

## Rousseau and Romanticism in Wales

Heather Williams

It is striking that Rousseau's thinking appealed in equal measure to those at opposite ends of the political spectrum. He was by no means unique in this respect: analysis of book ownership and reading habits in France during the Revolutionary period has suggested that persecuted émigrés and committed revolutionaries alike read many of the same books.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is remarkable how polarized the uses are to which Rousseau is put, both at home and abroad. In Wales in particular he has two very different reception histories. This chapter is about two groups of readers in Wales with different politics and different means of access to Rousseau. I discuss first the privileged group who could read Rousseau in the original French, before focusing on those whose radical politics led them to Rousseau in English translation. I shall also trace the reception of Rousseau in the Romantic period through texts in Welsh, since most people in Wales at the time could read neither French nor English: literacy rates in Welsh were high, but nine out of every ten inhabitants were monoglot Welsh speakers, as Rousseau himself was well aware: 'La Province de Galles où l'on n'entend pas meme l'Anglois, mais dont les habitans bons et hospitaliers tirereont de leurs cœurs l'intelligence qui ne sera pas dans leurs oreilles.'<sup>2</sup> This linguistic particularity makes Welsh culture a distinctive feature of British Romanticism, even if most modern scholars find the textual sources inaccessible.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter will contrast Rousseau's direct impact on the lives of the cultural and social elite in Wales with his indirect, mediated influence on Welsh radicalism. Upper-class Francophiles in Wales were able to access Rousseau in the original French, and I shall suggest how their lives and land bear the imprint of his ideas. I argue that Rousseau's conception of nature and the natural made its mark on the very landscape of west Wales at

Thomas Johnes's estate at Hafod Uchtryd, Cwmystwyth, and inspired Sarah Ponsonby and Eleanor Butler in their attempt to live out a life of what Butler described in her diary in 1789 as 'exquisitely enjoyed retirement' in their rural idyll of tranquillity and self-sufficiency at Plas Newydd, Llangollen.<sup>4</sup> I shall contrast these with the case of Iolo Morganwg (bardic name of Edward Williams, 1747–1826), the self-taught stonemason poet, antiquarian, notorious literary forger and French Revolutionary sympathiser, who probably read Rousseau in English translation, and fellow radical Tomos Glyn Cothi (bardic name of Thomas Evans, 1764–1833).

The readers in Wales who could access Rousseau in the original French belonged to a privileged social class. The aristocratic Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby had fled respectable marriage in their native Ireland for a simple life of devotion to one another in the Welsh hills in 1778, the year of Rousseau's death. However, their geographical isolation and reluctance to travel did not prevent them from keeping up to date, via letters and visitors, with British and continental culture. They made their home in Plas Newydd at Llangollen, where they became known as the 'Ladies of Llangollen', and were something of a talking point throughout Europe, making of Plas Newydd a landmark for travellers on the post road from London to Ireland. In 1788–9 travellers en route from France to Ireland would stop and tell them of 'troubles' and 'horrors' in 'poor France'.<sup>5</sup> In July 1789 Butler transcribes into her diary passages from letters sent to them that describe 'the horrors in France'; their friend Miss Bowdler writes from Bath that the Palais-Royal is a scene of murder, that the King has been publicly insulted and the French nation enraged.<sup>6</sup> They also followed the newspapers and are vexed on 5 August 1789 when there is none: 'No newspaper – how provoking at this critical time for France.'<sup>7</sup> Their greatest preoccupation was their adored garden, and they kept minute details of seeds sown and fruits reaped, but appreciated its picturesqueness just as much as its role in helping them achieve self-sufficiency, using it for ritual lengthy

recreational walks and deriving from it aesthetic pleasure: ‘The sun broke forth in such splendour. The country was in such a blaze of beauty that my beloved and I went to the white gate to behold and admire the magnificence of the amphitheatre.’<sup>8</sup> For some, their relationship with nature is a continuation of the English tradition of privileging nature over horticulture, exemplified in Bacon, Langley and Jekyll,<sup>9</sup> but it seems just as likely, given their Francophile reading habits, that they took their inspiration from Rousseau’s *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761).<sup>10</sup>

There is evidence that they read Rousseau. French was part of everyday life for them, and their spoken French was very good: ‘elles parloient français avec autant de facilité que de pureté’, remarked Mme de Genlis.<sup>11</sup> We also have it on Genlis’s authority that their beautiful library was well stocked in both French and Italian works,<sup>12</sup> and their handwritten catalogue lists many titles in these languages. Butler’s diaries contain minute details of books received and read, and these leave little doubt that the women devoured literature, particularly French literature, often reading it aloud. Unsurprisingly, they had no truck with Voltaire, who is referred to as ‘that detested Voltaire’.<sup>13</sup> An entry in Butler’s diary in October 1785 reveals her to be ‘reading Rousseau to my Sally’ and ‘from one ’till Three reading Rousseau to the Joy of my life’ while a storm raged outside.<sup>14</sup> By November their stamina had increased, as Butler claims to have read Rousseau aloud for five hours: ‘From Five ’till Ten read Rousseau (finished the 7<sup>th</sup> tome) to my Sally.’<sup>15</sup> And a diary entry the following month notes that they have finished the fourteenth volume of Rousseau,<sup>16</sup> meaning that they had read fourteen volumes in just three months. They were also interested in Rousseau the person, not just his books, though he had died a decade previously. Ponsonby’s commonplace book transcribes some lines that had been written in memory of Rousseau and inscribed at Ermenonville.<sup>17</sup> They were so fascinated when Col. Manseragh St. George, who visited them on 4 February

1788, ‘related many curious anecdotes of Rousseau’ that they asked him to draw a picture for them:

As he drew admirably we requested he give us some idea of the face and Person of this unfortunate and inimitable genius. He very obligingly took out his pencil and drew two figures, I am persuaded striking likenesses of Poor Rousseau in a dress lined and trim’d with Fur, and a large Muff.<sup>18</sup>

On Wednesday 9 July 1788, when Mr and Mrs de Luc visited the Ladies, the conversation once again turned to Rousseau’s life, and they received ‘a full account of Rousseau, his acquaintance and marriage with Mdlle Levasseur etc’.<sup>19</sup> They also read books about Rousseau, such as Mme de Staël’s *Lettres sur les ouvrages et le caractère de Jean-Jacques Rousseau par Mme de Staël* (1788), which they read in 1789–90.<sup>20</sup> So it is beyond doubt that they were interested in Rousseau, but still rather difficult to identify any specific influence he may have had on them. Though *Julie*, which Ponsonby mentions in her commonplace book,<sup>21</sup> once again appears to occupy a privileged position in the Ladies’ lives, with John Brewer claiming that they ‘devoured Rousseau’s *Nouvelle Héloïse*, reading it aloud in three-hour stints’,<sup>22</sup> it is difficult to say whether Rousseau actually played a more prominent role than other works of sensibility that they loved, such as Françoise de Graffigny’s *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* or Florian’s *Estelle*, or works that treat similar themes, such as Genlis’s *Théâtre à l’usage des jeunes femmes*, *Les Veillées du chateau* and *Adèle et Théodore ou Lettres sur l’éducation*.

The ladies’ garden can certainly be compared to Julie’s, a carefully contrived rural idyll, planned and maintained not only by themselves but also by gardeners, farm labourers and other domestic staff, just as Julie had received help to create her Elysium. Their attitude also seems to echo Wolmar’s idealized rural economy, as it is known that they took a sympathetic interest in the local people, ‘even their humblest neighbours, unusual in women

of their class'.<sup>23</sup> More than the transformation of their garden and their benevolent attitude towards local peasants, the very way they lived their lives seems to be a fulfilment of Julie's wishes to live in harmony with Claire at Clarens, free from male influences, so that what had remained a fantasy for Julie was, for the ladies, the bold choice of 'une rayonnante amitié'.<sup>24</sup>

Another household able to access Rousseau in the original was the family of Thomas Johnes, landowner and landscaping pioneer in upland Ceredigion. He and his wife Jane and daughter Mariamne, while devoted to Hafod Uchtryd, the estate he had inherited in 1780, were also in contact with London-based culture, since Johnes was Member of Parliament for Cardiganshire and also its Lord Lieutenant. The enlightened education that he received in Edinburgh, as well as the Grand Tour of the continent that he made in 1768–71, taking in Switzerland, France, Spain and Italy, had broadened Johnes's horizons.<sup>25</sup> He remained a Francophile after returning to Britain, as we see from his translation of Froissart's *Chronicles* into English (1806). He was also a bibliophile, whose collection of Welsh manuscripts kept in his famous octagonal library attracted the likes of Iolo Morganwg, to whom I shall return.<sup>26</sup> The matter of knowing which books he owned is complicated by the catastrophic fire at Hafod in 1807, and though Rousseau's works are listed in the catalogue of the Pesaro library that he bought after the fire, along with many canonical works from eighteenth-century France (including Voltaire), they arrived at Hafod much too late to be responsible for any 'influence' on his landscaping work.

It is the landscape created by himself, his wife and beloved daughter Mariamne, an accomplished botanist who corresponded with Edward Smith of the Linnean Society, that constitutes Johnes's most lasting legacy. Together they created flower gardens and oversaw the planting of over three million trees and the building of a network of paths that would allow visitors to discover the wonders of the Hafod landscape. Thomas Johnes claimed that he relied heavily in this transformation on a work by William Mason, *The English Garden*

(1772–82), a long poem split into four ‘books’. Indeed, he told William Gilpin, author of *Observations on the River Wye* (1782), that he had taken Mason’s book as his guide, and Gilpin relayed the compliment back to his friend Mason:

The walks, & lawns were laid out by Mr. Mason whose English garden he took in his hand; & wanted no other direction. So if you want to see an exact translation of Yr. book into good Welsh, you must go to Mr. Johnes’s seat in Cardiganshire.<sup>27</sup>

William Mason had a penchant for Rousseau that can be seen in the garden that he created at Nuneham Courtney for Lord Harcourt.<sup>28</sup> As well as acting as an inspiration on nature and the natural, Rousseau was represented there by a bust placed in the shrubbery and by a quotation from *Julie* that was inscribed above a gate: ‘Si l’auteur de la nature est grand dans les grandes choses, il est très grand dans les petites.’<sup>29</sup> In his 1783 edition of Mason’s *The English Garden*, which was probably the one that Johnes read, some notes by William Burgh were included, which refer the reader directly and precisely to ‘Rousseau’s charming descriptions of the Garden of Julie, *Nouvelle Eloise*, 4 partie, let. 11<sup>th</sup>’.<sup>30</sup> It seems likely, then, that Johnes came across Rousseau’s ideas on nature either in the original French or in Mason’s books. Caroline Kerkham has suggested that Johnes’s landscape was modelled jointly on the estate of Mason’s poetic hero Alcander and on that of Rousseau’s Monsieur and Madame de Wolmar at Clarens; she goes so far as to describe Johnes’s empathy with Rousseau’s perception of nature as ‘remarkable’.<sup>31</sup> His daughter Mariamne, who was born in 1784 but who died young, is even more likely to have read Rousseau than her father. According to the obituary of Thomas Johnes’s penned by William Shepherd, a family friend on whom she made a great impression, Mariamne had read ‘the best authors in the English, French, and Italian languages ... with diligence, and remembered with accuracy’.<sup>32</sup> Her personal copy of Florian’s *Estelle* has survived and is kept in the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth. Shepherd further mentions that her books were in ‘her apartments’, rather than in her father’s

famous library, so its catalogues would not necessarily tell us of all the French books in his house.

As a landlord, as well as a landscape gardener, Thomas Johnes clearly echoes the character of Clarens. The detailed description of the agricultural and economic workings of Clarens contained in Part IV, letter x stresses the importance of innovation, and Johnes is considered an ‘innovator and visionary’ in the field of agricultural experimentation;<sup>33</sup> similarly, both Clarens and Hafod advocate self-sufficiency or reliance on local, simple food. At Clarens, where masters are expected to lead by example, the care that is taken of staff is exemplary; for instance a weekly prize is offered for good work, as well as bonuses and annual increments. Thomas Johnes was a benevolent landlord keen to improve and innovate for the benefit of his tenants. For instance, he employed a doctor for his tenants, supported a school for girls to learn reading and needlework, and distributed Bibles and religious books to the poor.<sup>34</sup> The philosophy behind the garden design at Hafod seems to echo that of Julie’s garden at Clarens. Julie had made her garden appear as natural as possible, though in fact it had been carefully contrived. The trees are filled with birdsong because she deliberately planted crops that would attract them and made nest-building materials available, and the water in her streams was diverted from the fountain in her father’s formal garden. Like Saint-Preux, who exclaims that the gardener’s work was so in tune with nature that it cannot be seen – ‘la main du jardinier ne se montre point’<sup>35</sup> – Thomas Johnes claimed that he was working *with* nature: ‘by beautifying it I have neither shorn or tormented it’.<sup>36</sup>

Attitudes towards places perceived as more natural or primitive than the rapidly growing urban centres of Europe were changing at this time – thanks partly to Rousseau. Thomas Johnes was one of the first Welshmen to respond to this change and, indeed, to exploit the potential of tourism by charging visitors to access his estate and complaining bitterly about ‘Saxon visitors’ to Wales who regard the place as ‘un pays conquis ... and

think everything may be had and done here with impunity'.<sup>37</sup> Ironically, these people in Wales knew nothing of Rousseau's desire to reside – and indeed live out his days – in Wales.<sup>38</sup> On arrival in London in January 1766 Rousseau's first thought was to flee the city, and the destination that captured his imagination was Wales, 'cette contrée éloignée et sauvage', not so different from his native Switzerland.<sup>39</sup> When he eventually leaves London for Staffordshire instead, mainly on Hume's insistence, it is with one eye on a possible future visit to Wales.<sup>40</sup>

Welsh culture was further enriched and complicated by the London dimension: whether for reasons of education (Wales lacked a university), profession or business, many Welshmen were lured by the English capital, and a number of these made key contributions to the revival of Welsh culture, editing and scholarship, while others were in direct contact with French politics and thought.<sup>41</sup> Two London Welshmen with French connections – Richard Price (1723–91) and David Williams (1738–1816) – warrant only very brief mention here as their links to continental thought are already well known.<sup>42</sup> A Dissenting minister whose *Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (1789) provoked Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Price was born in south Wales and left it for London, where he came into contact with French culture and events in France, especially through his nephew George Cadogan Morgan, who wrote an eye-witness account of the Revolution.<sup>43</sup> Like Price, Williams was arguably more London than Welsh, but he was much more than a mere consumer of French thought and culture: an educationalist and deist born near Caerphilly in south Wales, Williams – a friend of Brissot – saw a number of his own works translated into French, he is held to have influenced the 'fête de l'Être suprême',<sup>44</sup> and his *Liturgy* gained the approval of both Voltaire and Rousseau. He was also part of a team that translated Voltaire into English, his *Lectures on Political Principles* is to some degree a response to

Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des lois*, and his *Treatise on Education* debates the pedagogical doctrines in Rousseau's *Emile*.

Iolo Morganwg, who has been described as Wales's 'one-man Welsh Romanticism',<sup>45</sup> was an altogether different type of London Welshman. This stonemason and bard from Glamorgan, in south Wales, spent the years following the French Revolution in London, where he mixed with known radicals, played cat-and-mouse with government spies,<sup>46</sup> and also masterminded the first Gorsedd [assembly of bards], which was to become the cornerstone of the revived Eisteddfod [Welsh cultural festival]. He was instrumental in the burgeoning Welsh societies and networks both in the capital and back home, and his priority when not practising his trade as stone mason was the restoration of the ancient Welsh past. This he did by transcribing, editing, translating and even inventing medieval Welsh texts, as well as re-imagining the Gorsedd of Druids and bards as a political force advocating pacifism and a return to nature.<sup>47</sup> Iolo has been seen by many – beginning with Elijah Waring<sup>48</sup> – as Wales's very own Rousseau. Modern critics have sought – often on the basis of scant archival evidence – to stress Rousseau's intellectual influence on Iolo: Gwyn Alf Williams, for instance, describes the ideas of Iolo and London Welsh radicals as 'a version of Rousseau's natural religion';<sup>49</sup> according to Ceri Lewis, Iolo 'read avidly the writings of Rousseau and Voltaire, and revelled in the pulsating excitement of the years that immediately followed the outbreak of the French Revolution';<sup>50</sup> for Huw Meirion Edwards, Iolo's championing of the common man and the dialectic he saw between rural and urban life, nature and artifice, are 'Rousseauesque';<sup>51</sup> Cathryn Charnell-White identifies echoes of *Emile* in Iolo's advice to his daughter in 1810 to 'abide by Nature' and also to 'adhere to truth on all occasions';<sup>52</sup> and for David Ceri Jones, Iolo's contention that 'great cities are destructive of population, life, health [and] morals' recalls *Julie*.<sup>53</sup>

Critics have also tended to stress Iolo's flair as a linguist: according to Geraint Jenkins, for instance, 'he learned to read French and Latin, dabbled with Sanskrit and Greek, and turned himself into a self-styled authority on language and literature, history etc'.<sup>54</sup> However, all the evidence points to Iolo relying on English translations to afford him access to ideas from France. His archive certainly provides evidence that he was familiar with a number of French titles, including some by Rousseau, and owned them, or at least stocked them in his shop in Cowbridge, but Iolo invariably refers to them by their English names: it is always *Emilius* and never *Émile*, *Eloisa* not *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Thus it was a rather British Rousseau that he knew, and even then, evidence of him engaging with these texts rather than just having second-hand knowledge of them is scant. In the case of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the evidence is limited to a tantalizing reference to 'Eloisa by Rousseau', jotted down in a list alongside Mackenzie's *Julia de Roubigné* and 'Pope Clement 13<sup>th</sup> or Ganganelli' in a diary from 1780.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, references to Rousseau's *Contrat social* are limited to its title, in English: the *Social Compact* is included in a list of books that Iolo deemed suitable for the circulating library that he was planning for Cowbridge.<sup>56</sup> Another book list entitled 'Reading society' gives 'Rousseau', but fails to identify the book.<sup>57</sup> The *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, however, known to Iolo as 'the Prize Question proposed by the Academy of Dijon', was more than a mere title, as he refers to it in an essay on Welsh literature in which he makes the claim that Welsh literature is morally superior to English literature. Iolo argues that while the state of the latter 'afforded Rousseau too many powerful arguments on the side that he took of the prize question proposed by the Academy of Dijon', Welsh literature is altogether different and constitutes a force for good.<sup>58</sup> The work by Rousseau that Iolo discusses in most detail is *Emile*. In a paragraph headed '*Preface to the New Robinson Crusoe*', Iolo writes:

The errors of great men are remarked and the discussion of them frequently leads to the Truth from which they have deviated.

Thus Rousseau's *Emilius* will, in spite of the false opinions advanced in it, always be a valuable book, both on account of the important Truths which it contains, and those which it has caused to be discovered; and it would be unjust not to attribute to it at least a considerable enlargement in our ideas concerning education.<sup>59</sup>

The connection that Iolo is making with *Robinson Crusoe* suggests some familiarity with the content of *Emile*, as Rousseau says of it in the novel: 'Ce livre sera le premier que lira mon Emile; seul il composera durant longtemps toute sa bibliothèque, et il y tiendra toujours une place distinguée.'<sup>60</sup> Elsewhere, though, it is the man rather than his texts who interests Iolo, as when Rousseau is listed as an example of the 'true friends of mankind', people, he notes, who almost invariably come from 'the lower classes or very rarely above the middle', and is set alongside Newton, Franklin, Ganganelli, and Jesus Christ.<sup>61</sup>

Elsewhere in Iolo's work the presence of Rousseau is more discreetly – but no less suggestively – felt. A good example of this is his involvement in the editing and re-packaging of the fourteenth-century Welsh poet Dafydd ap Gwilym to the tastes of a 1790s audience, recently studied by Dafydd Johnston.<sup>62</sup> *Barddoniaeth Dafydd ap Gwilym* [The Poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym], published in 1789 after a long period in preparation, was a landmark in eighteenth-century Welsh scholarship, coming as it did after some decades of renewed interest in the Welsh past, during which many medieval texts had been transcribed, edited, translated and manipulated by scholars both in Wales and in London. Its editors were Owen Jones (Owain Myfyr) and William Owen Pughe, aided (and somewhat misled) by Iolo, who sent them rather biased information on the life of the poet, as well as some forged poems, that influenced the final content and order of the poems in the collection. The fact that *Barddoniaeth Dafydd ap Gwilym* is now discredited on account of the forged poems that it contains of course in no way prevents it from revealing to us some of the preoccupations of the day. On the contrary, it is worth asking, for instance, as Dafydd Johnston does, whether it

is more than a coincidence that *Barddoniaeth Dafydd ap Gwilym* was published exactly as the Bastille fell. The Revolution and the editing project share some cultural ideals and values, at least on the part of some of the people involved: Rousseau can be seen as the crucial link between literature, the personal and the political. Editorial choices in the arrangement of poetic material ensure particular emphases on certain themes; moreover, Johnston argues that it is possible to map the plot of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* onto the poetry collection, with the poet-hero Dafydd ap Gwilym cast as Saint-Preux, who falls for his tutee, who would be Julie, the daughter of his patron, Ifor Hael [Ivor the Generous], all against the backdrop of an idealized county of Morgannwg, that is standing in for Le Valais.<sup>63</sup> Given Rousseau's huge popularity with readers in Britain and continental Europe, the notion of 'literary fashions' allows us to see Iolo in a broader European context.

In contrast to Iolo, his compatriot and friend Tomos Glyn Cothi barely left his native Carmarthenshire, never travelled as far as London and only learnt English as a second language. Officially named Thomas Evans, he was a Unitarian minister and the founding editor in 1795 of the radical periodical *The Miscellaneous Repository neu, Y Drysorfa Gymmysgedig* [The Miscellaneous Repository or, The Mixed Treasury]. He was also a known radical – he was sentenced to two years in prison for singing a seditious song<sup>64</sup> – and was prominent in the mission to enlighten the monoglot Welsh. Many of his publications, including much of the material in the periodical that he edited, were translations or adaptations by himself. What is more, his private notebook contains a Welsh translation of an English rendering of a passage from Rousseau:

Hawl a Dyledswydd Dyn

1. Nis gall un Tad drosglwyddo i'w Fab yr hawl o fod yn ddi-ddefnydd i'w gydgreaduriaid.

2. Mewn sefyllfa gymdeithasol yn yr hon y mae yn rhaid i bob un gael ei gynnal ar draul y gymdeithas, y mae'n ddyled ar bob un weithio gwerth ei gynhaliaeth a hynny heb edrych ar radd neu sefyllfa. Pob segurddyn, cyfoethog a thylawd, gwan a chryf, sydd ddihiryn, neu anonest ddyn.

3. Nid yw'r dyn sydd yn bwyta bara seguryd, heb ynnill ei gynhaliaeth, ddim gwell na lleidr; ac nid yw yr hwn sydd yn derbyn Tal (pension) am ddim gan lywodraeth, yn gwahaniaethu fawr oddi wrth leidr pen ffordd a fyddo yn byw ar ei ysglyfaeth ledradaidd. Rousseau.<sup>65</sup>

Here is the English translation of Rousseau that Tomos Glyn Cothi had used to create the very close translation into Welsh quoted above:

No father can transmit to his son the right of being useless to his fellow creatures. – In a state of society, where every man must be necessarily maintained at the expense of the community, he certainly owes the state so much labour as will pay for his subsistence, and this without exception of rank or persons. Rich or poor, strong or weak, every idle citizen is a knave.

The man who earns not his subsistence, but eats the bread of idleness, is no better than a thief; and a pensioner who is paid by the state for doing nothing, differs little from a robber who is supported by the plunder he makes on the highway.<sup>66</sup>

This English passage is a very loose translation, with omissions and re-orderings, of Rousseau's French;<sup>67</sup> it was published, as Tomos Glyn Cothi himself notes, in an English anthology called *The Manual of Liberty*, a compilation of mainly English and French writers containing many extracts from Rousseau, as well as Voltaire and Montesquieu. His Rousseau, then, came pre-digested, as well as pre-translated into English, which is hardly surprising given his lack of formal education.

Whereas upper-class Francophiles probably read Rousseau in the original, constituting a direct link between French and Welsh cultures, radical Wales's Rousseau is mediated through English, possibly aided by Wales's own community of expats in London. We might conclude that, however much British Romanticism needs to be seen in a European context, the only context needed to understand Romanticism in Wales is that of England. But this reference point is precisely what has made Welsh culture look deficient, like some pale reflection of its powerful neighbour's culture. In fact, Wales too makes more sense viewed in a European context. A true comparative approach puts Wales in parallel with smaller or stateless cultures in Europe. When we take a pan-European view, as Robert Evans has argued, Wales's cultural achievements in the eighteenth century 'can be compared to those of lands several times her size'.<sup>68</sup> And movements elsewhere in Europe seem, as Gwyn Alf Williams suggests, 'to speak with the same range of voices' as Wales.<sup>69</sup>

Just as in France Rousseau was both praised by Robespierre, especially during the debate over his Panthéonisation, and venerated by Marie-Antoinette, who visited his grave, so in Wales he was just as much an inspiration for known radicals and Revolutionary sympathizers Iolo Morganwg and Tomos Glyn Cothi as he was for Llangollen Ladies and Ceredigion landowners, who were horrified by events in France.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See Roger Chartier, *Les Origines culturelles de la Révolution française* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 105–6, and *The Darnton Debate: Books and Revolution in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Hadyn Mason (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Rousseau, *Correspondance complète*, ed. Leigh, XXVIII, 218–9. On literacy in Wales, see Eryn M. White, 'Popular Schooling and the Welsh Language, 1650–1800', in *The Welsh Language Before the Industrial Revolution*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1997), and Geraint H. Jenkins, 'Wales in the Eighteenth Century', in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. H. T. Dickinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 392–402, who notes that 'by 1801, nine of every ten inhabitants were still monoglot Welsh to all intents and purposes, and both to insiders and outsiders the native tongue was the most tangible badge of difference' (393).

<sup>3</sup> On Wales's near-invisibility from studies of Romantic-era culture, see Mary-Ann Constantine, 'Beauty Spot, Blind Spot: Romantic Wales', *Literature Compass* 5, no. 3 (2008): 557–90.

<sup>4</sup> National Library of Wales [henceforth NLW] MS 22971C, 737. Butler's diaries, which she kept between 1788 and 1821, are part of the Hamwood Papers (so called because they were formerly in the possession of the Hamilton family of Hamwood, Dunboyne, Co. Meath) held at the National Library of Wales; I am very grateful to staff there for granting me permission to read them.

- <sup>5</sup> NLW MS 22971C, 246, 669.
- <sup>6</sup> NLW MS 22971C, 590.
- <sup>7</sup> NLW MS 22971C, 617. See also Marion Löffler, *Welsh Responses to the French Revolution: Press and Public Discourse, 1789–1802* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).
- <sup>8</sup> NLW MS 22971C, 252 *bis*.
- <sup>9</sup> See Elizabeth Mavor, *The Ladies of Llangollen* (London: Penguin, 1971).
- <sup>10</sup> See Anne Scott-James, *The Cottage Garden* (London: Allen Lane, 1981), who argues that ‘Julie’s Elysium must surely have inspired the Ladies when planning their thickets underplanted with wild flowers; they even chose some of Julie’s shrubs, lilac, syringe and broom’ (32); see also Samantha George, *Botany, Sexuality and Women’s Writing, 1760–1830: From Modest Shoot to Forward Plant* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), who notes: ‘Their favourite book was *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and they are believed to have modelled their unusually aristocratic cottage garden at Plas Newydd on Julie’s Elysium’ (17, n. 14).
- <sup>11</sup> Stéphanie Félicité du Crest de Genlis, *Mémoires inédits sur le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et la Révolution française*, 10 vols (Paris: Ladvocat, 1825), III, 348. On Genlis’s visit to Plas Newydd, see Heather Williams, ‘Cymru trwy lygaid Rousseau (ac eraill)’, *Y Traethodydd* 168 (2013): 241–54.
- <sup>12</sup> See Genlis, *Mémoires*, III, 349.
- <sup>13</sup> Cited in Arthur Ponsonby, *English Diaries: A Review of English Diaries from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century, with an Introduction on Diary Writing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Methuen, 1923), 244. See also *A Year with the Ladies of Llangollen*, ed. Elizabeth Mavor (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 128.
- <sup>14</sup> Cited in *A Year with the Ladies of Llangollen*, ed. Mavor, 182.
- <sup>15</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, 203.
- <sup>16</sup> Cited in Ponsonby, *English Diaries*, 243.
- <sup>17</sup> NLW MS 22969A, 17.
- <sup>18</sup> NLW MS 22971C, 34.
- <sup>19</sup> NLW MS 22971C, 215. On the previous day the same ‘very agreeable charming couple’ were noted to have talked to them about ‘Troubles in France. Character of the Queen of France, Louis 16’ (NLW MS 22971C, 214).
- <sup>20</sup> NLW MS 22971C, 750, 826, 904.
- <sup>21</sup> NLW MS 22969A, 57.
- <sup>22</sup> John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1997), 479.
- <sup>23</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, ‘A Local Institution’, *Planet* 91 (1992): 28–35 (35).
- <sup>24</sup> Colette, *Le Pur et l’impur* (1941; Paris: Fayard, 2004), 124.
- <sup>25</sup> See Richard J. Moore-Colyer, ‘Thomas Johnes of Hafod’, *Welsh History Review* 15 (1991): 399–415.
- <sup>26</sup> On Johnes’s library, see Eiluned Rees, ‘An Introductory Survey of 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Welsh Libraries’, *Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society* 10, no. 4 (1971): 197–258 (229).
- <sup>27</sup> Letter to Mason, April 1787; Bodl MS Eng. Misc. d. 571, f.8v. I am very grateful to Bethan Jenkins for providing this transcript. This letter is cited and discussed in Caroline Kerkham, ‘Hafod: Paradise Lost’, *Journal of Garden History* 11, no. 4 (1991): 207–16 (212), and Mavis Batey, ‘The English Garden in Welsh’, *Journal of Garden History* 22, no. 2 (1994): 157–61.
- <sup>28</sup> See Mavis Batey, ‘William Mason, English Gardener’, *Garden History* 1, no. 2 (1973): 11–25 (12).
- <sup>29</sup> Rousseau, *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, ed. Henri Coulet (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 407 (Part IV, letter xi, note).
- <sup>30</sup> Burgh’s note to Book 4, line 358 in William Mason, *The English Garden: A Poem in Four Books, new edition, corrected, to which are added a commentary and notes, by W. Burgh* (Dublin, 1786), 252.
- <sup>31</sup> Kerkham, ‘Hafod’, 213.
- <sup>32</sup> See Caroline Kerkham, ‘The Rev. Dr William Shepherd and the Death of Mariamne Johnes’, *Friends of Hafod Newsletter* 14 (Winter 1996–7): 26–33.
- <sup>33</sup> Richard J. Colyer, ‘The Hafod Estate under Thomas Johnes and Henry Pelham, Fourth Duke of Newcastle’, *Welsh History Review* 8, no. 3 (1977): 257–84 (258).
- <sup>34</sup> See Dafydd Jenkins, *Thomas Johnes o’r Hafod, 1748–1816* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1948), 37.
- <sup>35</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> partie, letter 11.
- <sup>36</sup> Cumberland MSS, Thomas Johnes to George Cumberland, 28 July 1794, cited in Kerkham, ‘Hafod’, 209.
- <sup>37</sup> *A Land of Pure Delight: Selections from the Letters of Thomas Johnes of Hafod*, ed. Richard J. Moore-Colyer (Llandysul: Gomer, 1992), 159.
- <sup>38</sup> See Heather Williams, ‘Rousseau and Wales’, in *Footsteps of Liberty and Revolt: Essays on Wales and the French Revolution*, ed. Mary-Ann Constantine and Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), 35–51.
- <sup>39</sup> Rousseau, *Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. R.A. Leigh, 52 vols (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1965–98), XXVIII, 199–200, 275.

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., XXIX, 31.

<sup>41</sup> On the Welsh in London, see *The Welsh in London, 1500–2000*, ed. Emrys Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001).

<sup>42</sup> See Mary-Ann Constantine, 'The Welsh in Revolutionary Paris', in *'Footsteps of Liberty and Revolt': Essays on Wales and the French Revolution*, ed. M.-A. Constantine and Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), 69–91.

<sup>43</sup> *Travels in Revolutionary France & A Journey Across America by George Cadogan Morgan and Richard Price Morgan*, ed. Mary-Ann Constantine (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).

<sup>44</sup> See Henri Roddier, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau en Angleterre au 18e siècle* (Paris, Boivin, 1950), 209.

<sup>45</sup> Damian Walford Davies and Lynda Pratt, 'Introduction', in *Wales and the Romantic Imagination*, ed. D. W. Davies and L. Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), 2. See also the outcomes of the AHRC-funded project 'Iolo Morganwg and the Romantic tradition in Wales', University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, at <http://www.iolomorganwg.wales.ac.uk/> (accessed 1 August 2016).

<sup>46</sup> See Geraint Jenkins, 'The Bard of Liberty during William Pitt's Reign of Terror', in *Heroic Poets and Poetic Heroes in Celtic Tradition: A Festschrift for Patrick K. Ford. CSANA Yearbok 3, 4*, ed. Joseph Falaky Nagy and Leslie Ellen Jones (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 186.

<sup>47</sup> On the relationship between editing, translating and forgery in Iolo's work, see Mary-Ann Constantine, *The Truth Against the World* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007). On the politics of his druidic vision, see Gwyn Alf Williams, 'Druids and Democrats: Organic Intellectuals and the First Welsh Radicalism', in *Culture, Ideology and Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm*, ed. Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 246–76.

<sup>48</sup> Elijah Waring, *Recollections and Anecdotes of Edward Williams, the Bard of Glamorgan; or Iolo Morganwg, B.B.D* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1850). Over a century later, the historian Prys Morgan suggested that Iolo had 'imbibed rather too much of Rousseau's nature-worship' and recounted the anecdote of Iolo's experiment with eating grass in a failed attempt to return to nature: see P. Morgan, *Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975), 75; see also his 'Romanticism and Rationalism in the Life of Iolo Morganwg', in *Wales and the Wider World: Welsh History in an International Context*, ed. T. M. Charles Edwards and R. J. W. Evans (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2010), in which he describes Iolo as a 'Celtic Jean-Jacques Rousseau' (155).

<sup>49</sup> Williams, 'Druids and Democrats', 252.

<sup>50</sup> Ceri Lewis, 'Iolo Morganwg', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature, c. 1700–1800*, ed. Branwen Jarvis (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 135; see also his *Iolo Morganwg* (Caernarfon: Gwasg Pantycelyn, 1995), where he stresses Rousseau's *Social Contract* as a key text for Iolo (129).

<sup>51</sup> Huw Meirion Edwards, 'A Multitude of Voices: The Free-Metre poetry of Iolo Morganwg', in *A Rattleskull Genius: The Many Faces of Iolo Morganwg*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 177.

<sup>52</sup> Cathryn Charnell-White, 'Women and Gender in the Private and Social Relationships of Iolo Morganwg', in *A Rattleskull Genius*, ed. Jenkins, 373.

<sup>53</sup> David Ceri Jones, 'Iolo Morganwg and the Welsh Rural Landscape', in *A Rattleskull Genius*, ed. Jenkins, 237. For Iolo's comment, see NLW 21323B, 57. For further insights from the archives, see Williams, 'Rousseau and Wales'.

<sup>54</sup> Geraint H. Jenkins, 'On the Trail of a "Rattleskull Genius"', in *A Rattleskull Genius*, ed. Jenkins, 12. Similarly, Ceri Lewis claims that Iolo read French 'with considerable ease' ('Iolo Morganwg', 131).

<sup>55</sup> NLW 21326A, cited in Geraint H. Jenkins, *Bard of Liberty: The Political Radicalism of Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), 41, n. 64. This is a *Daily Journal for 1780*, though Iolo seems to be using it mainly as scrap paper; the page in question is May 1780, and the list is headed 'Jewel's Library'. It has not been possible to elucidate this title.

<sup>56</sup> 'Books at present in my possession proper for a circulating Library. Sepr 1<sup>st</sup> 1795', NLW 21407C. I am grateful to Ffion Mair Jones for guidance on Iolo's many book-lists. On the planned library see Geraint H. Jenkins, 'The Urban experiences of Iolo Morganwg', *The Welsh History Review* 22, no. 3 (2005): 463-98 (483).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> NLW 13121B. The essay is reproduced in Cathryn Charnell-White, *Bardic Circles: National, Regional and Personal Identity in the Bardic Vision of Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), 272–6; for the reference to Rousseau, see p. 275.

<sup>59</sup> NLW 13141A, 114.

<sup>60</sup> <reference needed>

<sup>61</sup> NLW 13123B, 161.

<sup>62</sup> See Dafydd Johnston, 'Barddoniaeth Dafydd ap Gwilym 1789 a'r Chwyldro Ffrengig', *Llên Cymru* 35 (2012): 32–53, and 'Radical Adaptation: Translations of Medieval Welsh Poetry in the 1790s', *'Footsteps of Liberty and Revolt'*.

---

<sup>63</sup> Johnston, 'Barddoniaeth Dafydd ap Gwilym 1789', 37, 44.

<sup>64</sup> On Evans's trial and imprisonment, see Geraint H. Jenkins, 'A very horrid affair: Sedition and Unitarianism in the age of Revolutions', in *From Medieval to Modern Wales: Historical Essays in Honour of Kenneth O. Morgan and Ralph A. Griffiths*, ed. R. R. Davies and G. H. Jenkins (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004).

<sup>65</sup> NLW 6238A, 'Y Gell Gymysg', 101 (Tomos Glyn Cothi's original pagination) or 107 (pagination added later in manuscript). I am grateful to Marion Löffler for bringing this passage to my attention.

<sup>66</sup> *The Manual of Liberty: or Testimonies in Behalf of the Rights of Mankind; Selected from the Best Authorities, in Prose and Verse, and Methodically Arranged* (London: Symonds, 1795), 37–8. This anonymous work was published by the radical H. D. Symonds, who was also responsible for publishing cheap editions of *Rights of Man*, for which he was imprisoned in 1793.

<sup>67</sup> Rousseau, *Emile ou de l'éducation*, ed. F. and P. Richard (Paris: Garnier, 1964), 225–6.

<sup>68</sup> R. J. W. Evans, *Wales in European Context: Some Historical Reflections* (Aberystwyth: The University of Wales Aberystwyth, 2001), 9.

<sup>69</sup> Gwyn A. Williams, 'Romanticism in Wales', in *Romanticism in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 17.

<sup>70</sup> The research for this chapter was undertaken as part of the AHRC-funded project 'Wales and the French Revolution', at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies; I am grateful to colleagues on that project, as well as many others, for guidance on various aspects of this research.