberts (Elis y Cowper), who spent most of his life living in the nearby village of Llanddoged. Although, as we have already seen, figures such as Ellis Roberts were subjected to the scorn of higher-ranking poets, their ballads were not without considerable craft. Whereas ballads in England remained metre- and rhyme-driven alone, Welsh ballad writers (in the north in particular) adopted a form of writing loosely based on the highly complex art of *cynghanedd*, where consonance and internal rhyme played a vital part in the construction of individual lines and couplets. This art was cross-bred with the art of popular music, as ballad writers structured their effusions to the metres of a variety of tunes, often imported from England.[32] The emphasis both on *cynghanedd* and on music means that the sound produced by word and note is often central to the appeal of Welsh ballads, and words or phrases within them which are difficult to appreciate (and seem merely to serve the purpose of filling up a line, adding nothing to its meaning) are more easily

accounted for when they are heard set to music.[33] This is particularly true of syntax and punctuation, which can often only be truly understood by giving due attention to the musical structure of the tunes which lie behind the texts.[34] The importance of the sound of the ballads suggests that ballad performers (or sellers) were crucial figures in the world of Welsh (as of English) balladry. In a 1779 text, Ellis Roberts envisions a world where the seller ('Y Baledwr') is deceased, leaving angry old women, unable to read, frustrated by the inaccessibility of the printed text.[35] Elsewhere, Roberts enjoyed poking fun at the figure of the ballad seller and singer, using his removed and privileged position as a poet to satirize this dependent.[36] As the eighteenth century drew to its close, the triangular association between poet, seller and printer appears to have changed, with ballad writers becoming increasingly involved in the process of performing and distributing their own work, especially in south Wales. Here, the tradition, as suggested, grew along different lines. In the prosperous printing town of Carmarthen no single printer held dominance over the ballad trade, and up to four different printers were involved in it, often in competition, during the period 1793–1815. Likewise, there were no obvious leading horses among ballad writers. The metres used by writers (with the exception of some of the ballads printed in relation to the Fishguard invasion) were simpler than the 'carol' metres of the north, as described above; this may have reflected the strength of an oral ballad and song tradition in southern regions. Balladry did not lend itself to print as early as in the north, and did not appear to need cross-fertilization with print culture to sustain and enhance it.[37]

The development of ballad singing in the Wales of the period was contained and controlled by the factors outlined above relating to printing, geography and tradition. Some of these factors were unique to Wales or to particular areas within Wales; others can be identified with developments in English balladry. There is one current within Welsh ballad writing which sets it widely apart from its English equivalent, however: the ubiquitous nature of biblical reference and imagery within it. Welsh writers from all areas of the country appear to have been obsessed with the nature of sin and redemption and, although Thomas Parry described the underpinning religiosity of the ballad writers as 'remarkably simple and unquestioning' ('crefydd fach seml ac unplyg ryfeddol'), its pervasiveness means that it makes an indelible impression on the mind of a reader today, as it would have done for contemporaries who read and heard the ballads.[38] A morality based on this 'simple' religion colours attitudes among ballad writers towards a wide variety of subjects, as Rosser has demonstrated in the case of Welsh ballads dedicated to the representation of women. For the ballad writers of north Wales, the mindset conditioned by religion and reliance upon the Bible, coupled with the stylistic parameters

set out by the alliterative, tune-based metres, often resulted in a 'lingua franca', where the individual poet's voice and perspective were lost.[39] Yet, ballad writers themselves, from the eighteenth-century 'prydyddion' to the early nineteenth-century balladeers proper, were evidently aware, at times at least, of their own unique status or personalities, and in some cases prepared to use their fame to enhance interest in (and the sale of) their ballads.[40] The writers' own sense of self serves as a reminder that Welsh balladry is not in fact as monochrome as might be expected, but offers a variety of perspectives on and insights to the experiences of the ordinary people whom it served.

Even if balladry in Wales was not seen as a threat to social stability at the turn of the 1790s, exploration of the ballad corpus which has survived suggests that ballads paid at least some attention to issues of social gradation and class tension. In fact, ballad writers in the earlier eighteenth century could be scathing in their portrayal of ruling class exploitation of ordinary people. This is the case in 'Ymddiddan rhwng Lloegr a Ffraingc ar y mesur a elwir Leave Land neu adel Tir' (A dialogue between England and France on the metre called Leave Land or Gadael Tir), a poem by Ellis Roberts published at the height of the Seven Years' War in October 1758.[41] This ballad shows the collusion of the British ruling classes, impersonated as 'England', with their equivalent social class in France over the question of corn imports. 'France', in her desire to reap the rewards of agricultural labour in Britain at the expense of a starving native population, advises a mercenary 'England' to shoot anyone who protests against the exportation of corn from Britain; 'England' concedes to having already done so the previous year when rioting against this practice took place and now plans to send its produce to France surreptitiously via the Isle of Man, promising death to anyone who attempts to frustrate its plans. In allowing his audience to listen in on this shameful sell-out of their own livelihoods, Ellis Roberts was certain to stir anger and indignation.[42]

Further dialogue poems (regrettably not always datable) pit members of different social classes against each other, thus providing a forum for exploring the representation of social tension in Welsh balladry. There appear to be two strands to such ballads: a landowner/tenant dialogue, and a tenant/beggar dialogue. The tenant is thus the consistent character, attacked from two different perspectives, a fact which suggests that the ballad audiences had a particular interest in his social position. This may have been because some of them hailed from the tenant class, aspired to it or were in close contact with it. Tenants are typically criticized in the ballads from the perspectives of both pauper and landlord for their decadent lifestyle (especially that of their offspring and womenfolk) and for social climbing.[43] Beggars are also typically reviled, although, of course, the genre ensures that they are granted a voice to put across their own viewpoint. They appear to be a source of anxiety to the tenants with

whom they converse on account of their dependence on parish relief (the poor rate being one of several taxes cited in these poems). In two poems by Robert Morris, one probably dating from 1788, the other possibly originating in the 1790s, the dialogue ends as the beggar is taken away from the scene.[44] This happens in a more sympathetic manner in the earlier ballad than in the later, where the tenant savagely threatens to tie up the beggar's legs unless he immediately leaves the county. In the later text, there is concern about taxation and about the dependence not only of paupers but also of the wives of soldiers, suggesting that the poet was writing (during years of war) for an audience that was self-sufficient but far from well off. Even though the end of the poem favours the tenant, the beggar makes the point that the tenant is better off during the current period than generally on account of raised prices for goods, a fact attested to in the 1790s.[45] The scuffling between these two groups suggests a working out of tensions, but no threat to social stability, and not a hint of an alliance between traditional popular balladry and a reformist or radical message. Only in one ballad does the formula of chasing off one speaker turn against a landowner. A poem published by Richard Marsh, active as a printer in Wrexham between 1772 and 1792, ends with a threat of physical violence against the landowner:

> A ninne ar ôl blino a godwn i foppio,
> Cei[ff] llawer eu pwnnio yn eu Penn;
> Y Gŵr mwŷa a welwn, tuag atto cyfeiriwn,
> Mi tresiwn, mi laeniwn i Lenn.[46]
>
> (And we, having had enough, shall rise up to mob,
> many shall be beaten in the head;
> we shall head for the most illustrious man that we can see –
> we shall thrash him, we shall beat his mantle.)

This is a provocative ending for a ballad sung on 'God Save the King', a tune sometimes used in a sardonic mode by radicals in the 1790s.[47] Use of the melody by Welsh ballad writers in 1779, 1784 and 1788 is largely unprovocative, which suggests that the text published by Marsh may date from the early 1790s.[48] Even if this inference regarding dating is correct, however, it remains the case that, in a decade in which popular protest was on the increase throughout Wales, there is very limited reference to protest or social unrest within Welsh balladry. Riots in the north Wales coal-field in the summer of 1789, corn riots in Swansea and protests against enclosure in Hope, Flintshire, in 1793, and riots in Denbigh and Haverfordwest in 1795 left no mark on the output of Welsh ballad singers.[49] This may have reflected a sense among ballad writers that the traditional occasional foray into protest which was a feature

of balladry earlier in the century was no longer an open avenue. Evidence shows that Thomas Edwards (Twm o'r Nant), a popular dramatist, poet and ballad writer, was unable fully to represent private feelings of sympathy for mob violence in Denbigh in 1795 in his poetic work.[50] This in turn suggests that at least some ballad writers in Wales were aware of the novelty of the period which was hailed by the fall of the Bastille in 1789, and of their entry into territory where previous markers regarding the permissibility of protest could no longer be relied upon.

Responding to Revolution

This anthology includes poetry published between 1793 and 1815. The earlier date represents the first clear responses in Welsh ballads to the events of the Revolution in France. The exhilaration of the initial years of the Revolution does not appear to have struck the ballad poets; neither did the vociferous debate among pamphlet writers stemming from the publication of Richard Price's *A Discourse on the Love of our Country* in 1789, at least not immediately. In England, conversely, Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1791), composed in answer to Price's *Discourse*, sparked a huge pamphlet debate (which extended to the production of ballads and songs) and lead to 'the growth of a popular press and the evolution of a popular political literary style' which spanned the divide between loyalists and radicals.[51] The death of two of the most productive among Welsh ballad writers may be a factor in the silence of Welsh balladry in reaction to the very early years of the Revolutionary period: Huw Jones of Llangwm died *c.*1785, Ellis Roberts during 1789 itself.[52] Many of the known ballad writers represented in this anthology are 'new voices' of the 1790s and beyond, with little footing in the previous decades and no experience of singing in 'political' contexts such as the Seven Years' War or the American War of Independence.[53] Earlier eighteenth-century poets had fully engaged with the debates emanating from the conflict between Britain and her American colonies and, in spite of being what Gwyn A. Williams described as 'non-political Tories' for the most part, were 'temporarily unhinged' by the conflict, '[s]ome even [showing] a transient sympathy for errant brethren across the water'.[54] During 1793, however, a largely new wave of Welsh ballad writers began to respond to the cataclysmic events in France and their political and social ramifications in their own communities. Untypically, in the context of this anthology, in 1793 there were voices straddled along the divide between Church-and-King loyalism on the one hand and reforming Dissent on the other. The following discussion turns to these two contrasting standpoints, beginning in Dissenting

south-west Wales, before moving northwards to the 'Tory' territory described by Williams.

The voices of Dissent: the ballads of south-west Wales (*1793*)

Two of the earliest texts presented here hail from Carmarthenshire in south-west Wales. They are almost unique in this anthology in that they clearly represent the voices of Dissenters – very little heard elsewhere.[55] Different from each other in attitude and stance – the first apparently conciliatory and deferential to the status quo, while the second is outraged and pugnaciously defensive – they are both framed by a prose narrative which sets them in context and perhaps betrays a certain anxiety as to their reception. The first, no. 1 in this anthology, was produced as a result of a meeting of Protestant Dissenters from the three denominations of Baptists, Independents and Presbyterians, held in Newcastle Emlyn in February 1793. Although no author's name is appended to the ballad text itself, the name of the chairperson at the meeting, William Williams, is clearly set at the end of the prose text, giving it the authority of an official statement. The meeting, and indeed the declaration itself, can be seen in the context of the rush among Protestant Dissenters (and numerous other public bodies) during late 1792 and early 1793 to affirm loyalty to the king in a climate increasingly hostile towards Dissent.[56] Declarations in a similar vein (none of which venture into verse, however) sprang from Dissenters in towns all over Britain, including London, Manchester, Haverhill in Suffolk, and Leeds, and were published in the London papers.[57] They typically refer to the 'Three Essential Estates – the King, the House of Lords, and the free representation of the People in an Elective House of Commons', to the Glorious Revolution which established the British constitution, and to their 'abhor[rence of] all Riots and tumultuous Proceedings' along with their determination to support their suppression by the Civil Magistrates.[58] The declaration which resulted from the south-west Wales meeting is substantially longer and fuller than those published in the London papers. Its ostensible purpose is to ward off any suggestion that Dissenters harbour sympathy with the violent aims and ways of the Revolution in France, and it urges any French sympathizers to 'go off to France all at one stroke, / a deluge of equals' (lines 59–60). An outright dismissal of the French model ('without taking heed of France . . .', line 63) is coupled with the use of the image of a deluge sweeping away the supporters of French-style 'equality' as if they were the dregs of the earth punished by God for their sins (but leaving the godly – the Welsh or the British – safe in their ark-like island). The author or collective authors clearly wanted to show that the ideals represented by the Revolution were rejected by the Dissenting

community. Nonetheless, this poem appears to have a two-tier message. Not only does it speak to the greater public of the loyalty of Protestant Dissenters, it also speaks to Dissenting congregations themselves, seeking to provide them with guidance on how to negotiate the difficulties of their current situation.

Even at a remove of more than three years, the ballad was clearly inspired by Price's *Discourse on the Love of our Country*. Price's sermon was delivered to the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain, and urges Protestant Dissenters 'to celebrate [that event] with expressions of joy and exultation'.[59] It also propagated a strongly reformist agenda, however, arguing for the pursuit of greater liberty of conscience, a more perfect toleration and more equal representation.[60] The celebrations of 1688, for Price, must on no account be a point of stasis, where men look backwards with satisfaction but fail to question whether any thing 'is left deficient'. Price's generation need to be 'transmitting the blessings obtained by [the Glorious Revolution] to our posterity, unimpaired and *improved*' (my emphasis).[61] The south-west Wales ballad likewise poises between past and future, and is no more a static celebration of 1688 than Price's work. In its description of the passing on of blessings from generation to generation and its strongly visionary outlook, picturing the blessings of future years, it shows (in spite of its rejection of the French ideal of equality) an almost missionary zeal for the Christianization of the world. The Particular Baptist Missionary Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen had been established in 1792, and the first missionary, William Carey, sent out to India. This, together with the campaign to abolish slavery, which gained strength from the end of the 1780s, is evoked in the poem in a way which suggests a real commitment to a Dissenting agenda. Not only are 'the black people' (line 94) and the natives of India part of a vision of transformation through the power of the Gospel towards liberalization, the text also envisages a world in which all kinds of sinners, or men believed otherwise wanting (from the proud to the drunken, the miserly, oppressors and cruel masters) are rendered godly. The poem ends with an affirmation of what it seemingly denied in its introductory prose message – another Revolution:

Yn ddilys mae i Dduwiolion
    Ail oes a Refoliwsion,
Pan caffon uno'n llon eu llef
    Yn felys â nefolion.[62]

(Godly people will surely
have a second age and a Revolution
when they shall join, with happy cry,
sweetly with heavenly beings.)

A clear message is thus given not only of Dissenter loyalty and patriotism (couched in 'citizens of the world' terms, as in Price's *Discourse*) but also of the need for Dissenters to strive for a better world. The framing prose section which appears at the end shows a keen awareness of the limitations on Dissenters. It mentions their 'exclusion from the common rights of citizens', but counsels that the way forward lies in putting their faith in the still-evolving and ever self-perfecting constitution ('an excellent constitution, which has been improving for ages, and from its very principles has power, without violence or tumult, to correct every remaining imperfection'). Like Price, who urges upon his listeners the importance of tendering their 'patriotic service' to change the society in which they live, the ballad counsels that fear of failure should count for nothing: the reward 'of soon becoming members of a perfect community in the heavens' is sustenance in itself.[63]

The prose introduction to the ballad mentions the figure of the Pretender (it is not specified whether that of 1715 or of 1745). In the second ballad produced in Carmarthenshire, also probably in February 1793 (no. 2), the Pretender figures again, rather more colourfully, as the poet remembers how the Dissenting community 'drove [him] like a traitor before them'.[64] This text is a response to the publication of a Welsh translation of *One Penny-worth of Truth from Thomas Bull to his Brother John*, which, from the evidence of contemporary correspondence, we know was circulating in Carmarthenshire in February 1793.[65] Although Dissent is not mentioned in the original English *One Penny-worth*, the ballad is an exercise in self-defence carried out on behalf of the Dissenting community, to which it makes numerous references. It begins pugnaciously by accusing the author and translator of the text either of ignorance or of being enemies to the king and the truth. It then accuses them of putting forth arguments which resurrect the cause of the Pretender and his attempts at a tyrannous rule. '[I]f Thomas had printed his ill-intentioned letter in the year 1745, when the Pretender landed in this island, he would certainly have died on the gallows, according to his desert', claims the author, echoing the words of Charles James Fox in a House of Commons speech on 13 December 1792. Fox had claimed that *One Penny-worth* contained 'assertions, concerning the divine right of anointed Kings, and such other matter, as, if published in the year 1715, or 1745, would have been held treason', and 'would have been supposed to defend the right impiously called divine by the Pretender, in opposition to that, which was so much better, the right resulting from the affection and loyalty of the People to the House of Brunswick, upon whom they so deservedly relied'.[66]

Like the previous ballad (no. 1), this poem delves into the history of Dissent in order to establish the lineal descent of Dissenting loyalty. It ventures as far back as the Restoration in its historical reference, claiming that 'it was the

Dissenters who brought King Charles the Second to the Crown in the year 1660', a potentially controversial claim in view of the established tradition in Welsh literature that Dissenters were strongly connected with the downfall of Charles II's father, Charles I, executed in 1649.[67] The author avoids any qualification of this claim (perhaps signalling his confidence in his own version of history) but is at greater pains to deal with claims directly raised in *One Penny-worth* about more recent Dissenting history. The pamphlet claims that:

> Our National Debt for which we are now paying such heavy taxes, was doubled by the troubles in America. Yet those people who fomented and brought those burdens upon us, are they that rail most at the expensiveness of our Government, and use it as a handle for overturning it . . .

The ballad writer saw this as a direct accusation against Dissenters, who, although they opposed going to war against the American colonists, could be viewed as 'fomenters' of the conflict in view of the support which they lent the colonists to stand their ground against a British executive which refused them parliamentary representation.

More central to the ballad (as to the pamphlet itself), however, is the Revolution currently underway in France. Of the three slogan-words promoted by the French – 'liberté', 'égalité' and 'fraternité' – the second probably instilled the greatest fear into the bosoms of the propertied classes in Britain.[68] It is the doctrine of equality which receives *One Penny-worth*'s initial attention:

> The Clerk is not equal to the Parson; the Footman is not equal to the Judge upon the Bench. If it were as they say, then the Clerk might get up into the Pulpit; the Footman might sit at the top of the table; the Thief might take his place upon the Bench and try the Judge; and the Coachman might get into the coach and set his Master upon the box, who, not knowing how to drive, 'tis ten to one but he overturns him.[69]

The ballad tackles this view, attributed to 'those conceited monkeys the French . . . and some Englishmen at home, who hate this country as bad as the French do', by arguing that Dissenters never harboured plans to turn the social hierarchy upon its head (lines 53–60). Yet, when the poet devotes a stanza to define what Dissenters believe and strive towards, his meaning is not immediately apparent, in spite of the gusto of the initial couplet:

> Yr hyn mae'r diwygwyr yn sicr yn ddal
> Yn wyneb mab Siencyn a phawb o'r rhai bal,
> Fod hawl gan gardotyn fel brenin, heb freg,
> I chwarae dros ffortun â'i fywyd yn deg.[70]

(What the reformers certainly believe
in the face of Jenkin's son and all the other stupid ones,
is that a beggar, like a king, without guile,
has the right to play his life out for fortune's sake.)

The ideal of equality expressed here may draw on notions of new beginnings such as those increasingly sought by Welsh Dissenters in the New World. In May 1793 the Welsh magazine *Y Cylchgrawn Cynmraeg* published a letter from the expatriate John Evans of Waunfawr in Caernarfonshire, who had left Wales for America in search of the descendants of the legendary Welsh prince, Madog. Evans wrote that 'this is the most wonderful country I have ever seen; the poor people here live better than the farmers in Wales' ('Dyma y wlad hyfrydaf a welais erioed; y mae y bobl dlodion yn y wlad yma yn byw yn well na'r ffarmwyr yn Nghymru').[71] This sentiment was later reflected in a Welsh ballad composed by an emigrant to America, which mentioned the equality of status among the population in the New World.[72]

As in the case of the first Dissenting ballad discussed (no. 1), 'Sylwiad byr' (no. 2) also apparently addresses two audiences. It is aware of (and wishes to profit from) the potential of cheap print to influence a popular audience, and attempts to anticipate the response to its arguments. It claims that the verdict of ordinary people on *One Penny-worth* is that 'Thomas and his lines are certainly too costly' (line 88), and it attempts to deflate the pamphlet's arguments by maintaining that its main spokesman is a 'tongue-less bell' (line 72). Throughout, it repeatedly accuses Thomas of lying, and attempts to attribute to him the blame for disruption and disturbance in public order, turning on its head the argument that Dissenters are disloyal to the Crown. Its concluding stanza, however, is a prayer-like plea for strength, imploring God to grant the necessary 'patience and nourishment' for the Dissenting community to shoulder the cross put upon them by society:

O, Arglwydd da! dyro amynedd a maeth
I'th lesg bererinion er gwell ac er gwaeth;
Trwy bob gwradwyddiadau a chroesau o hyd,
Ein henaid ddyrchafo Iachawdwr y byd.[73]

(Oh, good Lord! give patience and nourishment
to Your weary pilgrims for better and for worse;
through all dishonours and afflictions always,
may the Redeemer of the world raise our soul.)

'Faithful Britons': the loyalist response (1793–4)

The two ballads hitherto discussed present rather lone voices within this anthology in their portrayal of the Dissenting and reforming response to growing public mistrust as the Revolutionary decade proceeded. They are likely to be the work of educated authors: the first emanated from a meeting chaired by William Williams, a highly literate and influential member of the Baptist community in Cardiganshire, and the second shows evidence of acquaintance with views expressed by Charles James Fox, the leader of the Whigs in Parliament at this time.[74] In a third ballad produced in 1793 we move northwards into a terrain firmly established as the preserve of Gwyn A. Williams's 'Tory' ballad singers during the course of the eighteenth century; a terrain where, although ballad writers were prepared to make complaint about aspects of social life, they tended only to draw attention to 'where the shoe pinched' as R. T. Jenkins succinctly put it.[75] A new voice here in the 1790s is that of Richard Roberts, initially a ballad seller who probably realized his own talent for composition and became involved in producing and, most probably, selling his own work. Roberts had a predilection for choosing themes related to the troubles of the time and is, as a result, fairly well represented in this anthology.

Roberts's two earliest ballads in this volume (nos. 3 and 7) relate to the executions of Louis XVI in January 1793 and his wife, Marie Antoinette, in October of the same year. In the background to both poems is the spectre of war, France having commenced hostilities against Britain in February 1793. This links the poems with English ballads on the deaths of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, which also invoke the Europe-wide conflict that was quickly emerging early in 1793. In 'A New Song, called, The French King's Blood Crying for Vengeance', the 'ruffian' French are confronted by 'vast thunder / From Portugal and Spain; / From Austria and from Russia, / And Prussia more renown'd', let alone the 'Warriors of Great Britain', Brunswick and Holland. In 'The Lamentation of the French Queen, in Prison, with the moving Discourse of the Princess Royal, and the young Dauphin', the incarcerated Marie Antoinette (who, awaiting certain death at the hands of the Revolutionaries, rather clumsily characterizes herself as 'Hamlet's Ghost') envisages a France 'in great confusion, / By glittering swords, and cannon balls', and warns that 'It will end in dissolution'.[76] For both ballads, war is the answer to the outrage of regicide. For the author of the former, the Revolutionaries have 'made a blot in history, / By [their] infernal rage' and must be supplanted. The theatrical imagery implies that men are responsible for the actions of war: 'The combin'd drum beats come, come, come! / To lop you up the stage'.[77] In Richard Roberts's songs, the picture is somewhat less straightforward. Although his work shares

with contemporary English ballads an abundance of pathos at the fate of Louis's wife, it is also more reflective upon the British position in the narrative of the Revolution in France.[78] The ballad on the king's execution (no. 3) opens with an address to the Britons which invokes war, but immediately diminishes human agency in its vicissitudes by maintaining that 'God Himself is the arbiter / on sea and land'.[79] This leaves all to be played for. Since God is greater than all the Britons' enemies, worship of and faith in Him are the crucial factors in saving Britain from destruction.[80] Engagement in war is for Richard Roberts a matter for reflection not simply on the evil of the opposing country but also on the potential failings of the mother country.

Roberts envisages disaster in Britain on two counts. Unlike the English ballads on the death of the French monarchs, which make no mention of the possibility of an invading force from France landing on British soil, this possibility is keenly imagined in Roberts's work.[81] This, as Mary-Ann Constantine has noted in papers on Welsh balladry of the period, may be the result of the emphasis in Welsh historiography on the inbred sinfulness of the ancient Britons (who are amalgamated with the British subjects of the late eighteenth century in Roberts's and others' work) and the arrival of punishment for this wickedness reaching the Isle of Britain from overseas.[82] Yet, the 'bloody enemy' (no. 3, line 83) feared by Roberts is not solely an external force. 'Treachery' (of a particularly violent and bloodthirsty nature) is portrayed as rife within Britain itself. Popular radicalism is the immediate threat: Roberts expresses the hope that Britain's internal enemies will be kept away from his audience's hearing (no. 3, line 93), which suggests that the permeation of a popular radical message is a cause for anxiety for him as for the ruling elites elsewhere. The association of popular radicalism with Dissent is only fleetingly made, as Roberts refers to Britain's enemies as 'sham Christians' (no. 3, line 111), and asks for the support of a Trinitarian God in the battle against them (no. 7, lines 87–8).

Central to both ballads, as promised in their titles, is the narration of the stories of the French monarchs' executions. Both make use of the *memento mori* theme, which expresses bewilderment at the transience of human life, for kings and beggars alike. Louis himself is the subject of this astonishment in one ballad, his children in the other. Whereas the children's frailty is invoked for the sake of pathos in a poem devoted to the fate of their mother (no. 7, lines 60–1), Louis's is part of a portrayal which occasionally dips into a less sympathetic representation:

> Fe ganodd ffárwel ar ddydd Llun
> Ac fe ddwedodd wrth ei fab ei hun,
> "Bydd fyw yn dy le yn dda dy lun,
>   Rhag terfyn dy oes.

Cymer siampl ohono' i nawr –
Cei weld yn llif fy ngwaed i'r llawr –
Bûm i fel mur yn frenin mawr,
 Ond ar lawr mae'm loes."[83]

(he said farewell on Monday
and he said to his own son,
"Live within your condition, in a commendable manner,
lest your life should be ended.
Take an example from me now –
you shall see in the flow of my blood to the ground –
I was a great king, like a rampart,
but my agony is on the ground.")

Roberts's Louis offers his son, the Dauphin, the warning that unless he should live 'in a commendable manner' he may suffer execution at the hands of his people. Perhaps this portrayal owes more to the weight of popular Welsh 'example' literature than to Roberts's considered opinion of Louis. It can be compared with the song accorded to Louis in a Welsh interlude composed by Roberts's contemporary, Hugh Jones of Glan Conwy. Jones's work overwhelmingly portrays both Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette as cruel papist oppressors, yet makes use of the *memento mori* motif to suggest the king's repentance for and awareness of his failings in one last song before his execution on the stage.[84] As in Roberts's ballad, this song offers Louis a charged dignity, even while he acknowledges his failings. In both cases, however, the scaffold speech is in stark contrast to the record preserved in the popular Welsh genre of the interlude regarding the death of another monarch, Charles I, over a century earlier. In *Y Rhyfel Cartrefol* by Huw Morys, the dying king is shown addressing his son (eventually Charles II). In no way does the elder Charles admit to any fault or present himself as an example of the dire consequences of misbehaviour in Morys's portrayal.[85] This may reflect the difference (even at a century and a half's distance) between singing of one's own murdered king and of that of another nation, especially France's.[86] Louis's most famous predecessor in modern times was the 'Roi Soleil', Louis XIV, about whom Welsh poets had little good to say. Louis XVI himself had been portrayed in a Machiavellian light just over a decade previously by Ellis Roberts, in a poem on the invasion threat posed by the Scots-American privateer, John Paul Jones.[87] Roberts also visualizes the executed king in this lineage of rulers inimical to Britain and its interests (no. 3, lines 81–4).

While for both Richard Roberts and Hugh Jones, in two different but related genres, the *memento mori* theme provides an opportunity for the king to express his own dignity-in-disgrace, it appears to have served quite a

different purpose among French song-writers. A hint of the theme is found in the mocking self-portrayal of Louis composed by the song-writer Ladré, who worked in the Pont Neuf district of Paris, upon the king's first appearance before the 'barre' of the Convention on 11 December 1792. Ladré's song opens with:

Vous savez que je fus Roi
Comme mon grand-père,
Ne faites pas comme moi,
Tyrans de la terre.
Comme un soleil éclipsé,
Je suis bien embarrassé,
Je suis lou lou lou, je suis oui, oui, oui,
Je suis lou, je suis oui,
Je suis Louis Seize
Bien mal à mon aise.[88]

(You know that I was a king
like my grandfather;
do not act as I do,
tyrants of the earth.
Like an eclipsed sun
I am well and truly in a predicament,
I am *Lou- Lou- Lou-*, I am *oui oui oui*,
I am *Lou-*, I am *oui*,
I am Louis the Sixteenth,
very ill at ease.)

Ladré's Louis is couched in the trappings of an 'example'. His grandfather, Louis XV, a striking representative of the ideal of hereditary and absolute monarchy, is example enough with which to compare him, and there is little call for the expansive classical and biblical frame of reference offered in the Welsh interlude text. The chanting word play, which builds on the two syllables of the king's Christian name, perfectly conveys Louis's nervousness as he affirms his identity, delving into his psyche with a cruel cleverness. This pattern of semi-infantile play on words is retained through all six stanzas of the poem, the final example based on the swelling cries of the Parisian people, 'A la gui, gui, gui, à la liot, liot, liot' (To the *gui, gui, gui*, to the *liot, liot, liot*), resolved in the concluding couplet, 'A la guillotine, / Qu'on rase sa mine!' (To the guillotine, / may his face be shaven off!).

Even though nothing in Welsh interlude or ballad comes close to the relentless condemnation of Louis in Ladré's song, the king's behaviour is nonetheless subjected to scrutiny by both Hugh Jones and Richard Roberts. Returning

to the latter's representation of Louis XVI's final moments (no. 3), we find an implication that the king himself instigated a conflict with his people:

> Fe aeth brenin Ffrainc yn anghytûn
> I roi dial hy ar ei deulu'i hun;
> Fe a'i trowd o'i le yn ddrwg ei lun –
> Cadd derfyn du;
> Am ei groes faterion mowrion maith
> Cadd ddiodde loesion, creulon graith,
> Sef torri ei ben ar fyr daith –
> Heb obaith bu.[89]
>
> (The king of France went contentiously
> to effect a bold vengeance upon his own family;
> he was turned out of his seat in a cruel fashion –
> he had a calamitous end;
> for his great, numerous perverse actions
> he had to suffer agonies, a cruel scar,
> namely the severing of his head in a short time –
> he was without hope.)

In view of the varied and confused lexicon of this opening stanza, it is very difficult to determine how Roberts intended the 'vengeance' enacted by Louis XVI upon his own family, or possibly his own nation, to be interpreted.[90] The king's treatment is seemingly decried as 'cruel' and agonizing, yet he is charged with having conducted 'numerous perverse actions' and, in a later stanza, with being an 'unwise man under the firmament' (line 51). This lack of precision opens up the possibility of viewing Louis as either a God-like figure wreaking revenge on a disobedient people, or alternatively as a king who showed a deplorable lack of sympathy in his (unspecified) actions against his own subjects. He also at times takes on the mantle of a misunderstood prophet, 'struck in his own country' (line 21). Roberts's ballad on the death of Marie Antoinette contains none of this ambiguity. Even while describing her attempt to secure foreign aid against Revolutionary France, an action generally seen in France as highly duplicitous, Roberts has nothing but sympathy. He is likewise clearly unaware of the monstrous charges made against her at her trial regarding her surviving son, the Dauphin, and simply draws on her status as a mother to elicit his audience's sympathy (no. 7, lines 55–6).[91] As in Roberts's ballad on Louis XVI's death, a great deal of the energy of the text is channelled into describing the physical torment inflicted on the queen, his listeners and readers' disgust at the Revolutionaries' actions and heart-felt sympathy with the pair ensured by the depiction of Louis's scalded corpse, treated 'like animal

skins in our country', or Marie Antoinette's 'little arms bound'.[92] The simile in the first instance brings the picture home in cruel starkness, whereas the placing of the endearing adjective 'bach' (little) speaks powerfully in the second instance. In neither case is the guillotine clearly invoked, yet Roberts's tortured attempts at conveying the manner of Louis's death suggests that he may have been aware of its existence. Louis is said to have had his head placed 'Ar y siaffer dyner denn' (on the gracious, neat chafing-dish, line 50), perhaps in an attempt to evoke the bucket-like structure into which the head would have rolled once chopped off.[93] A minor textual variant in the Machynlleth and Wrexham imprints of Roberts's ballad to Louis suggests an effort by the printer-compositors to describe execution by the guillotine, or otherwise reflect a process of interpretation carried out during the transmission of the text; the words 'tan fur' (underneath a wall) in these imprints may suggest the movement of a wall-like contraption downwards on the neck. Marie Antoinette is said, literally, to have had her throat cut – an inexact description of the process of execution by guillotine. The reference to 'corn ei gwddw' (literally, her throat or windpipe, line 47) once again reverts to animal imagery: hens are frequently killed by twisting their necks in this way. The sense that Roberts is searching hard both for precise terminology and for more roundabout ways of describing both deaths suggests the novelty of the world which he attempts to portray in these texts in all its stark horror.[94]

Richard Roberts's emphasis on an internal enemy, as early as the initial days of the Revolutionary Wars, is not an isolated phenomenon among the ballads included in this anthology. It is further developed in a 1794 ballad by Roberts (no. 8), where the war against France is envisaged as a religious war against the forces of Catholicism. As in his ballads on the deaths of the French monarchs, there is a certain amount of confusion between the war fought against Revolutionary France and an internal battle against a host of representative animal figures, including 'gwiberod' (vipers), 'bleiddied' (wolves) and 'seirff' (serpents), the latter clearly stated to be present in England (line 61). Other Welsh sources, including the interlude by Hugh Jones (mentioned above) and *Y Cylchgrawn Cynmraeg* (published in 1793 and 1794) saw the Revolution itself as a scourge for Catholicism.[95] In spite of the widespread prejudice against Dissenters suggested by the south-west ballads of 1793, it is this anti-Catholic strain that Roberts takes up here. He wages a war on what appears at least in part to be the forces of British Catholicism, who are intent, he claims, 'were they to

receive aid' (line 63), upon bloodletting. The ballad's 1794 date is too early for this to be a reference to the activities of the United Englishmen, an association of radicals with strong links to the United Irish (who were themselves only truly taking shape under that name in the latter part of 1794).[96] It is more probable that the background to the ballad lies with William Pitt's efforts to steer an Irish Catholic Relief Act in 1793, in preparation for the 1800/1801 Acts of Union between Ireland and mainland Britain.[97] Roberts, and the community in which he lived, may also have been aware of the considerable numbers of Catholics living in large English towns including Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester as the eighteenth century drew to its close. Manchester and Salford, for instance, had a Catholic population of eight per cent in 1793, and Lancashire as a whole was plagued by anti-Catholicism in the 1800s in particular.[98]

An anonymous ballad (no. 6), again dated 1794, also evokes the presence of an 'internal enemy', but shows considerable ambiguity regarding the identity of this foe. Written 'in consideration of the times', it adopts the simple 'hen bennill' metre characteristic of poetry written with a leaning towards homespun wisdom and moral counsel. It describes with poignant simplicity the succession of happy times and troubled ones, with peace succeeded by war just as birth is by death or laughter by tears. The evoking of the rhythms of existence lends an inevitability to war, yet the poet wishes to advise his listeners to exhibit faithfulness to their country and to avoid criticism of each other (lines 21–32). The 'evil, turbulent men' initially blamed for raising commotion in the homeland (line 23) are here gradually amalgamated with the poem's individual listeners in an effort to impress upon each one the need to examine their conscience and their behaviour, regulating their almost canine urge to 'gibe and judge' ('Cnoi a barnu', line 31) others, driving them into corners in an attempt to outdo them. The poet calls instead for a reformation of manners and behaviour and for repentance before God, his tendency to blame the Britons' own behaviour for their predicament during this period of war indicative of the mood of this ballad corpus as a whole.

The Fishguard invasion (1797): loyalty, identity and the hand of God

The tension between an enemy within and the external forces of Revolutionary France, together with the self-critical soul-searching signalled by the earlier poetry, all come to a head in the ballads produced in the aftermath of the Fishguard invasion in February 1797. Threats of invasion, feared by the ballad writers of north Wales since 1793 (and in previous wars, including the conflict against the American colonies in the 1770s and 1780s), were

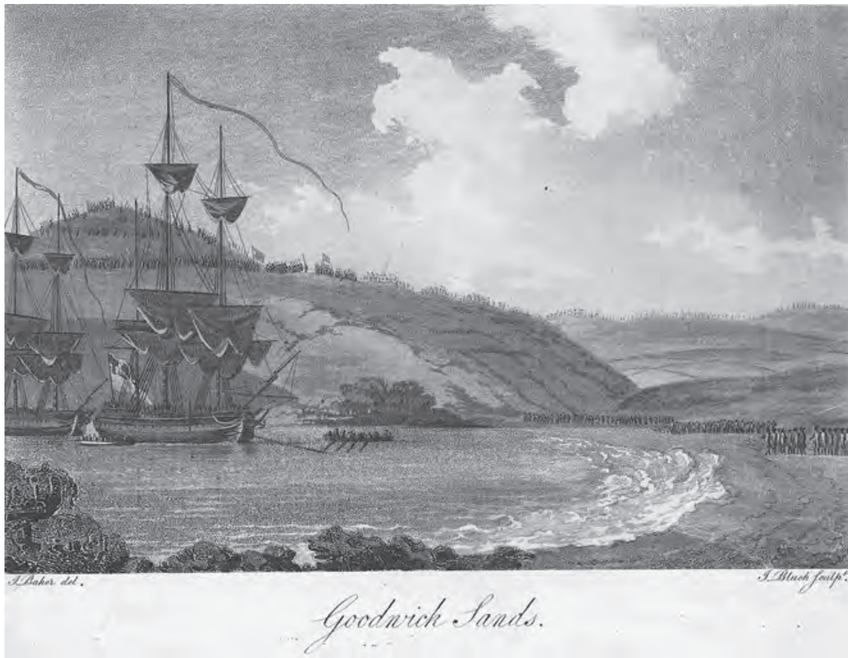

Figure 2. 'Goodwick Sands', from J. Baker, *Picturesque Guide through Wales* (1797)

now realized and, just as Roberts had worried about internal enemies prepared to lend the French a hand, the inhabitants of Pembrokeshire and neighbouring Carmarthenshire, in the aftermath of the scare, exhibited angst about the possibility that local people might have colluded with the enemy. The story of what happened when four shiploads of soldiers (many of them French convicts, others Irishmen, some trained soldiers) landed in Cardigan Bay on 22 February 1797 has been revisited by countless commentators and scholars and is still the subject of widespread debate. As Roland Quinault has suggested, in one of the most recent explorations of the landing, there was an early streak of commentary which aimed to deflate the significance of the experience. Jonathan Lovett, an Englishman present in Pembrokeshire soon after the event, made a strong case by letter to the duke of Portland on 3 March 1797 that 'some evil minded people [were bent on] lessen[ing] the merits of the Welch upon the French landing in Pembrokeshire by presenting their numbers as only two or three hundred and absolutely without *any sort of arms* not even *sticks*'.[99] Iolo Morganwg, a confirmed radical, also belittled the invasion and what he considered the hyperbolic response which it elicited. It was, in his view, no more than the landing of 'a thimble-full of French men . . . on our coast'.[100] The Cardiganshire-based brothers of John Jenkins (Ifor Ceri) were

slow to communicate to him what had happened. Jenkins, who was employed as a curate in Whippingham on the Isle of Wight at the time, 'waited with anxiety for every post, after the Country was invaded, but in vain for a Letter from my Brothers', and berated them for 'trifl[ing]' with him.[101] Further north, the ballad writers active around the printing hubs of Wrexham and Oswestry in the north-east, Trefriw in the north-west, and Machynlleth in mid-west Wales, were peculiarly reticent regarding the event. Only two ballads emanated from printing houses in these areas. The anonymous ballad no. 15 has survived only in an imprint produced by Ishmael Davies in Trefriw; records indicate the existence of another imprint by Edward Prichard of Machynlleth which is no longer extant. This poem gives a comprehensive account of the invaders' pranks and, although it is impossible to be certain about its provenance, the detail in itself suggests a more localized inception. The only other ballad on the landing to emanate from the north Wales presses is the work of Richard Roberts (no. 20). Compressed into two stanzas, it relates how a terrifying invasion took place in Pembrokeshire, leading to chaotic scenes of rape and a mass exodus of the region's inhabitants from their homes. The danger, however, was swiftly deflated as soldiers came from England to imprison the French. The poem concludes with an expression of faith in God's ability to conquer 'our' enemies. In view of Richard Roberts's earlier ballads on the Revolution and on the threat to stability presented by internal enemies and by the sin of the Britons more generally, this is a somewhat disappointing text, which fails fully to engage with the concept of infiltration from abroad and its consequences (other than the sensationalist claims mentioned) for the community involved.

To find such engagement we must turn to the ballads composed either in Pembrokeshire (Thomas Francis's, no. 21) or in the neighbouring counties of Cardigan and Carmarthenshire (nos. 18, 19, 22, by Nathaniel Jenkin, Phillip Dafydd and George Stephens). These were all printed (almost exclusively by John Evans) in the market town of Carmarthen, some thirty miles from the scene of the landing.[102] Other texts were published anonymously, one with no imprint, but are likely to have been produced in the area (nos. 12, 14, 15). Whereas some observers played down the significance of the invasion, for these poets it was a notable threat to life and limb, from which they were graciously 'delivered' by God. In no instance do the ballads mock the seriousness of the French's intentions; in this respect they differ from loyalist songs produced in the wake of the sister invasion of Bantry Bay in Ireland, only two months before, in December 1796. In 'General Wonder', an anonymous contemporary piece, the French general, Hoche, is confronted with a host of other abstract 'generals', including 'General gale' who provided a forceful wind to frustrate the plans of the invaders.[103] 'On the late Invasion, 1797',

published in *A collection of constitutional songs* (1799–1800), teasingly relives the invasion attempt from the perspective of the French, suggesting that, after long deliberation on 'which way they should steer', they 'at last . . . bethought 'em of our Christmas cheer'. In view of their trite objective of 'lick[ing] their lank lips' and thinking 'to regale / On . . . Carberry mutton and old bottled ale', it is perhaps no surprise that the 'French gluttons' are easily defeated by a benign Saint Patrick, who, with the assistance of Æolus, conjures up a storm to drive them away.[104]

The 1796 Bantry Bay attempt was, of course, an abject failure for the French, and this certainly colours the representation of the event in contemporary song.[105] In spite of the rather jovial tone of some of these loyalist effusions, however, a degree of seriousness prevails. One song, 'The Invasion. (Written in January 1797)', attributes Ireland's deliverance from Hoche's men to a combination of providential winds and the efforts of local people:

Oh! where was Hood? and where was Howe?
  And where Cornwallis then?
Where Colpoys, Bridport, or Pellew,
  And all their gallant men?

Nor skill nor courage aught avail
  When providence gainsays;
The storm arose and closed our ports,
  A mist o'erspread the seas.

For not to feeble mortal man
  Did God his vengeance trust;
He raised his own tremendous arm –
  All-powerful and all-just.

. . .

The sons of Themis proudly drew
  The sword of Justice bright,
And thirty thousand Yeomen blades
  Reflected back its light.

Now, firm and bold, her hardy troops
  To Erin's coast repair;
With ardent zeal they march along,
  Their banners fill the air . . .[106]

In the conspicuous absence of the heroes of the British navy, it is the storm itself to which victory is attributed. Vividly portrayed as an all-engulfing

mêlée, its 'billows mounting o'er [the enemy's] heads, / To kiss the bending sky', the moment at which it strikes is one 'When Earth beheld her God'. This interpretation of the Bantry Bay invasion is echoed in one of the Welsh texts to emanate from the Fishguard landing, in what is a relatively rare reference in the ballads to Ireland:

Nid cryfdwr llongau ar y moroedd
A'u rhwystrodd mewn i Iwerddon dir,
Ond gair o'i enau a orchmynnodd,
"Tyred wyntoedd, na fydd hir!
Chwytha longau rhai dinistriol,
Canons mawr a bwlets trwm,
Powdwr du ac arfau glowion
Lawr i'r môr fel pelen blwm!"[107]

(It was not the strength of ships upon the seas
that prevented them from entering the land of Ireland,
but a word from His mouth did command,
"Come, winds, do not be long!
Blow the ships of the pernicious ones,
large cannons and heavy bullets,
black powder and shining weapons
down into the sea like a lead ball!")

Although storms at sea did not feature in the defeat of the invaders at Fishguard, a belief in God's ability to prevent harm to a population threatened by invasion is echoed in every one of the ballads composed in the wake of the event, and often signalled in the titles, with their ubiquitous references to the Lord's deliverance. It is implied that a near-miraculous agency was at work on the occasion in the description of their surrender in the anonymously-published ballad no. 12:

Rhyfeddod ar ryfeddod! Ryfeddod daear lawr,
Wrth weled creulon filwyr yn bwrw'u harfau lawr
O flaen y Saeson glewion a'r Cymry mwynion triw;
Dewch, holl drigolion Brydain, i foli'r Seilo byw.[108]

(Wonder upon wonder! Wonder upon the surface of the earth,
seeing cruel soldiers putting down their arms
in front of the valiant English and the noble, loyal Welsh;
come, all the inhabitants of Britain, to praise the living Siloh.)

In Nathaniel Jenkin's depiction of the events, the Christian faith of the local army, led by parsons and priests and carrying the symbolical armaments of

'the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, / and the helmet of tender Salvation' (no. 18, lines 74–5), lends them a masque-like presence in their march to meet the French. Their confidence is evident in their complete lack of fear; God's power in the way in which He makes possible their victory 'without conflict or a fight' (line 93). Like the Syrians of the Old Testament (albeit in a rather less bloody manner), the enemy are rendered powerless. For the Methodist exhorter, Phillip Dafydd, the faithful Britons' cry for God's help pierced the heaven above, whereupon God 'arranged' a host of instruments, foremost among them Lord Cawdor, leader of a six-hundred-strong army against Tate's men.[109] And, even if God's war waging cannot be easily amalgamated with the physical forces of nature (as in Bantry Bay), Phillip Dafydd is at pains to evoke such a phenomenon when he calls to mind the Israelite Barak and prophetess Deborah's song of praise to God for His assistance in defeating the Canaanite Sisera.[110] Thomas Francis, in yet another ballad attributing the victory to God and reducing human agency in its outcome to the action of those who prayed for His assistance, simply evokes the 'storm' in a metaphorical sense.[111]

In their confidence in the power of God to deliver Ireland from the French, Protestant songs published after the Bantry Bay expedition of 1796 present hardly a hint of the complexity of the Irish society thus 'saved'.[112] 'General Wonder' in its insistence on an all-encompassing, universal response draws both 'rich' and 'poor' through a range of emotions in reaction to the event, among them 'disaffection', 'woe', 'dread', 'joy', 'ease', 'horror', 'praise' and 'love', all claimed to have been 'general'. 'The Invasion. (Written in 1797)' ends by expressing a hope that 'never more may foe presume / To dare this Christian land', thus glossing over the acute internal religious tensions within Ireland. In its attempt to perform the same feat, the hope for Ireland in 'On the late Invasion, 1797' is that 'no feuds or discord [may] her united sons sever'. In the effort to claim unity, and to reclaim the term 'united', such a line risks calling to mind the militant United Irish organization, in full flow in 1797, whose response to invasion by French hosts differed widely from that of loyalist Protestant Irishmen. The Fishguard ballads repeatedly affirm their loyalty to king and country, maintaining a staunch Protestant front in reaction to the invasion and eschewing the slightest degree of sympathy towards the French. They also, however, whether wittingly or not, provide a commentary on the tension which surfaced following the invasion, when a number of Protestant Dissenters (mostly Baptists) were accused of connivance with the enemy.

A quatrain from Phillip Dafydd's ballad prompted the Baptist minister William Richards of Lynn to compose a prose tract, *Cwyn y Cystuddiedig*, vigorously defending his brethren from attack. Dafydd had written of his astonishment at the connivance of enlightened men with the French enemy:

Mi ryfeddais fil o weithiau
I fod dynion hardd eu doniau
Gwedi'u dallu mor dywylled,
Yn margenna â'r fath fegeried.[113]

(I have wondered a thousand times
that men of decent moral virtue
should be so greatly blinded
as to bargain with such beggars.)

In a ballad which runs to 220 lines this is only a very brief reference. It nonetheless contains an unquestioned assumption of the guilt of the Nonconformists involved, and may well have contributed to the process of prejudicing the local population (potential jurors) in advance of the trial of two of the men taken up by the authorities on suspicion of colluding with the enemy. It was the injustice of this that incensed Richards, who argued 'Peth ciaidd a barbaraidd, dros ben, yw ceisio duo a rhagfarnu carcharorion cyn y caffo eu hachos ei brofi mewn brawdle, a cheisio rhagfeddiannu y wlad yn eu herbyn; gan na oddef y gyfraith iddynt hwy, druain, gynnyg cyfiawnhau neu amddiffyn eu hunain, cyn eu treial' (It is an extremely cruel and barbarous thing to attempt to blacken and condemn prisoners before their case has been tried in a court of law, and to attempt to prejudice people against them, since the law does not permit them, wretches that they are, the opportunity to justify or defend themselves before their trial).[114] Other ballads do not draw attention to the charge against the two men awaiting trial, and are rather at pains to demonstrate the loyalty of the local population. They make only passing references to the French doctrines of equality and liberty in an effort to diffuse them of any possible attraction to an audience.[115]

The demonstration of loyalty to king and country emerges as one of the prime concerns of the Fishguard ballads. Linda Colley and others have drawn attention to the complexity of the question of identity within the constituent 'countries' of Great Britain during the eighteenth century.[116] The peoples of the Celtic countries, in view of the troubled histories of their relations with England, might well be expected to feel divided loyalties between their love of their native countries and their allegiance to an all-British monarch. Ballads composed in England during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars often reduced the British entity to the three nations of England, Scotland and Ireland.[117] Welsh ballad writers and poets were adept at adjusting the perspective to include or exclude their own nation as the case might be, and had been so for some time. Poetry from the 1640s, a period when the official *lingua* of royal and parliamentary declarations emphasized the presence of