John Kirk, Michael Brown and Andrew Noble, eds., *Cultures of Radicalism in Britain and Ireland*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013. Pp 249. £60. ISBN 9781848933446.

This work is the third in a welcome new series entitled 'Poetry and Song in the Age of Revolution'. Bringing together work on Ireland, Wales and Scotland, its originality lies in the connections drawn between them, as well as in the use of source material in Welsh, Scots Gaelic and Irish, as well as English. Michael Brown's formidable introduction places the contributions in a broad intellectual context by offering suggestive thoughts on the connections between Enlightenment and revolution, in Britain and Ireland, and placing emphasis on what he calls 'the processes of politicisation' (19).

Delineating politicisation is no simple task. One of the most straightforward means is to take an individual case study, which is exactly what Bob Harris offers in his consideration of the radical career of Basil William Douglas, Lord Daer, who acted as an influential intermediary between radical reform politicians in London and Edinburgh. The core of this collection explores the value of songs, ballads, hymns and poetry, which were sung, recited and in many cases written by ordinary people. Three essays on Wales find plentiful, if complex, evidence of the 'processes of politicisation' at work. E. Wyn Jones concentrates on the hymns of William Williams of Pantycelyn, to argue that William's postmillenialism encouraged a movement for social and moral regeneration with Enlightenment as well as Methodist roots. Ffion Mair Jones argues that Welsh language ballads and poems carried in newspapers, almanacs and periodicals offer strong evidence of politicisation, if not necessarily radicalization, during the American War of Independence. Marion Löffler takes up the story in the 1790s through Welsh language poetry published in newspapers, almanacs and periodicals and assesses some striking works, including a Welsh adaptation of La Marseillaise entitled 'Cân Rhyddid' ('Song of Liberty').

Recent decades have witnessed a vigorous debate about what the surviving corpus of songs and poems in Irish tell us about the political ideas of lower-order Irish Catholics. Breandán Ó Buachalla and Vincent Morley have emphasized the continuing significance of Jacobite imagery in these works. Niall Ó Ciosáin reminds us that one of the most striking features of Irish radicalism in the 1790s is the almost complete absence of printed work in the Irish language (one still spoken by the majority of the population in the late eighteenth century). Ó Ciosáin provides a valuable service by contextualizing this absence within the printing histories of Welsh and Scots Gaelic, as well as Irish. Maura Cronin's study of popular songs from Munster in the first two decades of the nineteenth century suggests that radicalism was largely absent from the world of the *cosmhuintir* (ordinary people), arguing that 'apparent radicalization was only surface deep' (157). While Cronin is certainly not the first to raise doubts, her claim that 'the more closely popular songs are examined, the more it seems that *politics of any sort* – let alone radicalism – was at the very bottom of the popular agenda' (154, *my italics*) is startling, for it contrasts strongly with the case for popular politicisation in the 1790s articulated by many historians building on the pioneering work of Louis Cullen, James S. Donnelly Jr and others. Indeed, Cronin's argument also seems to have serious implications for recent understandings of the connections between Irish Jacobitism and Irish nationalism (vide. Vincent Morley's *Ó Chéitinn go Raiftearaí: Mar a Cumadh Stair na hÉireann* (Baile Átha Cliath, 2011)).

Though it is a secondary theme, the collection also makes it clear that radical politicisation was contested aggressively at all levels of society. Christopher A. Whatley's important essay on the reception of Burns' poetry from his death to the centenary of his birth illustrates in detail how admirers and readers in Scotland and Ulster projected both conservative and radical constructions of his work. Dan Hunt discusses how *Blackwood's*

Edinburgh Magazine defined itself by a sustained attack on Leigh Hunt for, among other things, his supposed religious and political radicalism. The backlash against radicalism was underway well before this, of course. It is no accident that, as Marion Löffler notes, opportunities for the dissemination of Welsh radical poetry had effectively disappeared by 1796. Finally, it is worth pointing out that the collection is not naïve about 'cultural transfer' between the nations either. Martyn Powell, for instance, identifies a curious strain of Scottophobia running through Irish Patriotism from the 1760s to 1780s.

Cultures of Radicalism offers fresh and engaging perspectives, drawing on frequently overlooked source material and underlining the value of comparative thinking. It would be too much, however, to expect neat responses to the kind of programmatic questions set out in Brown's introduction (which should, nonetheless, become an important contribution in its own right to the emerging literature on the 'Irish Enlightenment').

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