

Ffion Mair Jones, *'The Bard is a Very Singular Character': Iolo Morganwg, Marginalia and Print Culture*. Cardiff: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru / University of Wales Press, 2010. Pp. 352. £48. ISBN 9780708321959.

Ffion Mair Jones, ed., *Welsh Ballads of the French Revolution 1793-1815*. Cardiff: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru / University of Wales Press, 2012. Pp. 486. £24.99. ISBN 9780708324615.

Mair Jones's *'The Bard is a Very Singular Character'* is the sixth contribution to the University of Wales Press series dedicated to publishing the results of a research project, 'Iolo Morganwg and the Romantic Tradition in Wales, 1740-1918', that has helped to restore the reputation of the Glamorgan stonemason (also known as Edward Williams) who was perhaps best known in the twentieth century for his literary forgeries. Where other volumes in this series have concentrated on transcribing Morganwg's correspondence (for a triple-decker edition), dealing with his forgeries in a Romantic context, and examining his reception and legacy, Mair Jones's monograph does much more than just tidy up the remaining margins. Indeed, by examining what is at the edge of (or written on the back of) many of Morganwg's letters, this monograph provides an alternative vision of the revived bard to that which has been provided by the rest of the research project.

The final chapter of this admirable volume, entitled 'Morganwg the Writer', suggests that such was the frequency and the extent of Morganwg's reuse and reordering of his letters that the organised chronology of the official volumes of *Correspondence* (published in 2007) often hides much that was most interesting about how these papers were actually put to use in his working life. Often short of paper, Morganwg used any spare 'marginal' space in his correspondence to create new texts, and as Mair Jones makes clear, often returned 'to the same scrap on several occasions- sometimes separated by many years' (160). One sheet was used on at least four separate occasions between 1782 and 1812, and such reuse often makes the exact dating of his work difficult. Mair Jones argues that complicating the chronology of Morganwg's work is important for thinking about his career as a linguist and poet and she provides detailed readings of the 'correspondence marginalia' in this chapter. However, this detailed work with the manuscripts is to be equally admired for what it reveals about the material conditions that in part dictated Morganwg's need to work in fragments. Employed as a poorly paid stonemason he lacked both time and paper. Indeed, this chapter is arguably at its most interesting when it abandons the notion of Morganwg as writer in the traditional 'Bardic' sense, and thinks of him instead as either at the heart of a network for disseminating information, or as a reader amending his own correspondence. More could have been said in this context of the manuscript commonplace books and 'home-made booklets' in which he recorded his thoughts (154).

There is, however, a separate chapter on 'Morganwg as Reader' which concentrates on the writing left in the margins of books that he owned or borrowed. When studying marginalia in general it is often difficult to disentangle 'private' reactions to the words on the page from annotations designed to be read as 'public' engagements with the text that has been written upon, but by consulting the fifty-five volumes annotated by Morganwg which survive in the collections of the National Library of Wales and at Cardiff University, Mair Jones has been able to 'map out the different tenors of annotation' found within his books (80). This chapter is thus divided into four different types of marginalia: annotations that helped in the 'harvesting of ideas from secondary sources' (81); marginal comments that were shared public statements and in which Morganwg's annotations are in dialogue with those of other commentators; annotations which comment upon, or attack, the work of his

friends and contemporaries; and lastly, those annotations which were read (and commented on) by his son Taliesin. Mair Jones's intimate knowledge of Morganwg's world makes her a particularly good reader of this otherwise difficult to interpret body of work. She notes, for example, that the difference in tone between the playful additions to William Owen's *A Dictionary of the Welsh Language* (1803) and the scathing comments added to the same author's translation of Milton, *Coll Gwyfna* (1819), are due as much to a developing animosity between the two men as to any actual dissatisfaction with the work itself. This chapter, which draws lightly on Heather Jackson's examination of marginalia in *Romantic Readers* (2005), is in itself an important contribution to the history of Romantic reading practices.

Somewhat limited in scope by its relationship with the other texts in this series, more could have been made in this volume of the similarities and differences between Morganwg's annotation strategies and those of his contemporaries and an enlarged context may also have opened up a dialogue with recent discussions of other labouring-class poets, such as John Clare, who sometimes found themselves on the margins of print culture.

Welsh Ballads of the French Revolution is one of a number of publications that are being generated by the 'Wales and the French Revolution' research project run by the University of Wales Centre for Advanced and Welsh and Celtic Studies, which has been running since 2009. It is a fully-annotated anthology of thirty-eight Welsh-language ballads composed between 1793 and 1815. The texts are presented in chronological order with the original Welsh-language text accompanied by a parallel translation into English. The original of each ballad is followed by details of its publication and, where multiple copies exist, lists of textual variants. While some of these texts are already available in the original via the excellent 'Welsh Ballads Online' database, which covers material located in the National Library of Wales and Cardiff City Library, most of those taken from the Bangor University Library have not been available before and all of the translations are new. An excellent short section of the 'introduction' deals with the various ways in which the ballads were produced and consumed. The surviving imprints suggest that more ballads were produced in north than south Wales, with Trefriw (near Llanwrst) a particular centre of production. Mair Jones notes that the success of the ballad sellers ('baleddwyr') often relied on the work of a small number of 'renowned ballad writers (or 'prydyddion')', such as Ellis Roberts, for their success and her introduction makes it particularly clear that these were modern, hybrid productions that combined the traditional Welsh *cynghanedd* form with tunes 'often imported from England' (5). That these texts were designed to be sung is a fact not forgotten and an appendix of 'Ballad Tunes' containing 'settings to music of the words of the first stanza [...] of nine of the ballads' (433) is particularly admirable.

Making these texts more widely available would be enough to make this volume a major achievement in itself, but Mair Jones's introduction also suggests a number of thematic frameworks for understanding these texts that helps to place them in context. Where the chronological approach of the anthology itself allows the reader the freedom to interpret a variety of responses as they developed over twenty years, the introduction suggests four major recurrent themes: initial 'responses' to the French revolution (and there is curiously nothing until 1793), 'the Fishguard invasion (1797)', 'ballads of the militia, the volunteers and the army (1793-1815) and 'war-reporting (1794-1815)'. This detailed thematic introduction locates the texts both in their historical and print culture contexts. For example, Mair Jones points out that several of the 'Fishguard invasion' texts were printed at Camarthen, just thirty miles from the scene of the landing, and that it is therefore not surprising to find that they depict this event as though it were a very real threat 'from which they were graciously "delivered" by God' (23). These are 'local' texts in Jones's reading but her introduction also goes on to place them within the much broader British context of

loyalist songs about invasion threats, such as those gathered by Terry Moylan in *The Age of Revolution: 1776-1815 in the Irish Song Tradition* (2000), which includes ballads on the Bantry Bay invasion of 1796. As this introduction concludes ‘this anthology is mostly concerned with a conservative and loyalist response’ to the Revolution and the years of war that came in its aftermath because radical responses were less likely to make it into print, especially during the years of Government censorship and repression (57). Further work by the same research group may hopefully recover more of the traces of the oral radical culture that Mair Jones detects via oblique references in the surviving loyalist tradition. However, the major achievement of this project is to have produced an anthology that allows us to investigate the nature of ‘popular loyalism’ in all of its many forms.

Taken together, these two volumes make a significant contribution to our understanding of Welsh print culture during the Romantic period.

Stephen Colclough
Bangor University