



The "Celto-Briton" in Scottish Gaelic- and Welsh-Language Poetry, 1746-1826

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THE “CELTO-BRITON” IN SCOTTISH GAELIC- AND WELSH-LANGUAGE
POETRY, 1746-1826

A dissertation presented

By

Shannon Rose Parker

to the

Committee of Celtic Languages and Literatures

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

Celtic Languages and Literatures

Harvard University

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation proposes a new hybrid identity for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poets writing in Welsh and Scottish Gaelic: Celto-Britishness. Celto-Britishness is an identity based on the intersection of Celticity and reactions to the expanding, Anglocentric, British state that was formed in 1707. Celto-Britons are those who consider themselves to be of a common Celtic heritage in the face of a British state based on Anglocentricity. This study works within an archipelagic framework, considering the work of Welsh and Gaelic poets together with a limited amount of supplied English-language literature. An archipelagic approach argues for the inclusion of literature from all cultures and languages to present a complete view of the whole.

The “concentric loyalties” paradigm (first posited by T. C. Smout and updated by myself) – supposing that a multiplicity of identities can be present at the same time – is also important in this study. This helps discern the extent to which Celtic-language speaking poets think of themselves as simultaneously British, Welsh, Scottish, Gaelic, Celto-British, or a number of other identities.

Eighteen poets – nine from Wales, and nine from the Gàidhealtachd – are the focus of this study but some supplemental poetry by other poets is also considered. The terminus of this study are 1746 – after the Battle of Culloden – and 1826 – the date of Edward Williams’s death (he is also known as Iolo Morganwg). Culloden is significant in that it marked concerted efforts to Anglicize the Gàidhealtachd and after this date the Gàidhealtachd came increasingly pulled into the British gambit. I have singled out Edward Williams as he was a huge contributor to the conceptualization of Celticity across Britain.

The first chapter deals with the notion of “concentric loyalties,” looking at material pertaining to the growth of Britishness and the ways by which Welsh and Gaelic poets interacted with it. This is examined alongside the history of the Wales-England Act of Union and the Scotland-England Act of Union and a look into whether the Welsh and the Gaels thought about each other – recognition of one another would suggest the presence of Celto-Britishness. The prominent figure of Britannia is also explored to show levels of loyalty to the British state.

Chapter Two explores bardic identity in Wales and the growth of Celticity. Bardic identity, in essence, is the idea that poetry extant in the eighteenth century had its naissiance with the druids in times of antiquity, the line of succession being unbroken. This chapter reviews how bardic identity presented itself in a Welsh context. Against this, is an exploration of Celticity. Celticity was born in the eighteenth century with the publication of Edward Lhuyd’s *Archaeologia Britannica* (1707) and it is inextricable from bardic identity of the period.

Chapter Three sets out to consider bardic identity in Gaelic poetry against the definitions found in that of Welsh poetry. Of course, Macpherson’s *Ossian* (1760–1765) must take center stage and I assess how pervasive Macpherson’s own version of Celticity and bardic identity was in relation to the Gaelic vernacular tradition.

Chapter Four looks at poetry displaying connections to the military and the monarchy. The British state expanded into the Gàidhealtachd in the eighteenth century, and it is important to begin with a historiographical overview of Jacobitism to see to what extent it operated in Gaelic thought after Culloden. Welsh reactions to the French Revolution are also examined along with general views of the king and the Crown.

What is clear from this study is that Celto-Britishness only existed with English mediation.

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came from my stepdad, Rob, and I say diolch yn fawr iawn i ti am hynny or mòran mile taing dhut. Thank you also to my mother-in-law, Vickie, and my father-in-law, Don, for helping me settle in Alabama and always looking after me and my husband, Glendon. To Glendon, I have no words. Of all the hardships we have endured and all of the joy we have shared, I would not be here today without you. I thank God that we met all those years ago in Aberystwyth and I thank you for asking me to the pub.

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INTRODUCTION

AN ARCHIPELAGIC APPROACH

“Anglo-British” is the hyphenated term used by Sarah Prescott and Bethan M. Jenkins to describe the Anglocentric version of Britishness in the eighteenth century that had its core in London. There are many other hyphenated identities from this period: Cambro-Briton, North Briton, Hiberno-Briton, Scoto-Briton, and Anglo-Welsh, which was from the outset pejorative.¹ It is undeniable that an Anglo-British identity glued the new state together but in Wales’s case, according to Jenkins, “the truth of the matter was that in order to be accepted as a modern Briton and not be ridiculed as a backward Taffy, a person had to adopt the trappings of metropolitan Englishness such that they could pass as English.”² Jenkins goes on: “an eighteenth-century Anglophone Welsh writer is a Puncinello – he might choose to display one side, or another, or he may choose to face the front and show his partcoloring to the world.”³ The unfortunate truth is that, as Sarah Prescott writes, writers from Ireland, Scotland, and Wales “are absorbed by an often unconscious Anglo-British bias or treated separately with regard to their native linguistic and literary traditions.”⁴

¹ For more on identity formation and literature in the eighteenth century, see: Pittock, Murray G. H. (1997), “Orc and the Primitives” in *Inventing and Resisting Britain: Cultural Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1685-1789* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd.), 153-178.

² Jenkins, Bethan M. (2017), *Between Wales and England: Anglophone Welsh Writing of the Eighteenth Century*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press), 6.

³ Jenkins (2017), *Between Wales and England*. 15.

⁴ Prescott, Sarah (2016), “Archipelagic Literary History: Eighteenth-Century Poetry from Ireland, Scotland, and Wales” in J. Batchelor and G. Dow (eds.) *Women’s Writing, 1600-1830*. 169-191. 169-170.

The new hyphenated identity that I propose is: Celto-Briton – a hybrid identity that merges the obsession with Celticity and Britishness. Celto-Britons are those (Welsh, English, Irish, Scots, or [Scottish] Gaels) who consider themselves to be of a common Celtic origin in the face of the Anglocentricity emanating out of London and permeating all corners of the islands. Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg; 1747–1826), James Macpherson (Seumas MacMhuirich, or Seumas Mac a' Phearsain; 1736–1796), and Thomas Gray (1716–1771) would be Celto-Britons, for example.

Following the 1707 Act of Union of England (and Wales, in union with England since the sixteenth century) with Scotland, a new state was formed: the United Kingdom of Great Britain. According to Linda Colley in her influential *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (1992), most British subjects considered themselves to be (modern) “Britons” by the end of the eighteenth century, united by their common Protestantism and attitudes towards wars with France. This thesis, however, is criticized by modern scholars of Welsh and Scottish history such as Jenkins as “an Anglocentric one, with eccentric peripheries needing to be cajoled, humored or bribed into cooperation.”⁵ An archipelagic response is more desirable in the case of analyzing British poetry from largely isolated Celtic-language communities. Murray Pittock for example, is critical of Colley’s “fashionable” views and favors a “four nations” literary history of Britain in *Inventing and Resisting Britain: Cultural Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1685-1789* (1997), analyzing identity in all four nations of the archipelago and including Ireland and Scottish Gaels, something which Colley did not do. Katie Trumpener’s *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (1997) is also critical of Colley’s integrationist approach, and Rosemary Sweet argues that the version of eighteenth-century identity put forward by Colley only works on a political and

⁵ Jenkins, Bethan M., *Between Wales and England*. 16.

rhetorical level in *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2004).

In “A Plea for a New British History”, first published in 1974, J. G. A. Pocock called for a revision of “British” history as a separate study to English history and suggested that we start using the term “Atlantic Archipelago” instead of “British Isles,” as the latter is “one which Irishmen reject and Englishmen decline to take quite seriously.”⁶ His approach was pluralist and had to be reconciled with the pattern of England increasingly dominating British history as a political and cultural entity. He argued that British history needed to be reinvested with meaning as a “new subject” existing alongside English history without being inextricably intertwined. Pocock rejected the traditional Anglocentric focus of British history in favor of studying the three kingdoms of Britain as part of a connected archipelago. This approach has become known by a range of near-synonyms: the new British history, four nations history, three-kingdoms history, and archipelagic history.

In literature, the approach is known mostly as “archipelagic theory” and was most fully applied by John Kerrigan in his seminal work, *Archipelagic English*, published in 2008; a book which focusses on interactivity to encompass the reciprocity and tension of considering the four nations (England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland) together. Kerrigan is interested in texts that highlight devolutionary and interactive dynamics. The terminus of the book are James VI’s accession to the English throne in 1603 and the 1707 Act of Union between England and Scotland. What results is a series of archipelagic studies of English-language literature which juxtapose the canonical and non-canonical. For example, he reads Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* alongside a 1637 play, *The Valiant Scot*, to interrogate the internal Scottish and Anglo-Scottish currents that are dramatized in both. When it comes

⁶ Pocock, J. G. A. (1975), “British History: A Plea for a New Subject”, *The Journal of Modern History*. 601-621. 606.

to language, Kerrigan acknowledges that “discussion can only be complete when fully polyglot because important controls, perspectives, and elements of inter-ethnic dialogue lie in the Celtic tongues.”⁷ Yet, understandably he recognizes that it would be a heroic task to acquire all the languages used in the archipelago and suggests even that this would likely sacrifice specificity and particularity in studies. Kerrigan hoped for a collective future, populated with studies like his, authored by scholars of different language competencies. Unfortunately, some studies, despite labelling themselves archipelagic in approach are disappointingly ignorant of Celtic languages even when the study desperately calls for them. For instance, Jeff Strabones’s *Poetry and British Nationalisms in the Bardic Eighteenth Century: Imagined Antiquities* (2018) promises to examine bardic identity in literature – an identity that came out of the interaction of English and Celtic languages – in England, Scotland, and Wales equally and yet ignores the Welsh-language work of antiquarian giant Edward Williams and avoids Scottish Gaelic altogether.

When it comes to Celtic Studies, efforts to readmit Celtic languages into the discussion on identity in eighteenth-century Britain are encouraging. The Leverhulme Project, spearheaded by Sarah Prescott, *Women’s Poetry from Scotland, Ireland, and Wales: 1400-1800*, was initially conceived as a response to what Prescott calls the “lack of a genuinely inclusive and comparative archipelagic account of women’s poetry across Britain and Ireland.”⁸ This lack of inclusion is shown in Paula Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassa’s anthology: *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century*, which,

⁷ Kerrigan, John (2008), *Archipelagic English: Literature, history, and politics 1603-1707*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press). 60.

⁸ Prescott (2016), “Archipelagic Literary History.” 180.

contrary to the title, does not include any non-Anglophone poetry.⁹ The *Women's Poetry* project differs from other anthologies such as this above by providing translations of Celtic material not only alongside the original but interspersed with Anglophone examples to offer a revisionist narrative of women's poetry. The project is collaborative, and the team comprises: Sarah Prescott (UCD, Dublin); Cathryn Charnell-White (Aberystwyth); Kate Mathis (Edinburgh); Sarah Dunnigan (Edinburgh); Marie-Louise Coolahan (NUI Galway); and Wes Hamrick (NUI Galway). The anthology and accompanying critical study are yet to be published at the time of writing. Some digital resources have also developed that aim to aid willing non-specialist scholars in accessing Celtic-language material through language instruction. One such project is *Léamh*, initiated by Brendan Kane, which offers instruction in early modern Irish. Both methodologies—the collaborative *Women's Poetry* project and the linguistic *Léamh* project—offer routes towards a fuller multilingual archipelagic criticism.

My dissertation will follow the model of the *Women's Poetry* project in that Welsh- and Scottish Gaelic-language texts will be considered together alongside a limited discussion of Anglophone material. Anglophone material regarding bardic identity is already an evolved field and does not need more than a few references in my work to anchor the Welsh and Gaelic material within the period. Like the *Women's Poetry* project, I will accompany any previously untranslated poetry with a facing translation. This study covers poetry between the termina of 1746 and 1826. 1746 is the date of the Jacobite defeat at Culloden. I have chosen this date as it marked the beginning of concerted efforts to Anglicize the Gàidhealtachd. One would expect a British identity to start showing after this

⁹ Prescott (2016), "Archipelagic Literary History." 180.

date. The end date of this study (1826) marks the death of Edward Williams. Williams was a great contributor to the exponential growth of Celticity in the eighteenth century.

For this study I have chosen eighteen poets – nine from Wales and nine from the Gàidhealtachd. The poets vary from literate to non-literate, educated to non-educated, middle class to agricultural class, and male to female. I have done this so as to explore poetry from all strata of society to provide a full picture of expressions of identity in Wales and the Gàidhealtachd. The poets chosen are – for Wales: David Thomas (Dafydd Ddu Eryri; 1759–1822), Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg; 1747–1826), Evan Evans (Ieuan Fardd or Ieuan Brydydd Hir; 1731–1788), Goronwy Owen (1723–1769), Jonathan Hughes, Llangollen (Bardd Pengwern; 1721–1805), Lewis Morris (Llewelyn Ddu o Fôn; 1701–1765), Rhys Jones (1713–1801), Thomas Edwards (Twm o’r Nant; 1738–1810), and Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain; 1761–1849). The Gaelic poets I have chosen are as follows: Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alaisdair (Alexander MacDonald; *c.* 1698–*c.* 1770), Alasdair Mac Iain Bhàn (Alexander Grant; *c.* 1772–*c.* 1812), Alasdair MacFhionghain (Alexander MacKinnon; 1770–1814), Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir (Duncan Bàn Macintyre; 1724–1812), John MacLean (Bàrd Thighearna Chola; 1787–1848), Maighread Chamshron (Margaret Cameron; fl. 1785), and Mairearad Ghriogarach (Margaret MacGregor; *c.* 1750–1830). Other, supplemental, poetry is supplied in addition to these poets, but these poets are the focus of the study. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated and biographies of the eighteen poets can be found in the Appendix.

This dissertation begins, in Chapter One, with an exploration of “concentric loyalties.” This is a paradigm first posited by T. C. Smout (1994) for loyalties in Scotland and I will update the paradigm to fit poetry from Wales and the Gàidhealtachd. The paradigm offers a framework by which to view the concentricity of loyalties that existed in eighteenth-century Britain. In this first chapter, material pertaining to the development of

Britishness in the eighteenth century and the ways in which Welsh and Gaelic poets interacted with it is examined alongside a look into the history of the Wales-England and Scotland-England unions. Examining the material against a historical backdrop will allow me to see how Wales and the Gàidhealtachd reacted to the expanding British state and their involvement with it. A foray into Cambro-Gaelic relations – that is how Wales and the Gàidhealtachd saw each other – is pertinent to glean the depths to which Celto-British identity was expressed in the eighteenth century. The prominent patriotic figure of Britannia is also explored to test levels of loyalty to the British state.

Chapter Two – Wales and the Britons – is about bardic identity in Wales and its manifestations in Welsh-language poetry. Bardic identity, in essence, refers to the way in which poets saw themselves composing within an unbroken and continuous tradition which dated back to Roman times and lasted up until the massacre of the bards by Edward I's advancement into Wales in the 1280s. The development of Celticity is important to explore as it sets the foundations for ideas of bardic identity in the eighteenth century. The 1707 Scotland-England Union was in the same year as the publication of Edward Lhuyd's seminal *Archaeologia Britannica*, a work which connected the Celtic languages and cultures in a way that had previously not been done. This connection sets the scene for expressions of Celticity in Welsh poetry, associating themselves with druidic succession. A look into tradition formation following Lhuyd and also into how the Welsh saw the druids and their ancient British history precedes an exploration of origin legends and literary origins, the *awen*, or "poetic muse," and ideas pertaining to the bardic order. The chapter concludes with an inquiry into women's bardic identity to assess how pervasive bardic identity was in eighteenth-century Wales. The presence of Celto-Britishness is an aspect of inquiry as the formation of Celticity that so inspired Welsh poetry is a pan-British phenomenon.

Following this is analysis of Gaelic bardic identity. Welsh bardic identity was informed very much by Celticity, and I explore how this manifested in contemporaneous Gaelic poetry. Macpherson's *Ossian* (1761-1765) of course takes center stage as it was a true manifestation of Celto-British identity that was couched in the pan-British first Celtic Revival of the mid-eighteenth century. To assess how far *Ossian* reached into Gaelic-language poetry, I examine bardic identity both pre- and post-*Ossian*, seeing to what extent *Ossian* informed ideas of bardic identity. Celto-Britishness is present in Welsh poetry of the period in expressions of druidic succession and an adherence to Celticity. I want to see how far this entered into Gaelic poetry.

Chapter Four contains a study of poetry that pertains to the Jacobite Uprising of 1745-6. It also examines poetry from Wales and the Gàidhealtachd that deals with monarchy and the military. The British state was expanding into the Gàidhealtachd at this time with the formation of Highland regiments and the empire became a pivotal point of reference for identity. I assess to what extent Welsh and Gaelic poets identified with the British military project by first starting with a historiographical overview of Jacobitism in the mid-eighteenth century. This is the backdrop against which I explore poetry from pre-Culloden. Examining poetry from pre-Culloden is important in order to provide contrast with the poetry that followed the suppression of the Jacobite cause. I see how expressions of identity changed during this period in the history of the Gàidhealtachd and whether British identity made its way into the post-Jacobite micro-nation. Following this is an inquiry into poetry from both Wales and the Gàidhealtachd that deals with expressions of allegiance to the monarchy and military.

What is apparent as a result of this study is that the relationship that Wales has with Britain is far closer than that which the Gàidhealtachd has with Britain. Wales was annexed by England in 1536, whereas the effects of the 1707 Scotland-England Union was

not felt truly in the Gàidhealtachd until after Culloden – post-1746. Wales’s earlier incorporation meant that poets identified with British patriotic figures such as Britannia and meant that they considered themselves part of the British military project from long before my period of inquiry. The Gaels, on the other hand, only started to consider themselves as British military subjects post-Culloden as the Highland regiments expanded their scope. This Gaelic identification, however, is far less convincing than that of the Welsh. Celto-British identity is inseparable from the sense of bardic identity that the poets feel and is inextricable from English literary tastes. Welsh poets interact much more with Celto-British identity than the Gaels do and the identity in Gaelic poetry is largely confined to the reactions to Macpherson’s *Ossian*. Moreover, a Celto-British identity does not seem present on the ground level as the Gaelic and Welsh poets show no consideration of each other outside of the few interactions we have with the Ossianic controversy.

CHAPTER ONE

CONCENTRIC LOYALTIES

Linda Colley argues that the version of British identity that formed following the establishment of Great Britain in 1707 was largely shaped by wars with other powers.¹⁰ She states that war with France brought “Britons” from England, Scotland, and Wales together in solidarity against an obviously hostile Other, defining themselves as Protestants struggling for existence against the world’s largest Catholic power.¹¹ According to Colley, the French were imagined to be “superstitious, militarist, decadent and unfree” and, increasingly, as wars waged on, Britons defined themselves against the colonial peoples they encountered – alien in terms of culture, religion, and color.¹² This thesis is not uncontroversial and, in Welsh Studies, Bethan Jenkins has advocated for the formation of more nuanced Welsh and Cambro-British identities, critiquing and refining Colley’s premise.

According to Jenkins, we can think of Wales as having three “indigenous ethnic groups” – monoglot Welsh speakers, bilingual Welsh and English speakers, and monoglot English speakers, although the latter were relatively few.¹³ This linguistic continuum ran broadly along class lines with those at the bottom being mostly monoglot Welsh and those at the top being bilingual or polyglot English. In Jenkins’ words, the hyphenated markers of

¹⁰ See: Colley, Linda (1992), *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (New Haven: Yale University Press).

¹¹ See: Colley, Linda (1992), *Britons*.

¹² Colley (1992), *Britons*. 5.

¹³ Jenkins, Bethan (2017), *Between Wales and England: Anglophone Welsh Writing of the Eighteenth century*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 8.

identity that grew rapidly in the eighteenth century – Cambro-Briton, North Briton, Hiberno-Briton, and Scoto-Briton – “reflect the sorts of interconnected and often conflicting traditions that were co-opted to make up a “heterogeneous” Britain”.”¹⁴ “Anglo-Welsh” was first used in print by Evan Evans (Ieuan Fardd or Ieuan Brydydd Hir; 1731-1788) in his 1772 poem *On the Love of Our Country*.

Colley’s thesis is essentially Anglocentric and relies on the thought that the Celtic peripheries needed enticed into cooperation. Although I would never argue, like Colley, that the Welsh and Gaels did indeed become “Britons” in the face of overseas military threats – inhabiting a state identity that superseded other national and local identities – the reality is that Britishness could be active concurrent with other identities, proven by these hyphenated identity terms. Britishness mostly manifested itself in association with the British military project – the cohesive element. In this chapter, I look for traces of a Celto-British identity – a concept of identity that was shared across Wales and the Gàidhealtachd – a uniting factor in opposition to the London-based British state. In this thesis I engage with both positions (Jenkins and Colley) and demonstrate that national and state identities in Wales and Scotland were indeed shaped by the theater of war throughout the long eighteenth century. The main conflicts in my period (1746–1826) against which a British state identity, as well as hyphenated Cambro- and Gaelic identities, were forged include the repercussions to the Jacobite Uprising after 1746, the Seven Year’s War between 1756 and 1764, the American Revolutionary War between 1775 and 1783, the French Revolution between 1789 and 1799, and the Napoleonic Wars between 1803 and 1815.

Wales’s association with the British military is far closer than that of the Gàidhealtachd and is expressed in several poems in Chapter Four. I am using “the

¹⁴ Jenkins (2017), *Between Wales and England*. 9.

Gàidhealtachd” in preference to “the Highlands” as it refers to the area specially inhabited by Gaels and Gaelic rather than a geographical area. It is fortuitous, however, that the Gàidhealtachd and the Highland fault line (Montrose to Helenburgh) were very similar in the second half of the eighteenth century. The greater involvement of Welsh poets with the British military is in part due to the longer and fuller incorporation of Wales into the British state (they entered the Union in 1536), being incorporated as an annexation rather than an equal partner and they had a long tradition of loyalism. Indeed, as Cathryn Charnell-White argues, “war entrenched existing loyalism and exerted further pressure on Non-Conformists and Dissenters to prove their fidelity to the Crown.”¹⁵ Scotland, on the other hand, was first incorporated as part of the parliamentary Scotland-England Act of Union in 1707. The Gàidhealtachd, however, did not feel the effects of this union for the most part until 1746 after the failed Jacobite uprisings. Of course, as a caveat to this, before this date there were British projects which took place in the Gàidhealtachd such as the construction of barracks like that at Ruthven where James Macpherson grew up and the surveying of the region for road working by General Wade.¹⁶ The post-Culloden policies for the “civilization” of the Gàidhealtachd were, according to Richard Finlay, “the most dramatic and profound expression of the changed political realities induced by the Union.”¹⁷ While the Union was not much more than a piece of paper in the early eighteenth century,

¹⁵ Charnell-White, Cathryn A. (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution, 1789-1805*, (Cardiff: UWP). 24.

¹⁶ See: Ang, T.; Pollard, M. (1984). *Walking the Scottish Highlands: General Wade's Military Roads*. (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd.); Tabraham, Chris and Grove, Doreen (1995), *Fortress Scotland and the Jacobites*, (B. T. Batsford).

¹⁷ Finlay, Richard M. (1998), “Caledonia or North Britain? Scottish Identity in the Eighteenth Century,” in Broun, Dauvit, Finlay, R. J., and Lynch, Michael (eds.) *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-making of Scotland through the Ages*, (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers) 143-156. 146.

by 1746 it had expressed itself through military pressure. As we will see in the poetic excerpts in this chapter and Chapter Four, the state involvement in the Gàidhealtachd post-Culloden was a watershed moment for the Gaels and their sense of identity.

It is worth exploring these Acts of Union in relation to linguistic shift to examine the extent to which the communities were in fact isolated by language from the expanding sense of Anglocentric Britishness after 1746. The Acts themselves were inequitable as the Wales-England Union fully incorporated Wales into the English realm with no diplomacy and the Scotland-England Union was supposedly a decision made by equal partners. That is where this chapter begins: first, with a look into the Wales-England 1536 Act of Union and, second, with the Scotland-England Act of Union in 1707. This section sets the scene for further discussion of Wales's and the Gàidhealtachd's allegiance to the British state. Further sections will discuss a paradigm, first posited by T. C. Smout and updated by myself, for concentric loyalties, the development of Britishness, and Cambro-Gaelic relations. Additionally, this chapter will address how Wales and the Gàidhealtachd interacted with England and Britain. Although this chapter will preoccupy itself with the exploration of Welsh and Gaelic meanings of Britain, and the figure of Britannia, England must also unavoidably take center stage as England has long been historiographically synonymized with Britain and the waves of Saxon and Norman colonization made England the victorious nation – later nation state.

The Acts of Union

The Wales-England Act of Union¹⁸

¹⁸ Much of the information here is taken from: Davies, John (2007; revised edition), *A History of Wales*, (London: Penguin Books). 227-313.

The man behind the Wales-England Act of Union was undoubtedly Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's chief minister and, next to the king, the most powerful man in the kingdom between 1532 and 1540. The element (aside from the language clause) of most prominence in the act of 1536 was a list of lordships making newly formed counties. This created the existing border between Wales and England, and it did not follow the old boundary of Offa's Dyke or the eastern borders of the Welsh dioceses. The abolition of any legal distinction between the Welsh and the English was of central importance in the Act. This meant an abandonment of the Penal Code and the sole recognition of the Law of England in the courts of Wales. It should be noted, however, that nothing about the Act of Union was revolutionary – the Penal Code had long fallen into disuse and the Law of Hywel was in decline.

In 1536, twenty-six members of parliament were granted to Wales, with the number rising to twenty-seven in 1543. This is the first time Wales had had any kind of parliamentary recognition, but politicians did not attend parliament until 1542.¹⁹ Furthermore, the statute stated that there was already an existing union between England and Wales. Essentially, this was correct: in 1284, by the Statute of Rhuddlan, Wales had been united with England and Wales did not exist as a unique political unit, being split into the Principality and the March.²⁰ Indeed, the 1536 statute begins: “Albeit the Dominion Principality and Country of Wales justly and righteously is, and ever hath been

¹⁹ A second Act of Union was passed in 1543 after Thomas Cromwell's execution which did little but correct the weaknesses of the first act in relation to the errors contained in the lists of Marcher lordships.

²⁰ Olson, Katherine K. (2021), “The Acts of Union: Change and Religion in Wales, c. 1540-1700” in Evans, Geraint and Fulton, Helen (eds.) *Cambridge History of Welsh Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). 157-175. 157.

incorporated annexed united and subject to and under the Imperial Crown of this Realm...”²¹

Until the early twentieth century the Acts of Union (The Laws in Wales Acts, Welsh: *Y Deddfau Uno*, 1536–1542) were seen by historians as a benefit to Wales and only recently have they been criticized by scholars such as Glanmor Williams for their economic, social, cultural, and national implications.²² The act of February 1536: 27 Henry VIII, c.26, which entrusted the administration of Wales to the Welsh gentry is the first of these so-called Acts of Union.²³ However, the term Act of Union is misleading in that it suggests a resemblance to the 1707 Scotland-England Act of Union or the 1800 Ireland-Britain Act of Union – pieces of legislation passed by both concerned parliaments of supposed equal authority. Indeed, Owen M. Edwards, the Welsh historian who coined the term “Act of Union,” made his personal opinions known in 1901: “in Wales they [the Tudors] rode rough-shod over all sentiment and tradition; and established, in their methodical pitiless way, a strong system of justice and a real political union with England.”²⁴

While the Act of Union in 1536 was indeed important, it did not yield immediate results for Welsh culture, society, and identity. These were also not static. Change took place over a long period, as J. Goronwy Edwards has argued, and it was more complex.²⁵ The biggest impact on Welsh cultural identity was to strip Wales of a native language in

²¹ Bowen, Ivor (ed.) (1908), *The Statutes of Wales*, (London: Unwin). 75.

²² See: Williams, Glanmor (1993), *Renewal and Reformation: Wales c. 1415-1642*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

²³ The full name of this act is: “Act of Law and Justice in like Form as it is in this Realm of 1535/36.”

²⁴ Edwards, Owen M (1901), *Wales* (London: T. Fisher Unwin). 310.

²⁵ Edwards, John Goronwy (1969), *The Principality of Wales, 1267-1967: A Study in Constitutional History*, (Caernarfon: Caernarfonshire Historical Society).

legislation. This is not to say, however, that Welsh disappeared. In fact, as Lloyd Bowen points out, “Welsh remained a necessary, albeit largely invisible, component in these domains across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.”²⁶ There are around 7,500 words in the Act and only around two per cent of them deal with the Welsh language, but this small part of the statute has had a lasting impact on Welsh historical thinking. English was instated as the sole language of the courts in Wales and those using Welsh could not hold public office in the king’s territories:

Also be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, That all Justices Commissioners Sheriffs Coroners Escheators Stewards and their Lieutenants, and all other Officers and Ministers of the Law, shall proclaim and keep the Sessions Courts Hundreds Leets, Sheriffs Courts, and all other Courts in the English Tongue; and all Oaths of Officers Juries and Inquests, and all other affidavits Verdicts and Wagers of Law, to be given and done in the English Tongue; and also that from henceforth no Person or Persons that use the Welsh Speech or Language shall have or enjoy any Manner Office or Fees within this Realm of England, Wales, or other the King’s Dominion, upon Pain of forfeiting the same Offices or Fees unless he or they use and exercise the English Speech or Language.²⁷

Thomas Cromwell’s aim, as a stout supporter of English expansion, was uniform administration of the realm, and this was hindered by the Welsh language, meaning that it was a necessity to create a Welsh ruling class fluent in English:

[T]he people of the same dominion [Wales] have and do daily use a speche nothing like ne consonaunt to the naturall mother tonge used within this realm... his highnes therefore of a singular love and favour that he beareth towards his subiectes of his said dominion of Wales minding and entending to reduce them to the perfecte order notice and knowledge of the lawes of this his Realme and utterly to extirpe alle and singuler the sinister usages and

²⁶ Bowen, Lloyd (2022), *Early Modern Wales c.1536-c.1689: Ambiguous Nationhood*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 91.

²⁷ Bowen (1908), *The Statutes of Wales*. 87.

customs differinge frome the same and to bring his said subiectes of this his Realme and of his said dominion of Wales to an amiable concorde...²⁸

Before this, the Welsh gentry had little need to learn English, although there was a number of Welsh squires who were already educated in English, but branding the language as unnatural, while also allowing gentry to participate fully in English, rapidly accelerated the pace of linguistic change. The number of English-speaking Welsh gentry rose rapidly after 1536. The Act of Union did not create an English-speaking ruling class in a vacuum, and instead, as Katherine Olson states, it “merely confirmed existing late medieval practice and trends towards a bilingual and even multilingual gentry and office-holders.”²⁹

Ultimately, the treatment of the Welsh language in the statute did not yield immediate results and the speed of linguistic transition, Lloyd Bowen argues, has been overstated.³⁰ Nevertheless, Welsh-language literary activity was diminished, although popular literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, traditionally orally transmitted, was unaffected. The statute itself did not in one fell swoop destroy native poetry or the bardic order but it did encourage the gradual anglicization of the gentry – the traditional patrons of Welsh literary output.³¹ Bardic activity as a prominent feature of gentry cultural life did, however, continue into the Tudor period. It was illustrated by circuits on the “three special feasts” (*Tair Gŵyl Arbennig*) of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. Poetry at these feasts declaimed *cywyddau* and *awdlau* of praise composed in strict *cynganedd* or, when occasion demanded, presented elegies to the dead. Indeed, the

²⁸ Rees, William (ed.) (1939), *The Union of England and Wales*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 81.

²⁹ Olson (2021), “The Acts of Union.” 161.

³⁰ Bowen (2022), *Early Modern Wales*. 92.

³¹ Olson (2021), “The Acts of Union.” 162.

output of bardic activity in the Tudor period was prolific with as many as seventeen bards graduating at the 1567 Caerwys eisteddfod, including four who were granted the highest degree of *pencerdd*. Seven others were awarded the next degree of *disgybl pencerddaid*. The poetic output totals over 1,300 surviving *cywyddau* and *awdlau* and hundreds of shorter *englynion*.³²

Indeed, to a degree, the act assessed existing trends and statutorily recognized changes that had already taken place. Other changes happened gradually or had yet to occur. The Act of Union did, however, represent a re-orientation, redefining both jurisdictional and administrative boundaries.³³ Thereby, this established a more unified system of justice, law, and administration. It also provided the Welsh with a new and improved legal status. Nevertheless, as Peter Roberts has suggested, “it would be foolish to consider these measures as expressing a consistent and single-minded “Tudor policy towards Wales” and its language and culture, or to assume that their cultural impact was invariably what they intended.”³⁴ Moreover, Tudor legislation sought theoretically to unify the disparate parts of the realm under one common language, law, religion, and custom.³⁵ The reality, however, was more complex. Indeed, certain cultural pluralisms were, in

³² Williams, Gruffydd Aled (2019), “Bibles and Bards in Tudor and Early Stuart Wales”, in Evans, Geraint and Fulton, Helen (eds.) *Cambridge History of Welsh Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). 232-249.242.

³³ Olson (2021), “The Acts of Union.” 160.

³⁴ Roberts, Peter (1997), “Tudor Legislation and the Political Status of “The British Tongue”,” in Jenkins, Geraint H. (ed.), *The Welsh Language Before the Industrial Revolution* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997). 141, 143.

³⁵ Olson (2021), “The Acts of Union.” 160.

practice, tolerated, particularly in terms of the Welsh language. This was more so in the case of Wales than in Ireland.³⁶

The sense of Welsh identity that existed before 1536 was based mostly on *iaith* (“language”, but also “nation”). It was also based on law, custom, and on a shared sense of a storied past.³⁷ It was seen as the fulfillment of ancient prophecy (*darogan*) that the Tudor dynasty was given the throne in 1485 with the installation of Henry VII. This sense of separate identity was not lost after the Act of Union. However, after the Union of the Crowns of England and Scotland in 1603, the shifting political landscape and changing priorities meant that the Welsh cultural claim to British history and the “British tongue,” popular during the time of the Tudor dynasty (more on this in Chapter Two), did not hold its former sway and, in fact, the connection of Wales with the Tudors was severed after the 1640s.³⁸

The limited status that the Welsh language retained was upheld largely by the Act of Parliament in 1563: 5 Eliz. I, c.28, “An Act for the Translating of the Bible and the Divine Service into the Welsh Tongue,” that allowed for translation of religious materials into Welsh, elevating the status of the language as a language of worship in parishes where Welsh was spoken to official.³⁹ The Welsh translation of the Book of Common Prayer (Welsh: *Lliver Gweddi Gyffredin*) was completed by William Salesbury in 1567; the New Testament (Welsh: *Testament Newydd ein Arglwydd Jesu Christ*), translated by Salesbury and Richard Davies, appeared also in 1567; and in 1588 William Morgan completed the

³⁶ Olson (2021), “The Acts of Union.” 160.

³⁷ Olson (2021), “The Acts of Union.” 170.

³⁸ Olson (2021), “The Acts of Union.” 168.

³⁹ Olson (2021), “The Acts of Union.” 166.

translation of the full Bible. William Morgan convinced the queen and the archbishop of Canterbury that the Welsh Bible was essential for promoting religious uniformity, for “unless religion is taught in the vulgar tongue, not knowing its sweetness and value, no one will undergo any trouble for the sake of acquiring it.”⁴⁰ In fact, the effect of this piece of literature was far-reaching outside the religious sphere and is credited with having ensured the survival of the Welsh language into the modern period.⁴¹ To have an elevated status as a language of religion did much for a language that had no civic institutions, university, center of print culture, or urban literary establishment.⁴² Neither should the oral aspect of Biblical oration be underestimated in the transmission and continuity of the Welsh language as only between 10 and 20 per cent of the general population may have been literate at this time. This included a minority literate only in Welsh.⁴³

The vast majority of Welsh print output in the early modern period was Humanist learning. John Prise’s *Yny Lhyvyr Hwnn* (In This Book) of 1546–7 and William Salesbury’s dictionary and collection of proverbs were the first three printed books in Welsh. Even so, they were slow to make an impact on Welsh speakers on account of the low levels of literacy, the scattered rural population, and the difficulty of transportation and communication.⁴⁴ Gruffydd Robert (c. 1527–98) was a Catholic in exile in Italy and published what Angharad Price calls a “momentous, innovative, and beautifully written”

⁴⁰ Quoted in: Price, Angharad (2021), “Welsh Humanism After 1536”, in Evans, Geraint and Fulton, Helen (eds.) *Cambridge History of Welsh Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). 176–193.184.

⁴¹ Price (2021), “Welsh Humanism After 1536.” 184.

⁴² Price (2021), “Welsh Humanism After 1536.” 187.

⁴³ Olson (2021), “The Acts of Union.” 166.

⁴⁴ Price (2021), “Welsh Humanism After 1536.” 178.

grammar of Welsh in Milan in 1567 (over twenty years before Morgan's Bible) which represents the "apogee" of Welsh vernacular Humanism after 1536.⁴⁵

The Scotland-England Act of Union⁴⁶

As with the Act of Union between Wales and England in 1536, too much emphasis should not be placed on the effects of the Act of Union between Scotland and England on the ordinary Scot, especially Gaels. In fact, only three major pieces of legislation took place in the first half of the eighteenth century which had an influence on Scottish society, and these were in the areas of politics and military intervention.⁴⁷ The Act of Union as such did so little in fact, that "it is perhaps more appropriate to date the beginning of the Anglo-Scottish Union as a tangible entity from 1746, rather than 1707," as Richard J. Finlay explains.⁴⁸ 1746 marked the suppression of the Jacobite cause and is an important date in the Gàidhealtachd, which saw the greatest impact of the post-Culloden reaction. At the beginning of the eighteenth century most people in the Gàidhealtachd lived under the remnants of the clan system, a system which comprised notional kin-groups and affiliated families, focused on the chief, who was the protector and administrator of justice. However, after the 1609 Statutes of Iona, a range of measures were imposed on clan chiefs, aiming to assimilate them into the landed classes, and these statutes were influential on the Gàidhealtachd clan system in the long term. The Statutes, of which there were seven in total, resulted from supposed negotiations (and strong-arming) between James VI and the

⁴⁵ Price (2021), "Welsh Humanism After 1536." 187.

⁴⁶ Much of this information is taken from: Pittock, Murray (2003), *A New History of Scotland*, (Gloucestershire: Sutton). 161-225.

⁴⁷ See: Devine, T. M. (1985), "The Union of 1707 and Scottish Development," *Scottish Economic and Social History* 5.1. 23-40.

⁴⁸ Finlay (1998), "Caledonia or North Britain?" 146.

Highland elite and obliged clan chiefs to reside in Edinburgh for most of the year and educate their eldest sons in English-speaking Protestant schools in the Lowlands with the aim of creating a bilingual, Protestant upper class.⁴⁹ Military aspects of clan society were also restricted. Of course, absenteeism was costly and increasingly the clan lands became indebted and impoverished. The withering system was all but culled in the post-Culloden regime and, as Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart writes, the “Gàidhealtachd was drawn into the political, economic, and cultural ambit of Britain and the wider British imperial world.”⁵⁰

In 1700, Gaelic was the only language spoken by the majority of the population in the Gàidhealtachd. The population of the whole of Scotland at the time was around 900,000 and about twenty-five to thirty per cent spoke Gaelic.⁵¹ For most Gaels, English was a foreign, unknown tongue and the Gaelic-English diglossia had not yet developed. According to Aonghas MacCoinnich, the main languages of business in the Gàidhealtachd pre-1700 were “Scots, with Latin and perhaps Norman French in earlier centuries.”⁵² Of course, there were a number of individuals in the Gàidhealtachd that knew some in the eighteenth century, including those living in areas bordering the Lowlands and cattle drovers. This was an area where economic interactions involved language contact. The upper classes and educated people such as clergymen and some poets such as Sileas na Ceapaich and Alasdair

⁴⁹ Dodgshon, R. A. (2006), *From chiefs to landlords: social and economic change in the western Highlands and islands, c. 1493-1820*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 115.

⁵⁰ Stiùbhart, Domhnall Uilleam (2021), “Adaptation, Integration, and Renewal: Scottish Gaelic Literature, 1650-1750,” in Davis, Leith and Sorensen, Janet (eds.) *International Companion to Scottish Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century*, (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International). 25.

⁵¹ Withers, Charles W. J. (1984), *Gaelic in Scotland, 1698-1981: The Geographical History of a Language*, (Edinburgh: J. Donald). 53.

⁵² MacCoinnich, Aonghas (2008), “Where and how was Gaelic Written in Late Medieval and Early Modern Scotland? Orthographic Practices and Cultural Identities,” *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XXIV. 309-356. 314.

mac Mhaighstir Alasdair also knew English.⁵³ Language contact was primarily Gaelic through Scots and then English but, at the turn of the eighteenth century, language contact between English and Gaelic became increasingly obvious with loanwords – in particular, loanwords used for objects that came into the Gàidhealtachd from the south and the east. For example, much Jacobite poetry employs English terminology for weaponry and military activity. Nineteenth-century poetry also shows an increasing adaptation to urban ways of life in the industrial age. From the later eighteenth century, lamentation over the decreasing “purity” of the Gaelic language became more common due to knowledge of English increasing and bilingualism becoming prevalent.⁵⁴ We see this, as is discussed in Chapter Three, in Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair’s poem *Moladh an ùghdair don t-seann chànan Ghàidhlig*, (The Author’s Eulogy for the Old Gaelic Language).⁵⁵

The eighteenth century nevertheless was an important time in the development of the language as, despite Gaelic having diverged from Irish and Manx during the Middle Ages, as shown in the twelfth-century annotations of the Book of Deer, the language was only codified in writing in a distinctively Scottish manner in the later eighteenth century and early nineteenth century.⁵⁶ Prior to this, an Early Modern Gaelic continuum (to be discussed in Chapter Three), used from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, existed in the Gàidhealtachd and Ireland and professional poetry and prose texts were written in this

⁵³ Jones, Charles and McLeod, Wilson (2007) “Standards and Differences: Languages in Scotland, 1707-1918”, in Jones, Charles and McLeod, Wilson (eds.) *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press). 21-32. 21.

⁵⁴ McLeod, Wilson and Jones, Charles (2007), “Standards and Differences: LOanguages in Scotland, 1707-1918.” 23.

⁵⁵ <https://www3.smo.uhi.ac.uk/gaidhlig/corpus/dain/moladh.html> [accessed 04/20/2024].

⁵⁶ McLeod, Wilson and Jones, Charles (2007), “Standards and Differences: LOanguages in Scotland, 1707-1918.” 22.

somewhat artificial, antiquated language with few region-identifying factors.⁵⁷ We start to see poetry in vernacular Gaelic after the demise of Early Modern Gaelic in manuscript and print from the 1700s, but some poetry, taken down from oral tradition, dates to much earlier – in the 1500s – meaning that we can identify a vernacular tradition that existed in tandem with the Early Modern Gaelic one. An orthography unique to Scottish Gaelic was developed with the publication of a range of secular poetry collections from 1751 onwards and the publication of the Gaelic vernacular Bible, completed in 1801.⁵⁸ As Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart explains of the standard for writing, the mid-eighteenth-century Gaelic spelling reforms were not just a matter of orthographical and grammatical “arcana” but the demonstration of “a slow, but profound, reorientation of the language and its speakers’ vernacular identity and a cultural integration.”⁵⁹

The pioneer in Gaelic secular publishing was Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, whose *Aiseirighdhe na Sean Chánoin Albannaic* (The Resurrection of the Old Scottish Language) was the first vernacular secular book, published in 1751.⁶⁰ Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, rather than insinuating that the Gaelic language belonged outside Scotland as did many other contemporary writers who named it “Irish” or “Erse”, describes

⁵⁷ See: Dunbar, Robert (2013), “Vernacular Gaelic Tradition,” in Dunnigan, Sarah and Gilbert, Suzanne (eds.) *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Traditional Literatures*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press) 51-62.

⁵⁸ Jones and McLeod (2007), “Standards and Differences.” 22.

⁵⁹ Stiùbhart, Domhnall Uilleam (2021), “Gaelic Enlightenment to Global Gaelosphere: Gaelic literature 1750-1800,” in Davis, L. and Sorenson, J. (eds.) *The International Companion to Scottish Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century* (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International). 149-169. 150.

⁶⁰ MacDonald, Alexander (1751), *Ais-eiridh na Sean Choin Albannaich; no, An Nuadh Oranaiche Gaidhealach*, (Edinburgh).

the language as “Galic” [sic.]. The book has introductory material in English, moving on to the poems, which are in Gaelic with no translation.

Aside from Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair’s secular work, the most important publication in Gaelic in the eighteenth century was the New Testament translation in 1767. Dùghall Bochanan (Dugald Buchanan; 1716–1768) and James Stuart (1701–1789) worked on the translation together, with Stuart working from the Greek and Bochanan improving the Gaelic. The publication of this translation, along with the initiatives of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) teaching Gaelic in schools across the Gàidhealtachd, increased Gaelic literacy rates dramatically throughout the eighteenth century. This led to several publication initiatives, including the first periodicals in Gaelic from 1829 onwards. In the nineteenth century, over 1,000 Gaelic books were published, compared to only seventy in the preceding century (forty-five of which were published in the 1780s and 1790s).⁶¹ The New Testament project was important not just in terms of increasing literacy in Gaelic but also, in Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart’s words, for bringing into being a network of “enthusiastic indigenous intellectuals” who focused on Gaelic, becoming increasingly aware of what could make Gaelic suitable as a language of Enlightenment used in education and preaching.⁶² We see that in both Gaelic and Welsh, Biblical translations were huge turning points for the respective languages.

The Concentric Loyalties Paradigm

Assessing expressions of national loyalty, either Welsh, Scottish, Gaelic, or British, is a tricky thing to do. To account for this, T. C. Smout (1994) claimed that the inhabitants of

⁶¹ Jones and McLeod (2007), “Standards and Differences.” 23.

⁶² Stiùbhart (2021), “Gaelic Enlightenment to Global Gaelosphere.” 156.

Scotland can be imagined as having “concentric rings of territorial identity.”⁶³ These rings are as follows: 1. Family; 2. Kin or clan; 3. Locality; 4. Nationality (i.e. Scotland); 5. Statehood (i.e. Britain); 6. Empire; and 7. Supranational (i.e. Europe). Smout continues that language “serves to reinforce locality” but does not “destroy a sense of Scottishness, but rather reinforces it.”⁶⁴ Smout is correct in positing that a sense of Scottishness pervaded across Gàidhealtachd/Lowland boundaries, but all too often in modern scholarship Gaelic identity is subsumed into a Scottish identity that is analogous with Lowland sensibilities. This means that the differing culture in the Gàidhealtachd is not given the investigative treatment it deserves. For instance, even Smout, who states that it is difficult to make conclusions about Scottish identity without looking at the literature and investigating the language that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century people used, ignores Gaelic sources.⁶⁵

According to this paradigm, identification with nation and state are not the same but can coexist. To what extent they do coexist is the central question of this chapter and, in fact, the larger dissertation. Smout’s conclusion that “most Scots felt themselves to be both Scottish and British” fails to account for identity nuances between Lowland Scotland and the Gàidhealtachd. Rather, I argue that it is more effective to view Scotland as split into micro- and macro-nationalities (number four in the paradigm), meaning that Lowland and Gàidhealtachd identities are elevated from mere “local” identities and form micro-nationalities inside the macro-nation of Scotland. Splitting nationality into micro-nationality (Lowland or Gàidhealtachd) and macro-nationality (Scotland) allows for fairer

⁶³ Smout, T. C. (1994), “Perspectives on Scottish Identity,” *Scottish Affairs*. 101-113. 102.

⁶⁴ Smout (1994), “Perspectives on Scottish Identity.” 105.

⁶⁵ Smout, T. C. (1989) “Problems of Nationalism, Identity and Improvement in Later Eighteenth-Century Scotland” in Devine, T.M. (ed.). *Improvement and Enlightenment* (Edinburgh). 1-21. 3.

treatment of Gaelic identity. Smout argues that the concept of concentric loyalties was not present in England as “England was Britain, Britain was England” but I argue it can be true for Wales.⁶⁶ The problem here is with ring number two (kin or clan) and maybe “bardic circle” can be substituted for this when thinking of poetic output in Wales. The importance of bardic circles in Wales will be discussed in Chapter Two but, in short, a bardic circle is the circle of poets within which individual poets operated – a circle that was essential to the sense of bardic identity to which Welsh poets felt attached.⁶⁷ In the case of Wales, which was far more cohesively united in culture and language (around ninety per cent of Wales spoke Welsh) than Scotland (only around thirty per cent of Scotland spoke Gaelic), there is no need for micro- and macro-nationalities.⁶⁸

Many Anglocentric historians and literary scholars such as Linda Colley and Jeff Strabone lump the nations of the Celtic “fringe” together, assuming, if they do not ignore them altogether, that they all shared the English and Lowland-Scottish experience of Britishness.⁶⁹ Scholars of Welsh and Gàidhealtachd history and literature reject this idea and many call for a “Four Nations” or “Three Kingdoms” theoretical framework to British history that aims for greater separation in treatment of the Celtic nations to provide an archipelagic approach (see the introduction for a definition of the archipelagic approach). This way all experiences within the North Atlantic Archipelago (i.e. the geographical area of the island of Great Britain, the island of Ireland, and all outlying islands within the

⁶⁶ Smout (1989), “Problems of Nationalism.” 8.

⁶⁷ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 2.

⁶⁸ Withers, Charles W. J. (1984), *Gaelic in Scotland, 1698-1981: The Geographical History of a Language*, (Edinburgh: J. Donald). 53.

⁶⁹ See: Colley (1992), *Britons*; and Strabone, Jeff (2018), *Poetry and British Nationalisms in the Bardic Eighteenth Century: Imagined Antiquities*, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan).

“British Isles”) are represented. To recapitulate, with Smout’s basis and my emendations to the paradigm, we have:

Concentric Ring	The Gàidhealtachd	Wales
1	Family	Family
2	Kin or clan	Bardic circle (for poets)
3	Locality	Locality
4	a: micro-nation (the Lowlands or the Gàidhealtachd) b: macro-nation (Scotland)	Nation (Wales)
5	Statehood (Britain)	Statehood (Britain)
6	Empire	Empire
7	Supranational (Europe)	Supranational (Europe)

For the purposes of this chapter, we will concern ourselves with rings four and five (micro- / macro-nationality and state). Celto-Britishness is a statehood identity.

The Development of Britishness

The term “(Great) Britain” has a long and complicated past (and present). The proper noun “Prydain” in Welsh originates with the Brythonic term **Pritanī*, which is cognate with Greek *Πρετ(τ)ανοί*, meaning the “inhabitants of Britain,” and The Island of Britain was styled “Ynys P/Brydein” to signify the geographical area the Britons occupied (“Ynys” does mean “island” but in earlier Welsh could also mean “realm”).⁷⁰ This was then taken into Classical Latin as *Britannia* to refer to Roman Britain from whence we get “Britain,” and its convoluted English etymology is as such:

“< *Britain*, the name of the largest of the British Isles, and also (now historical) of Brittany, originally < classical Latin *Brittannia*, *Britannia*, and subsequently reinforced by Anglo-Norman *Brytayne*, *Brutaigne*, *Britaine*, *Bretayne*, *Bretanye*, *Bretannie*, etc., Anglo-Norman and Old French *Bretaigne*, *Bretagne* (Middle French, French *Bretagne*) Brittany (c1170 or earlier), Britain (early 12th cent.; now only in *Grande-Bretagne*, the name of Great Britain) < classical Latin *Brittannia* the island of Britain, in post-

⁷⁰ See: Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru, s.v. “Prydain” [accessed 01/23/2024]

classical Latin also Brittany (6th cent.; from 11th cent. in British sources), variant of *Britannia*.”⁷¹

Early medieval chroniclers were familiar with the term “Britannia” because of its employment by the monastic scholar Bede (672/3–735) and “Britain” made its way into some of the earliest Scottish chronicles.⁷² The Britannia of Bede, however, was the Britannia of Roman Britain. A few Anglo-Saxon and Norman kings used the epithet “King of Britain,” following on from the Roman tradition. For instance, Aethelbald styled himself “Rex Britanniae” in 736 and William the Conqueror “Totius Brittanie Monarches” in 1066.⁷³

The *Ynys Prydein* tradition is long and far-reaching in Welsh with, arguably, the earliest reference found in the *Y Gododdin*, a series of poetic elegies dating from sometime between the seventh and eleventh centuries.⁷⁴ The *Gododdin* elegizes men from *Yr Hen Ogledd* (“The Old North”) who died in slaughter at the Battle of Catraeth in around CE 600. *Yr Hen Ogledd* refers to the old Brythonic kingdoms of what is now northern England and southern Scotland. The text is written in Middle Welsh and partially in Old Welsh, dating from between the seventh and eleventh centuries. Traditionally, this series of poems is ascribed to Aneirin, one of the only survivors of the battle, and it is found in the Book of Aneirin, which dates from the second half of the thirteenth century. Gwrfelling is mentioned as *nef Ynys Prydein* in poem eighteen, showing that the concept of *Ynys Prydain* is at least as old as the concept of *Yr Hen Ogledd*.⁷⁵ *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* (The Triads of

⁷¹ See: Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “Britain (n.2), Etymology,” September 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1383754042>. [accessed 01/23/2024]

⁷² See footnote in: Hay, Denys (1958), “The Use of the Term “Great Britain” in the Middle Ages,” *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 89. 55-66. 58.

⁷³ Hay, Denys, “The Use of the Term “Great Britain.” 55-56.

⁷⁴ Williams, Ifor (ed.) (1961), *Canu Aneirin* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). Line 120.

⁷⁵ CA XVII, line 177.

Britain) is another early series of texts that supports this tradition, the earliest rendition being found in MS Peniarth 16, also dating from the second half of the thirteenth century. The triads are groups of related texts preserving fragments in rhetorical form of Welsh folklore, mythology, and traditional history in groups of three with a heading indicating the link between them. For example, the triad *Teir Lleithiclyth Ynys Prydein*, (The Three Tribal Thrones [Throne-Burdens] of the Island of Britain) lists Arthur as “Chief of Princes” in various places across Wales.⁷⁶ Consciousness that Britain had once belonged to the Britons and that their *patria* was consequently taken by a series of invaders is clear also in *Teir Gormes a Doeth y’r Enys Hon, ac nyt Aeth Vrun Dracheuyn*, (The Three Oppressions that Came to This Island, and not One of Them Went Back).⁷⁷ The oppressions are the Cor(y)aniaid, the Gwyddyl Ffichti, and the Saxons.

According to Helen Fulton, the early Welsh tradition of prophecy is based on “announcements of apocalyptic change, a radical overhaul of the existing status quo and the sweeping in of a new order of political freedom for the Welsh people.”⁷⁸ The return of the single polity of Britain was a frequent topic in Welsh legend and prophecy. This is what we find in the mid-tenth century prophetic poem, *Armes Prydein*, (The Prophecy of Britain), which is attested in the Book of Taliesin. The poem imagines a glorious victory – as the *awen* and Myrddin (Merlin) foretell – for the Welsh over the Saxon invaders who have stolen Welsh territory and demanded tribute. The legendary heroes Cynan and Cadwaladr with their armies, along with men from Ireland, Scotland, and Cornwall, will lead the

⁷⁶ Bromwich, Rachel (ed.) (2014; 2nd edition), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Triads of the Island of Britain*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 1.

⁷⁷ Bromwich (2014), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*. 90.

⁷⁸ Fulton, Helen (2000), “Tenth-Century Wales and Armes Prydein,” *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 7. 5-18. 5.

Welsh to victory, driving the Saxons out over the sea, and returning the island of Britain to the rightful rulers of Britain and their fellow Britons so that *ryfel heb dychwel y tir Prydyn* (war will not return to the land of Britain).⁷⁹

From the Middle Ages onward, the idea of Britain has played a significant and varied role in shaping the history of the constituent parts of Great Britain. When thinking of Britain's importance as a geopolitical concept, one must start with Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain), completed in around 1136, which was a greater influence than any when it came to making people, particularly the English, conscious of the term "Britain."⁸⁰ Geoffrey's work gave prophecies of a Welsh return to power a much wider circulation and his *Prophetiae Merlini* (Prophecies of Merlin), originally a separate text but republished as part of the *Historia*, made a considerable impact. Geoffrey claimed to have translated his work from a lost Welsh source. This hugely influential book tells the pseudo-history of Britain over a period of two thousand years, beginning with its foundation as a kingdom by the Trojan exile Brutus (an origin story that will be discussed in a Welsh context in Chapter Two) and ending with the arrival of the Saxons in the fifth and sixth centuries. Geoffrey's influence on Welsh prose tradition was immense and his *Historia Regum Britanniae*, taken as authentic and authoritative, was "translated" (the "translation" being much freer than we would expect a modern translation to be and including additional material) into Welsh as *Brut y Brenhinedd* (The Chronicle of Kings), a work extant in several versions and around sixty

⁷⁹ Williams, Ifor (ed.) (1972), *Armes Prydein: The Prophecy of Britain from the Book of Taliesin*, (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies). 6-7.

⁸⁰ See: Reeve, Michael D. (ed.) and Wright, Neil (trans.) (2007), *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of De Gestis Britonum (Historia Regum Britanniae)*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press).

manuscripts, the earliest of which dates from the mid-thirteenth century.⁸¹ Additionally, a sequel to the Galfridian history was produced: *Brut y Tywysogion* (The Chronicle of Princes), taking up where Geoffrey left off with the death of Cadwaladr, the last of Brutus's line, and ending in 1282.⁸² The longest edition of *Brut y Tywysogion* is found in Peniarth 20 which dates to around 1332 and extends the chronicle to that year. In *Brut y Tywysogion*, the Welsh are consistently named the *Brytaniaid*, "Britons."

Throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period, both the English and Welsh positioned this idea of an ancient British heritage as the cornerstone of their respective identities, and this is also true, to some extent, (as will be shown in Chapter Two) for Wales in the later eighteenth century. English writers used Geoffrey's illustrious history to support their claims to dominion over Wales, as Welsh writers used it to ideologically prove their resistance against the English. According to Allen MacColl, Geoffrey's ambiguous style of writing made his work possible to appropriate by both the English and the Welsh as part of their respective national histories.⁸³ The *Historia* seems to be the product of two conflicting allegiances. First, to the Welsh for whom the repeated allusions to the island of Britain would have recalled the *Ynys Prydein* tradition and whose patriotism would have been stoked by the ending which is a promise that the land would be returned to the descendants of the indigenous Britons. And second, to the Anglo-Normans to whom the

⁸¹ For more on the Welsh reception of *Historia Regum Britanniae* see: Roberts, Brynley (1991), "Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae* and *Brut y Brenhinedd*," in Bromwich, Rachel, Jarman, A. O. H., and Roberts, Brynley F. (eds.) *The Arthur of the Welsh*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 97-116; and Roberts, Brynley (1976), "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh Historical Tradition," *Nottingham medieval studies* 20. 29-40.

⁸² See: Jones, Thomas (ed. And trans.) (2015), *Brut y Tywysogion, or the Chronicle of the Princes*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press).

⁸³ MacColl, Alan (2006), "The Meaning of "Britain" in Medieval and Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 45, 2. 248-269. 252.

dedications to the king and the basis of its main theme (the dangers of division and the virtue of a strong monarchy) would have appealed.

The Galfridian *Historia Regum Britanniae* was followed by an Anglo-Norman work, *Roman de Brut*, by a poet named Wace in 1155.⁸⁴ Somewhere between these two works was the “Variant version” of Geoffrey’s *Historia* by an unnamed adapter and Wace’s poem is based on this Variant version. Wace’s *Roman de Brut* in turn influenced the production of the Middle English prose Brut in c. 1300, also written by an unnamed author.⁸⁵ In the Variant version, most (but not all) of the allusions to Britain as an island are removed and this was a development of great significance as it laid way for Wace to reconstruct “Britain” in *Roman de Brut*. Wace also removed the *Prophetiae Merlini* in his poem, removing with them any trace of pro-Welsh sympathies, reorienting the entire narrative as a history of England, and suggesting that “Britain” was simply another name for the kingdom of England. The later author of the prose Brut explains that “Britain” should be read as England and, in the later Middle Ages, the vernacular prose histories of England that monopolized English historical writing refer to Britain, if at all, as a synonym for England.

In *Armes Prydein*, Cadwaladr and Cynan are to deliver Britain back to the Welsh and the other Britons and this is an example of the *mab darogan* (son of prophecy) theme.⁸⁶ King Arthur became associated with this role by the twelfth century and Owain Glyndŵr (Owain ap Gruffudd) was then fabled to bring glory to Wales in the late fourteenth and

⁸⁴ See: Weiss, Judith (ed. And trans.) (2002), *Wace’s Roman de Brut: A History of the British: Text and Translation*, (Exeter: Exeter University Press).

⁸⁵ See: Matheson, Lister M. (1998), *The Prose Brut: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle*, (Tempe: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies).

⁸⁶ See: Williams, Ifor (ed.) (1972), *Armes Prydein: The Prophecy of Britain from the Book of Taliesin*, (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies).

early fifteenth centuries.⁸⁷ When we come to the late fifteenth century, however, Henry Tudor VII (“Harri Tudur” in Welsh) became the next incarnation of the *mab darogan* to the Welsh. Of Welsh heritage through his grandfather, Owain Tudor (Welsh poets even claimed that he was in fact of Cadwaladr’s lineage), Henry’s victory at the Battle of Bosworth fulfilled the prophecy and dream of Welsh glory and as Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn sang:

Ag ef ni bu neb gyfuwch
Dan y nef nid â dyn uwch.

No one reached as high as he;
under heaven no man will go higher.⁸⁸

The fact that Henry VII called his firstborn son Arthur exemplifies that he was knowledgeable and receptive to the myth and the myth’s real force is undeniable when discussing identity politics in the writing of contemporary commentators and of later eighteenth-century voices.⁸⁹ As Jenkins writes, once the English throne had gained a Welsh dynasty, the English were able to “colonize British antiquity” which allowed the Welsh to feel that they had retaken possession of the Britain lost in *Armes Prydein*.⁹⁰ The use of “Ancient Britons” was an attempt by the Welsh to reclaim an identity that, as Jenkins states, “had been lost to the English who were using the concept of “Britishness” to synthesize multiple ethnicities into one essentially Anglocentric nation.”⁹¹ These multiple

⁸⁷ For more on Arthur, see: Fulton, Helen (2014), “Originating Britain” in Zacher, Samantha, DeMaria, Robert, and Chang, Heesok (eds.) *A Companion to British Literature* (Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.). 308-322.

⁸⁸ Quoted in: Williams, Glanmor (1974), “Prophecy, Poetry and Politics in Medieval and Tudor Wales” in Hearder, H. and Loyn H. R. (eds.) *British Government and Administration: Studies Presented to S. B. Chrimes* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 104-116.

⁸⁹ Jenkins (2017), *Between Wales and England*. 18.

⁹⁰ Jenkins (2017), *Between Wales and England*. 19.

⁹¹ Jenkins (2017), *Between Wales and England*. 19.

ethnicities include the Gaels of Scotland, who conceptualized Britishness differently to the Welsh.

When it comes to Gaelic senses of Britishness, the earliest dictionary entry for “Britain” appears in the dictionary, *Dictionarium Scoto-Celticum*, funded by the Highland Society of Scotland, which was published in 1828.⁹² In this volume a concise definition of “*Breatann, -ainn*” is offered as “Britain: *Britannia*. C.S.” “C.S.” stands for “common speech” and suggests that the definition was based on popular usage rather than on literary sources.⁹³ Vincent Morley argues, on the basis of sources from the mid-seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries that this definition is correct.⁹⁴ “*Breatannach, -ich*” is listed as “British, a Briton: *Britannicus*. *Wel*. *Brython*.”⁹⁵ Aside from the referenced cognate, Wales is not mentioned (in Irish the word for Wales is *an Bhreatain Bheag* – “Little Britain”), presumably because of geographical distance and it should be noted that the Gaelic for Wales, “*a’ Chuimrigh*” is a neologism derived from the Welsh itself; “*Cymru*.” Although the inclusion of the Latin for *Britannia* suggests an acknowledgement of Roman Britain as a possible meaning, there is no implication that the term applied only to the southern part of Great Britain in post-Roman times. However, according to Morley, there is “unequivocal evidence” that the concept of “Britain” in the Gàidhealtachd had acquired an explicitly

⁹² The earlier dictionaries by William Shaw (*Gaelic and English Dictionary*, 1780) and Robert MacFarlane (*Nuadh Fhoclaire Gaidhlig agus Beurla*, 1795) do not contain the word.

⁹³ Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland (1828), *Dictionarium Scoto-Celticum: a dictionary of the Gaelic language, comprising an ample vocabulary of Gaelic words and vocabularies of Latin and English words, with their translation into Gaelic*. 142.

⁹⁴ Morley, Vincent (2004/2005), “The Idea of Britain in Eighteenth-Century Ireland and Scotland,” *Studia Hibernica* 33. 101-124. 111.

⁹⁵ Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, *Dictionarium Scoto-Celticum*. 142.

political dimension before the parliamentary union in 1707, a union which only increased the significance of “Britain” in Gaelic thought.⁹⁶

According again to Morley, *Breatann* signified “the entire island from the beginning of the period [the long eighteenth century] in Gaelic and the belief that Scotland formed part of a larger geo-political entity was reflected in the work of Jacobite and pro-Hanoverian authors alike.”⁹⁷ It is not surprising that *Breatann* occurs fairly regularly in Gaelic sources of the seventeenth century as after 1603 with the Union of the Crowns the Scottish people found themselves looking towards an ultimate executive power that was outside their own borders. The transfer of the court to London and the dual monarchy of James I and VI forced Gaels to think of themselves within a wider range of reference than the Gàidhealtachd or Scotland alone. Indeed, around this time – in 1595 – Gilleasbuig, the Earl of Argyll is praised as being a *Breat-Ghaoidheal* (British-Gael). This compound was a neologism and the Irish poet responsible for coining it urges Gilleasbuig to succor Ireland because his “progenitor King Arthur had exacted tribute there.”⁹⁸ Even if this is anomalous, it is significant and as M. Pía Coira reports, “a sense of Gaelic Britishness, and a specific understanding of what it meant to be British, developed in Gaelic Scotland in the seventeenth century.”⁹⁹ Throughout the eighteenth century, while Irish authors continued

⁹⁶ Morley (2004/2005), “The Idea of Britain.” 112.

⁹⁷ Morley (2004/2005), “The Idea of Britain.” 123.

⁹⁸ MacGregor, Martin (2012), “The Campbells: Lordship, Literature, and Liminality,” *Textual Cultures* 7.1. 121-157. 125.

⁹⁹ Pía Coira, M. (2020), “Greek Gaels, British Gaels: Classical Allusion in Early-Modern Scottish Gaelic Poetry,” in Kaminski-Jones, Francesca, and Kaminski-Jones, Rhys (eds.) *Celts, Romans, Britons: Classical and Celtic Influence on the Construction of British Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). 97-116. Abstract.

to anachronistically use “three kingdoms” or “three crowns,” their Scottish cousins were quick in adopting a “two kingdoms” frame of reference.¹⁰⁰

Cambro-Gaelic relations

Due to the geographical distance between the Gàidhealtachd and Wales, it is exceedingly rare to find poets from their respective (micro-)nations referencing each other, leading us to see that “Celto-Britishness” is not an overarching self-identification outside of literary culture. There are traces of Celto-Britishness in the discussions of bardic identity in Chapters Two and Three but, in this chapter on the sense of nationhood itself, it is difficult to find as there is neither negative nor positive recognition of one another. The Welsh poets feel a strong sense of loyalty to the British state but even then, we have few Welsh-language reactions to the Jacobite uprising in 1745, which was seen as the greatest threat to the British state in the Anglophone community. According to Murray Pittock, there are three main ways by which Jacobitism in Wales differed from that in Scotland and Ireland. First, the Stuarts were not allied to Wales through bloodline or religion; second, the Wales-England Act of Union had already annexed Wales to England and the events of 1699–1707 had no nationalist dimension; and third, Wales was not as geographically remote from the center of the British government as Scotland or Ireland.¹⁰¹ The gentry in Wales, even the Jacobite ones, were far more Anglicized than the other Celtic nations and, again, Pittock writes, “Welsh Jacobitism was politically, financially, and militarily ineffective.”¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Pía Coira (2020), “Greek Gaels, British Gaels.” 113.

¹⁰¹ Pittock, Murray (1994), *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). 201-202.

¹⁰² Murray (1994), *Poetry and Jacobite Politics*. 202.

The lack of Welsh and Gaelic awareness of one another is shown in the following poetic excerpt from *Cwynfan Britannia yn ei galar a'i thristwch am ei phriflyngesydd (Arglwydd Horatio Nelson) yr hwn a laddwyd yn y frwydr gerllaw Trafalgar, 21 Hydref 1805*, (Britannia's lament in her grief and her sorrow for her Admiral (Lord Horatio Nelson) who was killed in the battle near Trafalgar, 21 October 1805) by Jonathan Hughes, Llangollen (Bardd Pengwern; 1721-1805). When discussing British engagement in the Battle of Trafalgar, 1805, Hughes laments the death of Horatio Nelson and names only Welshmen and Englishmen as members of the accompanying military project, omitting Scotland altogether. The fleet contained significant contingents from England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland but the term "England" was widely conflated at the time to refer to the United Kingdom:

Gwnaeth tair o longau, traenau trais,
Ar ddeg ar hugain, gywrain gais
Am rwygo a suddo Cymro a Sais...¹⁰³

thirty-three ships (violent retinue)
made a cunning attempt
to tear and sink Welshmen and Englishmen...¹⁰⁴

David Thomas (Dafydd Ddu Eryri; 1759-1822) does something similar when he mentions the geographical areas he considers concerned with the British military: only Wales to "streets of the Tyne" in Northern England deserve mention in *Cân y fuddugoliaeth ar fyddinoedd y Ffrancod a'r Ysbaeniaid; a marwolaeth y pen-llyngeswr digymer Nelson. Y frwydr hon a ymladdwyd ar gyfer Penrhyn Trafalgar, yn nhalaith Andalwsia yn yr Ysbaen, 21 Hydref 1805* (The song of the victory against the armies of France and Spain; and the

¹⁰³ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 94-101.

¹⁰⁴ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 94-101.

death of the peerless Admiral Nelson. This battle was fought for the Peninsular of Trafalgar, in the region of Andalusia in Spain, 21 October 1805):

Ymdaenu'n gyffredinol
Y mae cysurol sain,
O eithaf Cymru ffyddlon,
Hyd dirion lonydd Tyne...¹⁰⁵

The comforting sound is
Spreading generally,
From the depth of faithful Wales
To the gentle streets of Tyne...¹⁰⁶

In the work of all poets I have examined, I have found only one poem suggesting that Wales recognizes the Gàidhealtachd or vice versa, and it is a simple recognition of Scotland's involvement in the British military and nothing more. Written during the French Revolution, David Thomas's *Awdl ar ryddid*, (An awdl on liberty), lists the members of the British military force as "dear England," "the land of Albion" (in this case, rather than referring to the whole island as once was the meaning, "Albion" is a variant form of "Yr Alban": the usual name for Scotland/Northern Britain), and "Gwalia" (a Latinate name for Wales):

Iawndda cadw'n ddihocedion
Goffadwriaeth o gyff dirion,
Prawf o lwyddiant prif luyddion
Lloegr annwyl, a'i holl gywreinion,
Da wrolbarch i dir Albion,
A thir Gwalia, a'i thrigolion:
Bid ein iaith, heniaith yw hon – mewn blodau
Yn nyddiau Gwyneddion.¹⁰⁷

it is right and good to keep, without deceit,
the memory of a gentle lineage,
the evidence of the success of the chief armies

¹⁰⁵ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 268-273.

¹⁰⁶ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 268-273.

¹⁰⁷ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 230-249.

of dear England, and all her skilled people,
good brave respect to the land of Albion,
and the land and inhabitants of Gwalia:
may our ancient language bloom
in the days of the men of Gwynedd.¹⁰⁸

This example, while important in showing that there was, at a basic level, some recognition of one other, gives us nothing of David Thomas's opinions of Scotland and the excerpt turns straight back to Wales with a wish that "our ancient language bloom."

Britain, England, and Wales

According to Matthew McCormack, "Britons in the eighteenth century were, for the most part, loyal."¹⁰⁹ Dual identities sat comfortably with eighteenth-century Gaels and Welsh people but, for this statement to be true, one would expect an identification with the British state and even perhaps references to themselves as "Britons." What we have, instead, is a manifestation of concentric loyalties, with loyalty to the nation, or micro-nation in the case of the Gàidhealtachd, coming first and loyalty to Britain coming second.

In this study I have not found any examples of poets calling themselves "British." There is, however, a reference in *Tuirseach an diugh crìocha Gaoidhiol* (Sorrowful today are the bounds of the Gaels) – an elegy to Iain Ruadh nan Cath, John Campbell, second duke of Argyll – as being praised because of his links with *ardrìgh Bhreatann* (the high king of Britain). This poem is by the Kintyre poet and antiquarian, Uilliam MacMhurchaidh, in 1743.¹¹⁰ The Campbells were, as Martin MacGregor accounts, "Scottish history's ultimate

¹⁰⁸ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 230-249.

¹⁰⁹ McCormack, Matthew (2012), "Rethinking "Loyalty" in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35:3. 407-421. 407.

¹¹⁰ MacGregor, Martin (2012), "The Campbells: Lordship, Literature, and Liminality," *Textual Cultures* 7.1. 121-157. 125.

chameleons,” having several genealogical stories that allowed them to claim British, Norman, and Gaelic lineage depending on the situation.¹¹¹ The Campbells have a complicated history but, during the eighteenth century, for the most part, they showed allegiance to the Crown in matters of land tenure, disposal, and inheritance. This, along with their earlier actions, lead to the Campbells being regarded by historians, as William Gillies writes, as “outsiders, or at any rate as existing on the fringes of the Gaelic world and somehow alien to it; not just geographically peripheral, either, but somehow “un-Gaelic” in their psychology as well.”¹¹² This is not, in fact, what Gillies thinks or wishes for us to think and is an idea that only came to prominence in the seventeenth century. Indeed, with his article, “Some Aspects of Campbell History” (1978), he sought to rectify this thinking as “there would seem to be grounds for arguing that members of the upper classes in the Campbell areas preserved a Gaelic consciousness for as long as their counterparts in other important Highland families, down to and even after the ’45.”¹¹³

We have many instances of the Welsh calling themselves Ancient Britons (as will be discussed in Chapter Two) which is a proud reference to the indigenous status of the Welsh and also a nod to their part in the new union. It seems, however, that the identification with modern Britishness is kept as a secondary allegiance. The Welsh, through closer connection to England and Britain, identify with Britain as being within their own realm. As M. Pía Coira explains, Gaels were “members of the kingdom of Britain, key players in its

¹¹¹ MacGregor, Martin (2012), “The Campbells: Lordship, Literature, and Liminality,” *Textual Cultures* 7.1. 121-157. 125.

¹¹² Gillies (1976-1978), “Some Aspects of Campbell History.” 256.

¹¹³ Gillies (1976-1978), “Some Aspects of Campbell History.” 257.

history, and the defenders of right and justice on the island.”¹¹⁴ However, in this study I have not found instances of Gaels identifying with Britishness outside of a military context in the period post-Culloden (something which will be explored in Chapter Four). On the Welsh side, there are several references to Britain described as a paradise, a lovely place, or good. Despite Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg; 1747-1826) showing general hatred for the crown and a belief that Britain should follow the French in revolution, he still resonates with the British realm as a “second paradise” in *Ymddiddan â'r Haf*, (Conversation with Summer):

Y gaeaf a'i oer giwed
Yn dwyn eu ffwyr llwyr ar lled
A'm cadwodd i'm glanfodd glwys
O Brydain, f'ail baradwys.¹¹⁵

Winter and its cold rabble
Bearing their full horror abroad
Kept me in my beautiful and pure way
From Britain, my second paradise.

The French Revolution had a strong influence on Welsh minds – minds which were more embroiled in Britishness than their Gaelic counterparts, and it served to secure a feeling of united Britishness in the face of overseas tensions. The maverick Edward Williams, however, sympathizes with the French and chastises the king and Crown but his opinions are not popular with other poets. Overwhelmingly, Welsh poets think of themselves as being freer than the French, being housed in “lovely Britain”:

Diau and oes, erioes un,
Bro dan haul fal Brydain hen,

Drwy Brydain gywrain rhoed gawr, - lawn uchder,

¹¹⁴ Pía Coira (2020), “Greek Gaels, British Gaels.” 109.

¹¹⁵ Lake, A. Cynfael (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas o Ganu Caeth y Ddeunawfed Ganrif*, (Felindre, Swanswea: Barddas). 206-9.

O lonychdod difawr...¹¹⁶

Doubtless there is not a
Region under the sun like old Britain, fair land

Through lovely Britain a shout was given out, at full blast,
Of immense cheer...¹¹⁷

David Thomas goes on to describe how Britain has many blessings:

Ni fu gwlith un fendith fwy
I Frydain, le dyfradwy.¹¹⁸

The was never any greater dew of blessing upon
Britain, well-watered place.¹¹⁹

To Thomas, Britain is a “well-watered place” and a “fair land.”

Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain; 1761–1849), also writing on the French Revolution, is particularly eulogistic of Britain in his *Arwyrain rhyddid*, (Praise to liberty). There are two references Davies makes in this poem to the “Britons” in the modern sense, presumably including himself in the descriptor, and this is the closest we get to a true show of loyalty to the British state. He wishes for Eleutheria, the Ancient Greek personification of liberty, to be bestowed upon Britain:

Duwies gannaid! O! disgynner
Ei gwlith, wir fendith, wâr fwynder,
Ar Frytaniaid, eurfri tyner

...
Rodder, noder yn enwedig,
Hon i Frydain yn fawredig...¹²⁰

Bright goddess! Oh! May her
Dew (sure blessing), civilized gentleness,

¹¹⁶ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 230-249.

¹¹⁷ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 230-249.

¹¹⁸ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 230-249.

¹¹⁹ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 230-249.

¹²⁰ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 290-317.

Fall on the Britons (gentle golden privilege)

...

May Eleutheria be given in particular
To Great Britain...¹²¹

He continues to eulogize Britain:

Mynnwn eu hail, sail 'r oes hon;
Awn â'r ffrwyn oreu ei phris...

...

Y mae'n hynod mewn hanes.

O! Frydain, fy hoyw frodir
Ddaearol nef, dangnef dir!

...

Brydain, bydd fyth heb wradwydd,
Rhyddid di-lid yw dy lwydd...¹²²

We demand the like
Of the dearest Briton's laws, foundation of this age...

...

Britain is remarkable in history.

Oh Britain! My fine region,
Heaven on earth, land of peace!

...

Britain, be forever without shame,
Worthy liberty is your prosperity¹²³

These lines show that loyalty to the fifth ring of concentric loyalties (state) is present in Welsh poetry. Given these examples of poetry from David Thomas and Walter Davies which are resolutely pro-British, it is unsurprising that they also equate England with liberty. In *Cân Twm Paen*, (The Song of Tom Paine) David Thomas calls England the “home of liberty”:

Pur ryddid pereiddiaf, dawn uchaf y ne',

¹²¹ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 290-317.

¹²² Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 290-317.

¹²³ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 290-317.

A wnaeth mewn disgleirder yn Lloegr ei lle...¹²⁴

The pleasantest pure liberty (highest blessing of heaven)
Which made its bright home in England...¹²⁵

Walter Davies, again in *Arwyrain rhyddid*, (Praise to liberty) shows endearment towards England:

I'n siomi, na ddos ymaith
O Loegr gu na Chymru chwaith...¹²⁶

Do not disappoint us by leaving
Dear England, or Wales either...¹²⁷

These examples of fondness for England are notable, as it is often assumed that only animosity exists between the Welsh and English.

Although Britain is an identity the Welsh and Gaels can get behind in a sense of political polity, old animosities are still very fresh in Welsh poetry. Dislike of the English, separate from the glory of Britain, is present in several poems by Evan Evans (Ieuan Fardd or Ieuan Brydydd Hir; 1731–1788), who shows enmity towards the English in *Mawrnad Wiliam Fychan, Corsygedol*, (A Lament for Wiliam Fychan, Corsygedol). He accuses the English of being a corrupting force on Wales:

Gwae i wlad Gymru druan;
Aeth i gyd yn noeth a gwan.
At fawrion glythion ein gwlad
O dir Lloegr deuai'r llygriad.¹²⁸

Woe to the poor land of Wales;
it all became naked and weak.
The corruption came from the land of England

¹²⁴ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 252-261.

¹²⁵ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 252-261.

¹²⁶ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 290-317.

¹²⁷ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 290-317.

¹²⁸ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 135-8.

To the great greedy men of our country.

Even worse, in *Hiraeth y Bardd am ei Wlad*, (Homesickness of the Poet for his Country),

Evans likens the English to “lewd devils” and Englishwomen to “black witches” of “tainted blood”:

At Sais trafaeliais trwy fŷr
I dir Cent, i awyr cas
Saesoniaid, diafloiaid diflas.

Annhebyg yn Neheubarth
Y fun wen ni fynnai warth
I Saesnes, ddewines ddu,
O waed Lloegr wedi'i llygru.
Och im, fy ngwlad, dy adaw,
A ffoi a throi yma a thraw.¹²⁹

To an Englishman I travelled through seas
to the land of Kent, to the dreadful air
of the English, lewd devils.

Unlike in Deheubarth
the pure maiden did not wish disgrace
upon an Englishwoman, a black witch,
of the tainted blood of England.
Alas, my country, I leave you,
and flee and turn here and there.

Hostility towards the English language is also present in Evan Evans's *Englynion i*

Dyddewi, (Englynion to St. David's) in which he laments that English bishops have been

placed in the cathedral of St. David's in South Wales and are using only English – “the

foreign Saxon's tongue”:

Tyddewi, heb fri, heb fraint – ym Mynyw
Na maenor uchelfraint,
Heb gafell a heb gwfaent,
Ef aeth, ysywaeth, heb saint.
Haid o ficeriaid a'u ceg – yn seinio
Gwasanaeth yn Saesneg;
Gwae i'n gwlad o'r brad a'r breg
Eu cael o fewn y coleg.

¹²⁹ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 141-4.

Iaith Cymru, darfu i'r dydd, – ni chlywaf
Na'i chlaear leferydd;
Iaith estron Saeson y sydd
A'u diffaith Esgyb diffydd.¹³⁰

St. David's in Monmouth, without prestige, without privilege
or privileged estate,
without a sanctuary and without a convent,
it has become, alas, lacking in saints.
A flock of vicars and their mouths sounding
service in English;
woe to our country because of the betrayal and the treachery
of having them within the college.
Wales's language, the day has come to an end, I do not hear
its gentle speech;
there is [but] the foreign tongue of the English/Saxons
and their wicked, faithless bishops.

As to the fourth concentric ring of loyalty (nation), references to Wales abound in the literature, many of which will be explored in Chapter Two, where we see the greatest show of Welsh patriotism. As for this chapter, the excerpts chosen show that Wales as a nation standing apart from England or Britain is part of the Welsh poets' consciousness. Firstly, we have Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg; 1747-1826) equating the loss of Richard Morris, the renowned Welsh antiquarian, with a blow to the nation of Wales specifically, in

Marwnad Richard Morris, (A Lament for Richard Morris):

Gwae Gymru oll o'i golli!
Trwm golled, niwed i ni.
Colli gŵr mawr, clodfawr, clau
A garodd bob rhagorau.¹³¹

Woe to all Wales for losing him!
A heavy loss, an injury to us.
Losing a great, celebrated, upright man
Who loved all excellencies.

¹³⁰ Lake (ed.) (1993). *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 145.

¹³¹ Lake (ed.) (1993). *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 215-222.

Walter Davies translated anti-Jacobin works into Welsh and in his work “Britishness” and “Welshness” were interchangeable as political terms, with the Welsh language becoming a medium for pro-British politics.¹³² In his poem, *Arwyrain rhyddid*, (Praise to liberty), also discussed earlier in this chapter for being affectionate towards England and Britain, Davies states that Wales itself, separate from Britain, is a place of liberty, showing a Welsh tradition of liberty as part of the British story:

Caent ryddid, heb lid na bloedd – galanas
 Gelynyon a’u lluoedd;
 Ond eu cred, nid croyw ydoedd,
 Pib i Ddiawl, ’ran pabaidd oedd.¹³³

The Welsh had liberty, without wrath or the cry of murder
 By their enemies and their troops;
 But their belief was not pure
 (it was an instrument for the Devil) because it was popish.¹³⁴

There is a clear comfort for the Welsh in considering themselves both proudly Welsh and British, the loyalties working concentrically.

The Gàidhealtachd

Moving on to the Gàidhealtachd, this same level of comfort is not seen, and the rings of concentric loyalty are more closed. As I argue on the basis of greater recognition for the Gàidhealtachd as more than a “locality,” the Gàidhealtachd has its own “micro-national” ring of concentric loyalty. It is pertinent to examine what the Gàidhealtachd meant in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The question of “what is a Highlander?” is an essential question in Scottish history, as Murray Pittock explains, but is often neglected,

¹³² Davies, Hywel (2001), “Loyalism in Wales, 1792-1793,” *Welsh Historical Review* 20:4, 687-716. 716.

¹³³ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 290-317.

¹³⁴ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 290-317.

particularly in popular thought.¹³⁵ The word “Highlander” involves three concepts: geographical, geological; linguistic; and social.¹³⁶ The geographical delineation separating Highland and Lowland is thought to be the fault line which runs from around Montrose to Helenburgh with its more ancient rock formations in the north and less ancient formations in the south. Another way to divide Scotland is through language – the Gàidhealtachd being the Gaelic-speaking parts of Scotland that were mostly above the Montrose-Helenburgh fault line. The third way to divide Scotland is with the presence of a different kind of social organization in the north and west of Scotland, known (from Victorian times, at any rate) as the clan system.¹³⁷

The Gaelic word for the Highlands in the eighteenth century is simpler in meaning – the Gàidhealtachd is where the Gaels (*na Gàidheil*) – Gaelic-speaking Scots – reside. The Lowlanders are referred to as *na goill*, etymologically meaning “foreigners” but developing primarily to mean “Lowlanders.” In English it is an uneasy definition to consider the Highlands to be the Gaelic-speaking parts of Scotland as there are so many other factors, but in Gaelic this is the primary delineation. Fortuitously, in the eighteenth century, at the time of the 1745 Uprising, the Gàidhealtachd had retreated approximately to the Highland fault line (Montrose-Helenburgh). This meeting of geographical and linguistic differentiation probably fed into the idea that there were distinct “men of the mountains” and “men of the plains,” Celts and Teutons.¹³⁸ As Murray Pittock bemoans, the Highlander

¹³⁵ Pittock, Murray (2009), “What is a Highlander, What was a Jacobite?” in *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans: The Jacobite Army in 1745* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press). 31-64. 32.

¹³⁶ Pittock, Murray (2009), “What is a Highlander, What was a Jacobite?” 31-64.

¹³⁷ Pittock, Murray (2009), *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*. 32.

¹³⁸ Pittock (2009), *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*. 34.

became associated with Jacobitism in a way that Lowlanders were not. This concept is particularly uneasy as many major Jacobites were found on either side of the Highland fault line, crossing linguistically and culturally, meaning that Jacobitism was not uniformly a Gaelic enterprise. For this reason, Pittock claims that a “Highlander” cannot then simply be one who lives in the Highlands and that the “Highland Army” raised by the Jacobites in 1745 was an ideological description more than it was a geographical one.¹³⁹ It is for the very reason of this confusion that I stick to the Gaelic delineation of the Gàidhealtachd rather than the “Highlands” as I am concerned foremost with cultural identification and the description “a’ Ghàidhealtachd” is primarily a cultural identifier in the eighteenth century.

Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir (Duncan Bàn MacIntyre; 1724-1812), identifies himself as a *Gàidheal* (Gael) in both of the following excerpts in which he praises the heroism and fortitude of the Gaels, militarizing them as hardy warriors. The first excerpt is from *Òran a’ Chaimp*, 1798, (Song of the Camp):

’S ann againn tha na Gàidheil
Théid dân anns an ruaig,
Na fir làidire dhàicheil
A b’ àbhaist bhith cruaidh;...¹⁴⁰

We have with us the Gaels
Who are bold in pursuit,
The strong, handsome heroes,
Who were wont to be hardy;...¹⁴¹

The second is *Òran do Reisimeid Bhràghaid Albann*, (A Song for the Breadalbane Regiment):

’S maireg nàmhaid a thachradh
Air na lasgairean treun;

¹³⁹ Pittock (2009), *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*. 33.

¹⁴⁰ MacLeod, A. (ed.) (1978), *Òrain Dhonnchaidh Bhàin*, (Edinburgh). 384.

¹⁴¹ MacLeod (trans.) (1978), *Òrain Dhonnchaidh Bhàin*. 384.

Gleidhidh cruadal nan Gàidheal
Buaidh-làrach dhaibh féin.¹⁴²

Pity the foe that encountered
The valiant, gay lads;
The fortitude of the Gaels
Will ensure their victory.¹⁴³

Donnchadh Bàn uses “Gael” as a self-descriptor. As the concentric rings of loyalty within Scotland are to both to the micro-nations of the Gàidhealtachd and the Lowlands and to the macro-nation of Scotland itself, I was expecting to find examples of allegiance to *Alba* (Scotland) or *Albannach* (Scottish [person]) in this vernacular poetry but have not come across any. A possible reason for this is that in the poetry of Classical Gaelic, *Alba* is underdeveloped as a frame of reference and source of imagery and is referenced infrequently.¹⁴⁴

Despite the crossover between the cultures of the Gàidhealtachd and the Lowlands (the chiefs sending their heirs to be educated in the Lowlands, for example), there could be strife and tension between them. This is clear in several poems, none of which is ruder than the current excerpt from *Acarsaid nan Con ’s nan Gillean*, (The Anchorage of Dogs and Servants) by Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alastair (Alexander MacDonald; c. 1698–c. 1770), in which he uses explicitly erotic imagery to degrade the Lowlanders sexual prowess:

Thusa a’ tarrain ad’ bheul prionnsa,
A phumpa nam bod mealamhìn?
Acarsaid nan con ’s nan gillea —
S tric a sgiol iad t’ earball

S tric a chigil iad do bhrillea
'Nad dhubh innis tharrangharbh,

¹⁴² MacLeod (ed.) (1978), *Òrain Dhonnchaidh Bhàin*. 376.

¹⁴³ MacLeod (trans.) (1978), *Òrain Dhonnchaidh Bhàin*. 376.

¹⁴⁴ McLeod, Wilson (2004), *Divided Gaels: Gaelic Cultural Identities in Scotland and Ireland, c.1200-c.1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). 127-136.

Spreilleann do chamais air rùsgadh
Le sìor lùisreadh Ghallabhod.¹⁴⁵

You to be breathing the word prince,
You pump for honey-smooth penises?
The anchorage of dogs and servants —
They often entered your premises.

They often tickled your clitoris
In the thick of your belly-wide pasture,
The blubber-lips of your harbor stripped
By Lowland prick's fervent shafting.¹⁴⁶

Discomfort among the Lowlanders is also found in *An Gaidheal am-measg nan Gall*, (The Gael in the Midst of the Lowlander) by John MacLean (Bàrd Thighearna Chola; 1787-1848). The word *gall* (foreigner) is used to describe the Lowlander and John mourns that his very being is stripped of its former joviality by being amongst Lowlanders – he cannot sing or play because music evades him:

Cha togar fonn leam ach trom air aineoil,
Cha dean mi oran 'san doigh is math leam,...¹⁴⁷

I can't raise a tune, sorrowful in strange parts,
I can't make a song in the way I like,...¹⁴⁸

John MacLean again praises the fortitude of the Gaels against the Lowlanders in the following poem, *Òran do Mhaighstir Cailean Grannta, Sagairt Arasaig*, (Song to Father Colla Grant, the priest of Arasaig). He states that Clan MacKenzie would “give chase” to the Lowlanders:

Gura lionmhor luchd-leanmhainn duit
'Thairneadh fear-seanachais mun cuairt,

¹⁴⁵ Black, Ronald (ed.) (2001), *An Lasair*, (Edinburgh: Birlinn Origin). 190-3.

¹⁴⁶ Black (trans.) (2001), *An Lasair*:190-3.

¹⁴⁷ Dunbar, Robert D. (ed.) (2006), The Secular Poetry of John MacLean, “Bàrd Thighearna Chola”, “Am Bàrd MacGilleain,” (Edinburgh: PhD) Poem 40.

¹⁴⁸ Dunbar (trans.) (2006), The Secular Poetry of John MacLean. Poem 40.

Do na fineachan ainmeil
Cho math's a bha 'n Albainn ri luaidh;
Clann Choinnich nan garbh-chath
'Bheireadh brosnachadh calma don t-sluagh,
'Dol air adhart fo 'n armaibh,
'S a chuireadh air galla-bhodaich ruaig.¹⁴⁹

Numerous are your supporters
That a storyteller could draw round,
From the famous clans
As good as there were in Scotland to praise;
The MacKenzies of the vicious battles
Would give resolute encouragement to the people,
Going forward in their armor,
And would give chase to the aging Lowlanders.¹⁵⁰

Furthermore, John MacLean's *Do Thighearna Chola*, (To the Lord of Coll) praises the work of the Royal Highland Society – a society founded in Edinburgh in 1784 – in keeping the Gaelic language alive:

Tha Comunn Gaidhealach Rioghail ann,
Daoine uaisle suairce siobhalta,
Tha 'n toir air cainnt an sinnsearachd,
A chumail suas, 's nach diobrar i;
Ged leigeadh treis air diochuimhn' i,
Gu bheil i 'nis air cinntinn
Anns gach tir 'san robh a h-eolas.¹⁵¹

There is a Royal Highland Society there,
Urbane and civil noblemen,
Who wish to keep their ancestors' language,
So that it will not be abandoned;
Although she was forgotten for a while,
She has now prospered
In each place in which she was known.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Dunbar (ed.) (2006), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*. 579.

¹⁵⁰ Dunbar (trans.) (2006), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*. 579.

¹⁵¹ Dunbar (ed.) (2006), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*. Poem 5.

¹⁵² Dunbar (trans.) (2006), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*. Poem 5.

These poems which show the self-identification with “Gael” and animosity towards Lowlanders support the concentric loyalties paradigm that the Gaels were loyal to their micro-nation, the Gàidhealtachd. That is not to say that they were not also loyal to the macro-nation of Scotland but that they conceptualized the Gàidhealtachd as different, culturally, from the Lowlands.

Britannia

Fondness for Britannia, the very personification of the British/English realm, moves right into ring five (state) of the concentric loyalties’ paradigm, showing allegiances to the British state through patriotic symbolism. I have not come across any references to Britannia in Gaelic poetry, presumably because of their later incorporation into the British state – in 1707 versus 1536 with Wales – and the later incorporation in any meaningful way – post-Culloden – of the Gaels of the Scotland-England Act of Union. In comparison, there are plenty of positive references in Welsh, and this next section will examine Britannia’s development throughout the centuries before moving on to her usages in Welsh poetry.

The figure of Britannia as the national personification of Britain has a long history. She was not always the helmeted warrior carrying a trident in protection of the realm, however, and in fact she began as a figure of defeat and subjugation. The earliest extant image is Roman in origin, found in south-west Turkey, and she, dressed as an Amazon, is forced to the ground and overpowered by the emperor Claudius.¹⁵³ Even into the Elizabethan era she remained a passive figure, in need of protection, but the defeat of the Spanish armada in 1588 seems to have accelerated the transformation of Britannia into the

¹⁵³ For a more detailed history of the development of Britannia see: McLean, Ralph (2018), “James Thomson and “Rule, Britannia”,” in Kidd, Colin and Carruthers, Gerard (eds.) *Literature and Union: Scottish Texts, British Contexts*. 79-96.

protector of the English navy. Even during the eighteenth century though, Britannia still had the characteristics of suffering and inequality, being often beaten, abused, and helpless against enemies.¹⁵⁴

As a symbol of the English navy, Britannia was conceptualized as an English symbol of patriotism. However, in the seventeenth century, with the work of Henry Peacham, Britannia became a more pan-British figure, reflecting the desire of James I and VI to more closely bind England and Scotland in union after the Union of the Crowns in 1603.¹⁵⁵ In 1672, during the reign of Charles II, Britannia made her first appearance on coinage, with the coins including Scottish iconography – her shield had a union flag imprinted on it (which includes the cross of St. Andrew). The Bank of England bills, in comparison, saw her carrying only the flag of St. George. Indeed, Britannia still appears to the bottom left of current Bank of England bills, still with the St. George's cross. This shows that Britannia could and can be a symbol of both England alone and of Great Britain at large.

Partially the change in Britannia's reception as a British figure from a solely English one is due to the work of the Lowland Scottish poet, James Thomson, in his poems, *Britannia, a Poem* (1729) and *Rule, Britannia* (1740). *Britannia, a Poem*, written during conflict with Spain over water rights in the Spanish American colonies, saw Britannia reflecting the desire to protect property and maintain freedom of the Oceans.¹⁵⁶ Thomson is careful to represent Britannia as both an English and a Scottish symbol. Popularity of *Rule*,

¹⁵⁴ Major, Emma (2011), *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation 1712-1812*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press). 23-68.

¹⁵⁵ Major (2011), *Madam Britannia*. 23-24.

¹⁵⁶ For more on Thomson, see: Griffin, Dustin (2002), *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). 77-91; and McLean (2018), "James Thomson and "Rule, Britannia." 79-96.

Britannia grew, and it was sold in the streets in broadsides and performed to the music of Thomas Arne (a tune and chorus that many still know today), uniting the classes in patriotic fervor. The poem begins:

When Britain first, at Heaven's command
Arose from out the azure main;
This was the charter of the land,
And guardian angels sung this strain:

Rule, Britannia! rule the waves:
Britons never will be slaves.¹⁵⁷

This song's popularity came with many imitations, emulations, and parodies, including a Jacobite version, using the imagery to support Charles Edward Stuart's claim to the throne:

When royal Charles by Heaven's command
Arrived in Scotland's noble Plain;
Thus spoke the Warrior, the warrior of the Land,
And Guardian Angels sung this strain;

Go on Brave Youth, go combat & succeed,
For Thou shall't conquer, 'tis decreed.¹⁵⁸

Authors imbued this and further Jacobite adaptations of *Rule, Britannia*, with a heavy militarism, invoked to assert the authority of the deposed king. Thomson himself denounced the Stuarts and was comfortable asserting a post-union British identity forged out of Scottish and English values, celebrating the contributions of both nations. Thomson's passionate belief in the benefits of the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707 led to *Britannia* becoming a lasting figure in British patriotic symbolism.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45404/rule-britannia>, [accessed 03/30/24].

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in: McLean (2018), "James Thomson and "Rule, Britannia"." 91.

¹⁵⁹ McLean (2018), "James Thomson and "Rule, Britannia"." 90-93.

The portrayal of Britannia as the positive personification of the British state, emphasized by Thomson, is reflected in the following poem by Jonathan Hughes, Llangollen (Bardd Pengwern; 1721-1805), *Cerdd o anogaeth i lanciau chwe sir Gwynedd, am godi yn glau ym mhlaid Britannia, pan oedd y deyrnas mewn perygl o gael ei gorthrechu gan y gelynyon*, (A poem of encouragement to the lads of Gwynedd's six counties for rising quickly in the cause of Britannia when the kingdom was in danger of being overcome by the enemies). He considers the lads of Gwynedd to be children of Britannia, a "gentle and vigorous maiden," a symbol of liberty uniting the realm in its fight against the French:

Mae achos mawr yn awr i ni
 Godi'n gad hoff rad a ffri
 Ym mhlaid Britannia brafia' ei bri,
 Fun heini, fwyn, henedd.
 Hi gadd anrhydedd, mawredd maith,
 Ganwaith heb gwyno.
 Mae ganddi elyn, dygyn dig,
 Ffreinig i'w ffrwyno;...
 ...
 Bu hon yn famaeth lanwaith lwys,
 A chymwys i'w chanmol,
 Ar dir a dŵr fel y dur,
 A phybyr ei phobol;...
 ...
 Dowch, blant Britannia gwycha' eu gwedd,
 Rhai gwrol clau i gario'r cledd,
 Rhaid curo am rhyddid, hawddfyd hedd,
 Dda agwedd feddygawl;...¹⁶⁰

there is now great cause for us
 to rise up in a blessed and fearless army
 on Britannia's side, the most lovely in prestige,
 ancient, gentle and vigorous maiden.
 She had honor, extensive greatness,
 a hundred times without complaint.
 She has an angry, persistent,
 French enemy to restrain;...

...
 Britannia was a pure, beautiful and brave foster mother to her people,
 worthy of praise,

¹⁶⁰ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 88-93.

strong as steel on land and sea,
and her people zealous;...

...

Come, most handsome children of Britannia,
valiant and quick to carry the sword,
we must beat for liberty (easy life of peace),
good salutary manner;...¹⁶¹

Hughes personifies Britannia again in his lament for the fall of Admiral Horatio Nelson in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, writing in the persona of Britannia, in *Cwynfan Britannia yn ei galar a'i thristwch am ei phriflyngesydd (Arglwydd Horatio Nelson) yr hwn a laddwyd yn y frwydr gerllaw Trafalgar, 21 Hydref 1805* (Britannia's lament in her grief and her sorrow for her Admiral [Lord Horatio Nelson] who was killed in the battle near Trafalgar, 21 October 1805):

"Rwyf fi, Britannia, garwa' gur,
Fel merthyr mwys,
Dan lwyth alaethus, poenus pur,
A dolur dwys;
Er caffael buddugoliaeth gwiw,
Mae briw i'm bron,
Daeth sythion saethu, draenau drud,
O hyd i hon

...

Fel gweddw drist mae'n gweiddi draw:
"Bob nos a dydd rwy'n brudd mewn braw,
A gwŷr yn lluoedd ger fy llaw,
Anhylaw hynt:
Mae'r gelyn blin a'i fyddin fas
Am ladd Britannia, blina' blas,
A siâr fy etifedd, weddedd was,
Rai cas fel cynt."¹⁶²

"I, Britannia (most grievous anguish),
am like an equivocal martyr,
under a mournful burden (it is truly painful)
and intense hurt;
despite gaining a worthy victory,
my breast is wounded,

¹⁶¹ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 88-93.

¹⁶² Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 94-101.

for straight arrows (painful thorns)
 found my breast [lines 1-8]
 ...
 She calls out like a sad widow:
 “Every night and day I’m sorrowful in fright,
 and the men in hosts are near at hand,
 devastating course:
 the angry enemy and his base army
 wish to destroy Britannia (most wretched place)
 and the patrimony of my heir (lovely lad),
 cruel me as before.¹⁶³

Here we see the characteristics of suffering and inequality so often associated with Britannia in earlier references, a representation of Britain’s liberty being threatened, and Hughes uses the image of Britannia in danger of defilement by the French armies, lamenting the death of her protector: Nelson.¹⁶⁴

Britannia’s earlier history as a predominantly English symbol during the Spanish Armada and the conflation of Britain and England is reflected in the following poem by David Thomas (Dafydd Ddu Eryri; 1759-1822), again lamenting Nelson’s death, *Cân y fuddugoliaeth ar fyddinoedd y Ffrancod a'r Ysbaeniaid; a marwolaeth y pen-llyngeswr digymer Nelson. Y frwydr hon a ymladdwyd ar gyfer Penrhyn Trafalgar, yn nhalaith Andalwsia yn yr Ysbaen, 21 Hydref 1805*, (The song of the victory against the armies of France and Spain; and the death of the peerless Admiral Nelson. This battle was fought for the Peninsular of Trafalgar, in the region of Andalusia in Spain, 21 October 1805):

Gwŷr Brydain gorchfygasant
 Yn bendant Ffraince a Sbaen
 ...
 Bu Nelson ddewr ryfelwr,
 Ben trechwr lawer tro,
 Enillodd fawredd dibrin
 I frenin Brydain fro
 ...

¹⁶³ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 94-101.

¹⁶⁴ Charnell-White (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 38.

Ei ddoethder a'i wrolder,
Ŵr syber yn ei swydd,
Drwy farwnerth Duw'r uchelder,
A barai i Loegr lwydd

...
Gorchfygodd Lloegr dirion,
Ond Nelson, trengi a wnaeth!¹⁶⁵

The men of Britain had a decisive victory
Over France and Spain

...
Nelson was a brave warrior,
Chief victor on many an occasion,
He won abundant glory
For the king of Britain

...
His wisdom and bravery
(proper man in his role)
Brought, through the great power of the God of heaven,
Success to England

...
Dear England prevailed,
But Nelson, he perished!¹⁶⁶

The conflation of “Britain’s king” winning glory with “England prevailing” implies that David Thomas saw Britain as an extension of England or, indeed, identical with England. As Cathryn Charnell-White writes, Thomas was the “loyalist of all [British] loyalists” and a staunch King-and-Crown man so it is likely that he was comfortable as a Welshman within the British state and English realm, viewing it as a symbiotic relationship.¹⁶⁷ Even so, Thomas writes of the “men of Britain” rather than the (modern) Britons. This is probably because *Brython* (“Briton”) in Welsh was used usually to refer to the Ancient Britons but it striking that he – a loyalist – avoids explicitly self-identifying as a British subject.

¹⁶⁵ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 268-273.

¹⁶⁶ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 268-273.

¹⁶⁷ Charnell-White (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 2.

Conclusion

Neither Welsh nor Gaelic poets seem to refer to themselves explicitly as being “British” in the poetry I have examined from 1746–1826. This is not to say that there are no implicit references, however. There are many, ranging from the consideration of the British state as a place of liberty and paradise to identification with the patriotic figure of Britannia. The Welsh use the term *Brythoniaid* (Britons) to recall the Ancient Britons rather than representing the subjects of the eighteenth-century British state. The Welsh instead refer to themselves as simply *Cymry* (Welsh [people]) showing that while they can and do show loyalty to the state, their personal identity is mostly marked by the national. This is particularly present in the resentment shown towards the English nation. It may seem paradoxical that the Welsh can identify with an Anglocentric state while showing animosity to the English nation. At once, Welsh poets perpetuate the conflation of England and Britain by adopting Britannia and disparage England for being a corruptive force while showing love for a greater Britain. It appears, however, that the British state supersedes England and includes the Welsh in a way that England does not, despite the “unifying” Wales-England Act of 1536.

The Gàidhealtachd, similarly resentful of the Lowlands, shows its first loyalty to its own micro-nation with subsequent loyalties to the macro-nation, Scotland, and the state, Britain. Love for a greater Britain is not found in Gaelic poetry as it is in Welsh poetry, presumably because the Gàidhealtachd has a much shorter period of being firmly incorporated within the British state (post-1746). In Chapter Four, however, we will see how the Gàidhealtachd can revere Britain through military pride. Despite displaying animosity to their closest neighbors, the Gaels and the Welsh show no recognition of each other due to geographical and cultural distance. The lack of this Cambro-Gaelic recognition debunks the idea that a Celto-British identity can be found without English mediation. It is

necessary for Gaelic and Welsh poetry to interact with English literature and literary tastes for Celto-British identity to appear. This will be seen in Chapter Two and Chapter Three which examine bardic identity in the respective nations.

CHAPTER TWO

WALES AND THE BRITONS

Celticity was born at the beginning of the eighteenth century with Edward Lhuyd's seminal work, *Archaeologia Britannica* (1707). The Celtic languages were formally connected in this work, and it set in motion an opportunity for obsession over the origins of Celtic language speakers and the qualities of their "race." Antiquarian enquiry exploded and a search for the most ancient texts began. The first Celtic Revival literary movement, which peaked in the middle of the eighteenth century was intersectional with English literary tastes and, unfortunately, as a result, literature in the native Celtic languages of Britain has been largely neglected in the scholarly discussion, aside from where it interplays with Anglophone literature. Though much work has been done on the pioneer of Welsh (and British) Celticity, Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg; 1747–1826) – the "Iolo Morganwg and the Romantic Tradition in Wales" project produced several important volumes – I do not see the discussion including the work of eighteenth-century Welsh poets as a *whole*.

It is known that an adherence to the poetic tradition, interest in strict meters, and composition within circles of likeminded individuals, glues poets to their sense of bardic identity and this can even be said for poetry in the Welsh language today. In this chapter, I set out to present the elements of Welsh bardic identity in a way that I have not seen in the body of knowledge in the field, looking for expressions of Celto-British identity which works on the state level of the concentric loyalties paradigm mentioned in Chapter One. Celto-British identity unites Celtic-language speakers in the face of an expanding Anglocentric British state. In Chapter One, Celto-British identity was not present as I found that the (micro)nations did not refer to each other or profess a sense of unity or even explicitly call themselves British (there are plenty of implicit ways by which they do this, however). To

some extent, the Anglophone literary circles and tastes of the eighteenth century provided a bridge between Wales and the Gàidhealtachd as the Celticity of the two (micro-)nations was being determined. This is a manifestation of Celto-British identity. It is my aim in this chapter, however, to see how far Celto-Britishness filtered into Welsh-language poetry of the period and whether it could be independent of English-language influences.

To explore the extent to which a Celto-British identity exists in Welsh poetry, I begin with an investigation into the meaning of bardic identity and how it manifested in the antiquarian and anthology tradition. Next, I trace what aspects we see in the poetry: adherence to the idea of the druidical beginnings of Welsh poetry and the origin myths of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Gomer, and the Tower of Babel; loyalty to the bardic tradition and literary elements of continuity; the *awen* (“poetic muse”); and the Bardic Order. This chapter ends with an exploration of women’s bardic identity in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century – a neglected subject indeed despite there being a few named poets with substantial enough bodies of work.

What is “Bardic Identity”?

In the introduction to *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution, 1789–1805*, Cathryn Charnell-White writes of the (all male) poets anthologized therein that their status as poets was “fundamental to the[ir] self-image, social persona, and national identity” because bardic identity itself was central to the construction of eighteenth-century Welsh cultural identity within Great Britain.¹⁶⁸ Bardic identity was/is a frame that allowed poets to engage with current events – on a local, Welsh, British, or European level – whilst

¹⁶⁸ Charnell-White, Cathryn (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution, 1789–1805: Introduction*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 2.

simultaneously “negotiating the fault-lines of Welshness and Britishness.”¹⁶⁹ She also considers the poets as peculiarly bardic because they operated within “bardic spheres” in which poems were performed or transmitted.¹⁷⁰ In essence, this form of bardic identity refers to the way in which poets saw themselves composing within an unbroken and continuous tradition which dated back to Roman times and lasted up until the massacre of the bards by Edward I’s advancement into Wales in the 1280s. Antiquarianism was of utmost importance to the poets, since a reverence of the past was such a crucial feature of bardic identity, whether in the London-based literary societies such as the Gwyneddigion Society (Welsh: *Cymdeithas y Gwyneddigion*), founded 1770, or the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion (Welsh: *Anrhydeddus Gymdeithas y Cymmrodorion*), founded 1751, or with the rural poets back in Wales. Many poets of the eighteenth century (and still today) used bardic names to strengthen their sense of belonging not just to the bardic tradition within Wales, but also to the local and national networks of Wales and London.¹⁷¹ Edward Williams, for example, a product of an English-speaking household, reinvented himself through his bardic names; first adopting a Cymricized version of his name, “Iorwerth Gwilym,” cycling through “Iorwerth Morganwg” – a name which gave esteem to his locality of birth, Glamorgan – and ending on “Iolo Morganwg” by 1791. As Charnell-White posits, this meant that Edward reinvented himself as “bardism’s sole mediator.”¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Charnell-White, Cathryn (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution, 1789-1805: Introduction*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 2.

¹⁷⁰ Charnell-White, Cathryn (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution, 1789-1805: Introduction*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 2.

¹⁷¹ Charnell-White (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 6.

¹⁷² Charnell-White, Cathryn (2007), *Bardic Circles: National, Regional and Personal Identity in the Bardic Vision of Iolo Morganwg*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 13.

In deference to professional medieval bardic culture, the twenty-four traditional strict meters were held in higher esteem than the free meters which had developed and became popularized during the early modern period, although most poets in eighteenth-century Wales were, as Charnell-White terms, “culturally amphibious” and, being proficient in both kinds of meter, participated in both high and low culture.¹⁷³ The time between the Romans and Edward I’s conquest was considered the “golden age” of bardic identity in Wales to the eighteenth-century poet (the fifteenth century being another one).

During Caesar’s time, bards and druids are reported as separate entities in *De Bello Gallico*, a text that was widely read in Latin by British schoolboys in the eighteenth century. However, because Caesar also states that druids were responsible for “matters of religion” and held “supreme authority,” spending their time memorizing “a large number of lines of poetry,” the eighteenth-century poet began thinking of their own bardic art as one of druidical claim.¹⁷⁴ Continuing the idea of Welsh druidical succession, Juliette Wood explains that the use of the term “British” to refer to the Welsh language “continued to validate contemporary Welsh culture by means of a created past which centered on the antiquity and continuing purity of both language and culture.”¹⁷⁵ The past therefore centered modern Welsh poetic composition and steadied the search for identity in eighteenth-century Wales. This version of bardic identity – that is the version belonging to a long unbroken druidic tradition – is not just a Cambro-British construct but also a Celto-British one, spanning the whole island and coloring ideas across languages and nations.

¹⁷³ Charnell-White (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 3.

¹⁷⁴ See: Hammond, Carolyn (trans.) (1996), *Caesar: The Gallic War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press). 126-7.

¹⁷⁵ Wood, Juliette (1997), “Perceptions of the Past in Welsh Folklore Studies,” *Folklore* 108. p. 97.

The identity took up in Scotland also, producing the infamous *Ossian* (1760s) by James Macpherson (Seumas MacMhuirich, or Seumas Mac a' Phearsain; 1736–1796) but this is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

The later named first Celtic Revival (1750–1770) was the first truly British literary venture, engulfing all three nations in the obsession with Celticity. The “set text” of this movement across Britain was the poem *The Bard: A Pindaric Ode*, by Thomas Gray (1716–1771), published in 1757 – the poem was translated into Welsh by William Owen Pughe much later in 1822. The plot is straightforward: the last surviving Welsh bard surveys the slaughter of Edward I’s invading army from a mountain overlooking the river Conwy, he curses the king, receives a pair of prophecies from deceased bards, and then, satisfied by the future he has seen, leaps to his death in defiance of the king. Gray’s poem has the air of druidic majesty and Celtic mistiness that so appealed to readers at the time. This imagery inspired several great artworks, not least of all “The Bard” by John Martin, “The Bard” by John Harrison, “The Bard” by Thomas Jones, and “The Poems of Thomas Gray” by William Blake.

Lewis Morris (Llewelyn Ddu o Fôn; 1701–1765), antiquary and poet, and renowned Welsh patriot belonged to a network of architects of Welsh cultural identity and bardic identity that both preceded and followed Gray. While trying to prove the genius and antiquity of the Welsh language and manuscript culture, Lewis Morris also took on English influence and incorporated them into his Welsh- and English-language works.¹⁷⁶ However, he Cymricized them by using Welsh models such as Llywarch Hen (a legendary poet of the

¹⁷⁶ Jenkins, Bethan M. (2009) “Concepts of Prydeindod (Britishness) in 18th century Anglo-Welsh writing; with special reference to the works of Lewis Morris, Evan Evans, and Edward Williams,” (Oxford: PhD). 56.

6th century CE) rather than Classical ones.¹⁷⁷ During his lifetime, Lewis Morris published poems in only one volume, *Diddanwch Teuluaidd* (A Seemly Diversion), edited by Huw Jones of Llangwm and printed in 1763.¹⁷⁸ In the introduction to the work, Huw Jones, echoing the sentiments of Lewis's poetry, introduces the Welsh language as an ancient curiosity to English readers:

It may not be improper to introduce this work in English, for the encouragement of Englishmen, or others, who might be inclined to dip into this curious ancient language: the principal remains of the Celtic tongue...¹⁷⁹

Such an introduction to Anglophone readers both exoticizes the Welsh language and establishes it as the “original” language of Britain. This validation of the Welsh language was inherited from Renaissance scholars (as discussed in Chapter One). What is curious is that very few English people would in fact have been able to appreciate the poetry contained in the volume as no translations were provided. One wonders what purpose this English-facing introduction serves if not to push an agenda, namely the bardic status of Britain's oldest poetry – Welsh poetry. Jones continues: “among the ancient Britons, (a main branch of the Celtae) the Bards managed a considerable part of the Druidical religion, who sang their verses to the harp.”¹⁸⁰ These passages show that many of the proponents of bardic identity had one foot in the world of English literature and produced poetry at least in part to educate the English as to what bardic identity meant to them.

¹⁷⁷ Jenkins, Bethan M. (2017), *Between Wales and England: Anglophone Welsh Writing of the Eighteenth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 34.

¹⁷⁸ “Teuluaidd” also references the medieval role of the “bard teulu” or “teuluwr” (“household poet”).

¹⁷⁹ Jones, Huw (ed.) (1763), *Diddanwch Teuluaidd; Y Llyfr Cyntaf: Yn cynnwys Gwaith y Parchedig Mr. Goronwy Owen, Lewis Moris, Esq.; a Mr. Huw Huws, &c, Beirdd Mon, Mam-Gymru, Ac Aelodau o Gymdeithas y Cymmrodorion* (London: William Roberts, 1763). iii.

¹⁸⁰ Jones (ed.) (1763), *Diddanwch Teuluaidd*. v.

Lewis Morris was a mentor of Evan Evans (Ieuan Fardd or Ieuan Brydydd Hir; 1731-1788) and had a broad bardic network that influenced English antiquaries and poets.¹⁸¹ Evan Evans, although influencing a smaller circle, was another giant in Welsh-language poetry and antiquarianism of the eighteenth century. Having provided much of the (pseudo-)history that informed Gray's *The Bard*, he wrote an English work in answer to Thomas Gray's poem, "A Paraphrase of the 137th Psalm, Alluding to the Captivity and Treatment of the Welsh Bards by King Edward I":

What! – shall the Saxons hear us sing,
Or their dull vales with Cambrian music ring?
Thou God of vengeance, dost thou sleep,
When the insulted druids weep,
The victor's jest the Saxon's scorn,
Unheard, unpitied, and forlorn?¹⁸²

The Saxons Evans refers to here are the English under the rule of Edward I, the king who, in legend, sought to destroy the bardic tradition in Wales in 1282. One can interpret the poem in terms of political sovereignty as playing for their "Saxon" captors would be to surrender political sovereignty along with their greatest artistic treasure.¹⁸³ In the English preface to *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards* (1764), Evans professes full belief in this Edwardian myth:

This [anthology] is a noble treasure, and very rare to be met with; for Edward the first ordered all our Bards, and their works, to be destroyed, as is attested

¹⁸¹ See: Jenkins, Bathan (2017), "Evan Evans: a Multiplicity of Discouraging Circumstance," in Jenkins *Between Wales and England*. 72-104.

¹⁸² Evans, Evan (1820), "A Paraphrase of the 137th Psalm, Alluding to the Captivity and Treatment of the Welsh Bards by King Edward I" in *The Cambro-Briton*, Vol. 2, No 14. (Oct., 1820). 87-89.

¹⁸³ Katie Trumpener (1997), *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press). 3.

by Sir John Wynne of Gwydir, in the history he compiled of his ancestors at Carnarvon.¹⁸⁴

Here, Bardic identity again served the Welsh patriot's agenda – to prove the antiquity and superiority of the Welsh bardic art even in the face of oppression. Evans' anthology left an enduring mark on scholarship and antiquarianism and allowed Anglophone readers, for truly the first time, a glimpse into the world of Welsh literature. Evans, by proving the antiquity of Welsh poetry, sought a place for Welsh-language poetry within the history of “British” literature but also amongst the vernacular literary geniuses of Europe.¹⁸⁵

Tradition Formation and the Birth of “Celtic”

The interaction between antiquarianism and the practice and recovery of strict-meter poetry in Wales shows that the adherence to bardic identity in the eighteenth century was a display of Welsh national identity that went together with the development of Celticism. An obsession with Celticism in the eighteenth century across Britain and Ireland lent Welsh poets the power of cultural superiority and validity that they were keenly seeking. In 1703 Paul-Yves Pezron (1639-1706), a Cistercian monk from Brittany, published *Antiquité de la nation, et de langue des Celtes, autrement appelez Gaulois*, which was translated into English as *The Antiquity of Nations* in 1706. This study “proved” the descentance of the Gauls, or Celts, from Gomer and identified the Welsh with the Bretons as Celtic descendants and speakers of the “Celtic” language:

¹⁸⁴ Evans, Evan (1764), *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards*, (London: R. and J. Dodsley). iii.

¹⁸⁵ McKenna, Catherine (2006) “Aspects of Tradition Formation in Eighteenth-Century Wales”, in *CSANA Yearbook 5*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press). 37-60. 38.

I am not therefore to be blamed for saying that Gomer, who, according to scripture, was Japhet's eldest son, and the grandson of Noah, ought to be look'd upon as the first and true father of the Gauls...¹⁸⁶

The archaeologist Simon James asserts that Edward Lhuyd's own inscribed copy of Pezron's book could constitute "the primary material relic of the creation of the insular Celts," as Lhuyd, generator of Britain and Ireland's Celtic roots, drew heavily on Pezron's work.¹⁸⁷

A bust of Edward Lhuyd (1660–1709) sits outside the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies in Aberystwyth as he was an important figure in the naissance of Celtic Studies. It was Lhuyd who first formally connected the P-Celtic, or Brythonic, branch of the Celtic language family (Breton, Cornish, and Welsh) with the Q-Celtic, or Goidelic, branch (Irish, Manx, and Scottish Gaelic) and he did so under one "Celtic" umbrella. P-Celtic languages are so called since Proto-Celtic *kʷ evolved into /p/ (Proto-Celtic: *maquō- > Middle Welsh: *map/mab*) and Q-Celtic languages are so called since the same sound evolved into /k/ (Proto-Celtic: *maquō- > Scottish Gaelic: *mac*). As mentioned above, Lhuyd set out this theory in his seminal 1707 linguistic study, *Archaeologia Britannica: an Account of the Languages, Histories and Customs of Great Britain, from Travels through Wales, Cornwall, Bas-Bretagne, Ireland and Scotland*. He did have predecessors, such as George Buchanan (Seòras Bochanan; 1506–1582), who had noted the similarities of Welsh and Gaulish († c. 600 AD), but no one, up until *Archaeologia Britannica*, had conceived of a combined language family divided into P-Celtic and Q-Celtic:

¹⁸⁶ Pezron, Paul-Yves (1706), *The antiquities of nations; more particularly of the Celtæ or Gauls, taken to be originally the same people as our ancient Britains. Containing great variety of historical, chronological, and etymological discoveries, many of them unknown both to the Greeks and Romans*, (London). iv.

¹⁸⁷ James, Simon (1999), *The Atlantic Celts: Ancient People of Modern Invention?* (University of Wisconsin Press). 45.

I am sensible Mr. Camden, Boxhornius and others have long since taken notice of the Affinity of our *British* with the *Celtic*; but there being no Vocabulary extant of the *Irish* (or Ancient *Scottish*) they could not collate that Language therewith, which the Curious in these Studies will now find to agree rather more than ours, with the *Gaulish*.¹⁸⁸

Here, Lhuyd refers to Brythonic as “British,” Goidelic as “Irish,” and Gaulish as “Celtic.”

Leading up to what Joep Leerssen terms a “mixum gatherum,” “Celtic” was already in English usage as an archaeological tag for Gaul.¹⁸⁹ The earliest example of such usage dates from 1656 in Thomas Blount’s *Glossographia*.¹⁹⁰ Since “Celtic” and “Gaulish” were synonymous in archaeology, Lhuyd’s choice of “Celtic” aimed to show the connection of the modern languages with Gaulish. It is presumed that Lhuyd chose “Celtic” as opposed to “Gallic” as “Gallic” was too closely associated with France; a country continually at war with Britain in the eighteenth century. Nowhere does Lhuyd equate speakers of the Celtic languages with the ancient “Celts.” However, a definitional conundrum arose as scholars began using a term for ancient Gaul to refer to the modern peoples of Britain, Ireland, Man, and Brittany. So, the European Ancient Celts became intertwined with “indigenous” British, Irish, Manx, and Breton history and the British Celts were born. Lhuyd pioneered the term “Celtic” in a Welsh-language context in the Welsh preface to *Archaeologica Britannica*, titled “At y Kymry”¹⁹¹:

Celtæ, Gwyr Gallia ... ag in i rhiv llyosog in ol in harver ni, Keiliet a *Ceilŷ*: Ag nid alle i Rhiveinied skrivenny’r Gair hwnnw ond nail ai Ceilte ai Celtæ.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Lhuyd, Edward (1707) *Archaeologia Britannica*. The Preface. i.

¹⁸⁹ Leerssen, Joep (1996), “Celticism” in Brown, Terrence (ed.) *Celticism*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi). 1-20. 1.

¹⁹⁰ See: “Celtic, adj. and n”. OED Online. November 2022. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/view/Entry/29537?redirectedFrom=Celtic> [accessed 11/16/2022].

¹⁹¹ Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru, “Celt” [accessed 11/16/2022].

¹⁹² Lhuyd, Edward (1707), *Archaeologica Britannica*. xviii.

Celtae, Men of Gaul ... and in the plural according to our custom, *Keltiet* a *Ceilf* and the Romans could only write that word as *Ceilte* or *Celtæ*.

Archaeologica Britannia was a watershed moment in the development of Celticity in the eighteenth century and it set off a series of chain reactions in which antiquarians began searching for the “most ancient” manuscripts that they could find, hoping to prove the ancient roots of the Welsh language.

Thirty years after the publication of the *Archaeologica Britannia*, Lewis Morris, author of *Diddanwch Teuluaid*, published an anthology of ancient Welsh poetry, *Tlysau yr Hen Oesoedd* (Jewels of Ancient Times) in 1735, and, although the poetry went untranslated, the summaries are in English. Morris explained this approach:

Er mwyn denu 'r Gymru Seisnigaidd i ddarllen Cymrâeg, ag i graffu ar beth na chlywsant erioed braidd sôn am dano (sef, bod dŷsg a gwybodaeth gŷnt ynghymru), rhoddais y cynwysiadau yn Saesoneg...¹⁹³

In order to attract the English-speaking Welsh to read Welsh, and to look at something that they have not heard mention of before (that is that there is earlier learning and knowledge in Wales), I have given the summaries in English...

This “book,” only sixteen pages long, contains poetry attributed to “the druids,” Taliesin (“poet laureate to Maelgwn Gwynedd, king of Wales”), Dafydd ap Gwilym (“our Welch Ovid”), Rhys Cain, and Thomas Prys (“a commander of buccaneers on the coast of Spain in Queen Elizabeth’s time”). It seems unlikely that Morris’s only motivation for writing in English was for the benefit of Welsh people alone. Rather, it seems that it was a reaction to the kind of thinking about the literary past that was taking place in London – a literary world of which Morris was actively aware and to which he contributed.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Morris, Lewis (1735) *Tlysau yr Hen Oesoedd: Sef, Gwaith Doethion y Cynfŷd*, (Holyhead). 3.

¹⁹⁴ See: Lewis, Saunders (1924), *A School of Welsh Augustans, being a Study in English Influences on Welsh Literature during Part of the Eighteenth Century*, (Wrexham: Hughes).

According to Catherine McKenna in “Aspects of Tradition Formation in Eighteenth-Century Wales” (2006), considering the way we construct English literary history today, one could look on eighteenth-century Wales as merely “the sleeping ghost of a romantically heroic but always already doomed past” which waited to be awakened by the summons of Thomas Gray’s *The Bard* (1757) and James Macpherson’s *Fingal* (1762).¹⁹⁵ As such, one could see the publication of Evan Evan’s anthology of early Welsh poetry, *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards* (1764), as simply a reaction to this trend. Indeed, it was an anthology aimed at a readership outside Wales and was published during the Ossianic controversy of the 1760s (more on this in Chapter Three). However, as McKenna argues, it would be incorrect to frame his work wholly in response to *Ossian* as it was part of a longer tradition of anthologized poetry in Welsh, as we saw with Lewis Morris’s *Tlysau* earlier in the century (1735).¹⁹⁶ In the English preface to the work, however, Evans does indeed seek to appeal to Macpherson’s readers and trump him with greater antiquity and authenticity. The poetry of Evans’s anthology is provided in English translation with a preface in English, and later the Welsh originals are given with a similar, but longer, accompanying Welsh preface. A dissertation in Latin on the history of bardic poetry separates the languages. The prefaces differ in their approach to Macpherson, presumably in anticipation of either an English-language or Welsh-language audience – audiences which were looking at the material through different lenses. In English we have a few suggestive paragraphs:

As to the genuineness of these [Ossianic] poems, I think there can be no doubt; but though we may vie with the Scottish nation in this particular, yet there is another point, in which we must yield to them undoubtedly. The

¹⁹⁵ McKenna (2006), “Aspects of Tradition Formation.” 38.

¹⁹⁶ See: McKenna (2006), “Aspects of Tradition Formation.”

language of their oldest poets, it seems, is still perfectly intelligible, which is by no means our case.

The works of Taliesin, Llywarch Hên, Aneurin Gwawdrydd, Myrddin Wyllt, Avan Verddig, who all flourished about the year 560, a considerable time after Ossian, are hardly understood by the best critics and antiquarians in Wales, though our language has not undergone more changes than the Erse.¹⁹⁷

In the Welsh, however, we have something much more pointed:

Ac i mae'r llyfrau [Ossian] hyn mewn rhagorbarch gan foneddigion dysgedig y Saeson. A rhaid addef eu bod wedi eu cyfieithi yn odidog: ond i mae arnafi ofn, wedi'r cwbl, fod yr Ysgodog yn bwrw hug ar lygaid dynion, ac nad ydynt mor hen ag i mae ef yn taeru eu bod.¹⁹⁸

These [Ossianic] books are held in great esteem by learned English gentlemen, and it must be confessed that they have been splendidly translated: but I fear that, after all, the Scot is pulling the wool over people's eyes, and that they are not as old as he maintains that they are.

It appears Evans is imbuing his Welsh audience with more awareness. Or, perhaps, he does not wish to fully engage in the controversy as he would have to if he wrote these comments to an Anglophone audience.

The poetic contents of the volume are as follows. Most poems date from the “golden age” of the *Cynfeirdd* (Early Poets), *Gogynfeirdd* (Not-so-early Poets), and *Cywyddwyr* (Poets who compose in the *Cywydd* meter), ranging from Taliesin (traditionally associated with the 6th century CE) to Howel-ap-Lygliw (1390), thus creating linkages with some of the oldest known Welsh poetry:

- I. A Poem composed by Owain Cyfeiliog, prince of Powys, entitled by him HIRLAS... He flourished about A.D. 1160, in the time of Owain Gwynedd and his son David.
- II. A Poem to Myfanwy Fechan of Castell Dinas Bran, composed by Howel-ap-Lygliw, a Bard who flourished about A.D. 1390.
- III. An Ode of David Brenvras to Llywelyn the Great, Prince of Wales, A.D. 1240.

¹⁹⁷ Evans (1764), *Some Specimens*. ii.

¹⁹⁸ Evans (1764), *Some Specimens*. 104.

- IV. A Poem to Llewelyn the Great, composed by Einion the Son of Gwgan, about 1244.
- V. A Panegyric upon Owain Gwynedd, Prince of North Wales, by Gwalchmai, the Son of Meilyr, in the year 1157.
- VI. An Elegy to Nest, the daughter of Howel by Einion the son of Gwalchmai, about the year 1240.
- VII. A Poem to Llewelyn ap Iorwerth, or Llewelyn the Great; In which many of his victories are celebrated; composed by Llywarch Brydydd y Moch, a Bard, who, according to Mr. Edward Llwyd of the Museum's Catalogue of the British writers, flourished about the year 1240.
- VIII. An Ode in five parts, to Llewelyn, the son of Gruffudd, last prince of Wales of the British line, composed by Llygad Gwr, about the year 1270.
- IX. A Poem, intituled the Ode of the Months, composed by Gwilym Ddu of Arfon, to Sir Gruffudd Llwyd, of Tregarnedd and Dinorweg.
- X. Taliesin's Poem to Elphin, the Son of Gwyddno Garanir, king of Cantre' Gwaelodd, to comfort him upon his ill success at the Wear; and to exhort him to trust in Divine Providence.¹⁹⁹

Generally, the work was well-received in the eighteenth century, although the tripartite scheme (English, Latin, then Welsh) does show Evans's uncertainty about his audience as he seems to be covering all bases with slightly different aims in each language (as is shown in the excerpts above).²⁰⁰

The next development in Welsh literary anthologies is *Gorchestion Beirdd Cymru* (1773) by Rhys Jones (1713–1801). The collection begins with the “classics” of Taliesin, Aneirin, and Llywarch Hen (all traditionally associated with the 6th century CE) before moving into and staying in the fifteenth century. According to Rhys Jones, the purpose of publishing such a volume was his hope:

That a Book of British Poetry wrote by Bards who flourished from the beginning to the Close of the fifteenth Century, when they wrote correctest and best, and when, as yet the Language was free from any Corruption occasioned since, by our closer Union and Commerce with the English, will

¹⁹⁹ I have collated this contents table from the titles of each section in: Evans, Evan (1764), *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards*, (London: R. and J. Dodsley).

²⁰⁰ Constantine, Mary-Ann (2004), “Ossian in Wales and Brittany,” in Gaskell, Howard (ed.) *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, (London: Thoemmes). 67-91. 72.

meet with due Encouragement from the Lover of their Country and Language, in all Parts of Britain.²⁰¹

Importantly, Jones, like Evan Evans envisions his anthology reaching a Britain-wide audience, very different from Lewis Morris's "English-speaking Welsh" in *Tlysau*. Jones emphasizes that the "correctest" form of Welsh existed before the Wales-England Act of Union in 1536 and this emphasis on "pure" Welsh is something we have seen throughout antiquarian projects of the eighteenth century. In the Welsh preface to the work, we find a Welsh-translated quotation from Pezron's book *Antiquité de la nation*, professing belief in the Gomerian legend (to be discussed later in this chapter), and affirming the antiquity of the Welsh language:

Iaith y Titaniaid, yr hon yw 'r un a'r Galiad, yn ol amryw Droedigaethau dros fwy da phedair, Mil o flynyddoedd gwedi ei chadw hyd ein hamser ni; drwy ryfeddu'n ddifawr fod Iaith cyn hyned yn cael ei Siarad yng Nghymru, ag yn Llydaw yn Ffraingc. Dyma'r genedl medd efe Sy'n perchennogi 'r glod am gadw Iaith hiliogaeth Gomer, Mab hynaf Iaphet, a Nai Shem; Iaith y Tywysogion a elwid Sadwrn, ag Iou; pa rai oedd Dduwiau Mawrion yn yr hen amseroedd.²⁰²

The language of the Titans, that which is the same as the Gauls, according to various translations over four thousand years preserved until our time; by being greatly surprised that a language so ancient is spoken in Wales, and in Brittany in France. This is the nation, he said, that takes the credit for preserving the language and race of Gomer, Japhet's eldest son, and Shem's grandson; the language of the princes called Saturn and Jupiter; who were great gods in ancient times.

The next big installment in the anthology tradition is *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales: Collected out of Ancient Manuscripts* (1801–1807) edited by Edward Williams, William Owen Pughe (1759-1835), and Owen Jones (Owain Myfyr; 1741–1814). Beginning with Aneurin's *Gododdin*, the first volume comprises writers "from the earliest times to the

²⁰¹ Jones, Rhys (1773), *Gorchestion Beirdd Cymru: neu Flodau Godidowgrwydd Awen*, (Shrewsbury). Note to the Reader.

²⁰² Jones (1773), *Gorchestion Beirdd Cymru*. The Preface.

beginning of the fourteenth century”; the second volume contains prose works, histories, law texts and saints’ lives; and the third was advertised as containing a mixture of aphorisms, proverbs, ethical triads, legislative triads, laws, and music.²⁰³ There was also a fourth proposed volume, never completed, that was planned to contain the native prose tales. The three volumes of poetry were compiled in the hope that:

... this publication of our ancient literary remains will in some degree reanimate the genius of our country, enrich and purify the language of our writers, afford them models of writing in verse...²⁰⁴

This stated purpose is not unlike that of *Tlysau* and *Some Specimens*. The compilation of the *Myvyrian Archaiology* seems inevitable when considered in relation to the English literary tradition and there seemed to be a sense of insecurity and an indignation borne out of it within Welsh literary circles. As Charnell-White writes, the *Myvyrian Archaiology* can also be thought of as a compendium of Welsh material. Some of the material within was legitimate, some of it spurious, and some even forged. The compendium served as a vehicle for Edward William’s own bardic vision – displaying the majesty of Welsh literature, real or imaginary, and adhering to his belief in the Primitivism paradigm.²⁰⁵ As Mary-Ann Constantine also posits: establishing a venerable and legitimate literary history, older than that which England could boast, could console the fact that Wales lost prestige within an English-speaking Britain which rapidly consolidated its powerbase in London. The Ancient Britons, after all, undisputedly spoke Welsh.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Jones, Rhys (1773), *Gorchestion Beirdd Cymru*. vi.

²⁰⁴ Williams, Edward, Owen Pughe, Williams, and Jones, Owen (eds.) (1801), *The Myvyrian archaiology of Wales: collected out of ancient manuscripts*, (London). xv.

²⁰⁵ Charnell-White (2007), *Bardic Circles*. 29-33.

²⁰⁶ Constantine, Mary-Ann (2008), “Welsh Literary History and the Making of the “Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales””, *European Studies* 26. 109-128. 113.

The idea of a chronologically organized compilation of literary texts was new: Lewis's *Tlysau* was a collection of just a few poetic "jewels", while Evans's anthology, *Some Specimens*, was far from complete with the material that was known at the time. The *Archaiology* contains three volumes of texts ascribed where possible to named poets. The volumes were also notable for being arranged chronologically and generically. Again, the material provided a retrospective and was untranslated:

They [the poems] exhibit lively pictures of primitive manners, afford curious anecdotes of our ancient knowledge, especially of the very beautiful ethics of our remote ancestors.²⁰⁷

It is within the context of this busy and involved anthology tradition and the growth of Celticity that Welsh-language poetry was situated.

The Druids, Celts, and Britons

Interest in the druids and Celts exploded in the eighteenth century as the Primitivism paradigm was followed by many antiquarians. The Primitivism paradigm was based on the thought that the universal laws of nature and reason were innate to primitive man, with later civilized man considered corrupt and disconnected from nature and moral law. The Celts and druids were seen as primitive and therefore uncorrupted. The earliest known references to the Celts are short and throwaway. One such reference appears in Herodotus' *Histories*, written between *c.* 480 and *c.* 429 BCE, in which he locates them at the source of the Danube.²⁰⁸ Much later, in *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (58–49 BCE) Julius Caesar equates the Gauls with the "Celts":

²⁰⁷ Williams, Edward, Owen Pughe, Williams, and Jones, Owen (eds.) (1801), *The Myvyrian archaeology*. xv.

²⁰⁸ See: Cunliffe, Barry (1997) *The Ancient Celts*, (London: Penguin Books). 3.

All Gaul is divided into three parts, one of which the Belgae inhabit, the Aquitani another, those who in their own language are called Celts, in ours Galli, the third.²⁰⁹

Corroborating this, Pliny the Elder (AD 23/24–79) writes that a part of Gaul is known as Celtica:

The whole of Gaul that is comprehended under the one general name of Comata, is divided into three groups of people, which are more especially kept distinct from each other by the following rivers. From the Scaldis to the Sequana it is Belgica; from the Sequana to the Garumna it is Celtica or Lugdunensis; and from the Garumna to the promontory of the Pyrenæan range it is Aquitanica, formerly called Aremorica.²¹⁰

A point of importance, however, is that no author of Antiquity refers to the inhabitants of Great Britain as “Celtic,” although Caesar does note similarities between Britain and Gaul.²¹¹ Nevertheless, thanks to Edward Lhuyd’s *Archaeologica Britannica* and his use of “Celtic” for the languages and implied histories of the North Atlantic Archipelago and Brittany, the eighteenth-century mind conflated the history of Britain with the history of the Celts. The interest in druids, according to Ronald Hutton is one “intrinsic aspect of modernity.”²¹²

There is no single, authoritative portrait of the ancient druids but much of the basis for knowledge of the druids comes from Diodoros Siculus’ writing. In it we find a description of bards and druids:

²⁰⁹ Hammond, Carolyn (trans.) (1996), *Caesar: The Gallic War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press). 3.

²¹⁰ “Gallia omnis Comata uno nomine appellata in tria populorum genera dividitur, amnibus maxime distincta. a Scalde ad Sequanam Belgica, ab eo ad Garunnam Celtica eademque Lugdunensis, inde ad Pyrenaei montis excursus Aquitanica, Aremorica antea dicta. Universam oram.” Pliny the Elder. *Naturalis Historia* (4.17 / 4.31).

²¹¹ See: Green, Miranda J. (1995). ‘Who Were the Celts?’ in Green, Miranda, J. (ed.) *The Celtic World*. (London: Routledge). 1-5.

²¹² Hutton, Ronald (2011), *Blood and Mistletoe: A History of the Druids in Britain*, (Yale University Press). 418.

They have also lyric poets whom they call bards. They sing to the accompaniment of instruments resembling lyres, sometimes a eulogy and sometimes a satire. They have also certain philosophers and theologians who are treated with special honor, who they call Druids. They further make use of seers, thinking them worthy of praise.²¹³

As in Caesar's writing, the druids and bards are separate entities in this passage.

Long before the eighteenth century, the druids were associated with Anglesey thanks to Tacitus's *Annals* and his description of the druids' last stand against the invading Roman army in CE 14-68. The druids are described as a kind of mystical, all-powerful entity who can use the power of recitation and cursing to fend off the enemy:

On the shore stood the opposing army with its dense array of armed warriors, while between the ranked dashed women, in black attire like the Furies, with hair disheveled, waving brands. All around, the Druids, lifting up their hands to heaven, and pouring forth dreadful imprecations, scared our soldiers by the unfamiliar sight, so that, as if their limbs were paralyzed, they stood motionless, and exposed to wounds.²¹⁴

In keeping with this idea of an indigenous, druidic past, it had long been recognized that Wales was the "original British nation," and, in the eighteenth century, patriotism was the impetus to reclaim the history of the earliest Britons, it being the task of the antiquarian to establish all that was known about them. Indeed, Rees Davies writes that "for the Welsh... the cultivation of their own historical mythology was one of the few means that they could exploit to hang on to their identity as a people."²¹⁵ David Thomas (Dafydd Ddu Eryri; 1759–1822), among others – notably Edward Williams (as mentioned above) – was tasked with finding material for the *Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* (1801–1807), the three volumes of

²¹³ Quoted in: Tierney, James J. (1964), "The Celts and the Classical Authors," *The Celts* (Mercier Press). 33.

²¹⁴ Tacitus, *The Annals*, Book XIV, chapter 30.

²¹⁵ Davies, R. R. (1997), "The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100–1400: IV. Language and Historical Mythology," *TRHS*, 6th series, 7. 15, 23.

Welsh literature that provided “venerable monuments of enlightened periods of literature among the Britons,” i.e. material from Welsh-language manuscripts.²¹⁶ It is clear from Thomas’s *Awdl ar ryddid*, (An *awdl* on liberty), written in response to the French Revolution (1789-1799), that he associates British ancestry (here referring to the state) with a Celtic one:

O’i phlaid yr hen Geltiaid gynt,
 Diddwl, anorfod oeddynt
 A’u harfau yn gwau mewn gwynt,
 A dynion marwol danynt.²¹⁷

The old Celts, long ago were in favor of liberty
 with their weapons darting about on the wind,
 and dead men under their feet,
 they were wise and unconquerable.²¹⁸

Generally, across England and Wales, admiration for the Romans was contrasted with the pride in the strength of resistance put up by the Ancient Britons. The civilizing influence of the Romans was seen to have been won at the cost of liberty and independence.²¹⁹ The druids were the only constituency discussed at any length by Classical authors and were seen as subjects of admiration in the work of the English poets John Milton (1608–1674) and Michael Drayton (1563–1631). Edward Lhuyd’s *Archaeologica Britannica*, although incomplete (only the linguistic portion was published in 1707), was one of the first antiquarian works to make the case for a sophisticated British civilization based on artefactual evidence and it set a precedent for later works. For instance, William

²¹⁶ Williams, Edward, Owen Pughe, Williams, and Jones, Owen (eds.) (1801), *The Myvyrian archaiology*. v.

²¹⁷ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 230-249.

²¹⁸ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 230-249.

²¹⁹ Sweet, Rosemary (2004), *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in the Eighteenth Century*, (Hambledon and London: London and New York), 121.

Stukeley (1687–1765), the English antiquarian famous for connecting the druids with stone circles – in particular Stonehenge and Avebury – shows the conflation of druidical religion and the Celts/Ancient Britons with the proposed titles of his unpublished book; first titled *The History of the Temples of the Ancient Celts*, and later becoming *The History of the Religion and Temples of the Druids*.²²⁰ This conflation is seen in several Welsh poems including *Cywydd gorymbil ar heddwch* (A *cywydd* invoking peace) by Edward Williams:

E’th fawl beirddion gwyhion gant,
 Â’u meliaith hwy’th ganmolant,
 Adroddant ein derwyddon
 Gân Newydd a dedwydd dôn [...] ²²¹

Hundreds of bards praise you [God]
 With their honeyed language they laud you,
 Our druids declaim
 A new song and a happy tune [...] ²²²

As will be explained in detail later in this chapter, the druids were considered the patriarchs of the Old Testament in Wales and Britain at large, originating from Gomer son of Japheth son of Noah. Edward Williams believed wholeheartedly in this origin myth and, through his use of the Primitivism paradigm, was a great believer in the purity and bardic majesty of the druids, using this to trump England’s own claim to Britain. He first wrote to the *Gentleman’s Magazine* (a monthly periodical founded in London in 1731) in 1789 using the pen-name J.D – to preserve his identity – testing the water for his ideas and their reception in literary and learned circles. Later, in 1792, he wrote again to the magazine, concerning the autumn equinox celebration on Primrose Hill – this time as “Iolo Morganwg”

²²⁰ For information on William Stukeley’s life, see: Piggott, S. (1974), “William Stukeley: Doctor, Divine, and Antiquary” *British Medical Journal*. 725-727.

²²¹ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 184-99.

²²² Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 184-99.

– expressing full belief in his hypothesis that the eighteenth-century bardic tradition had stayed “exactly the same as it was two thousand years ago”:

...the Bardic Institution of the Ancient Britons, which is the same as the Druidic, has been from the earliest times, through all the ages, to the present day, retained by the Welsh... is now exactly the same as it was two thousand years ago.²²³

The ancient sources for descriptions of the druids were sparse and difficult enough that they could serve many purposes. Williams’s druids are at once patriots, showing native strength against foreign enemies and great philosophers and theologians, proving the intellectual and cultural achievement of not only Wales’s ancestors but the modern Welsh, who, as Williams claimed could trace their lineage directly back to the druids. Of course, this glorification of the druids and bardic institution also served the self-aggrandizing claim that Williams himself was one of only two genuine bards still active in eighteenth-century Wales. In his 1789 letter to the *Gentlemen’s Magazine*, identity concealed, he wrote that: “Besides Edward Williams, there is, I believe, now remaining only one regular Bard in Glamorgan, or in the world... These two persons are the only legitimate descendants of the so-long-celebrated *Ancient British Bards*.”²²⁴ He also asserted throughout his life that his home county of Glamorgan was the principal home of the druidic tradition, conflating bardic learning with druidic lore as he does in *Gofuned Goronwy Ddu o Fôn*, (“The Wish”):²²⁵

Gardd i minnau, gorau ddymuniad,
A gwasgawdwydd o wiw gysgodiad
Tra bwy'n darllain cain aceniad—beirddion,

²²³ Quoted in Herbert, Trevor and Jones, Gareth E. (eds.) (1988), *The Remaking of Wales in the Eighteenth Century*, (Capel Garmon: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch). 161-2.

²²⁴ Quoted in: Charnell-White (2007), *Bardic Circles*, 14.

²²⁵ See: Charnell-White (2007), *Bardic Circles*, for a foray into how Williams used Welsh literary and legendary characters to place Glamorgan at the center of the bardic tradition. 99-117.

Hil Derwyddon, olau adroddiad.²²⁶

For me, the best wish, a garden,
and a perfectly sheltered bower
whilst I would read the elegant diction of poets,
progeny/descendants of Druids, a deft recitation.²²⁷

This literary connection lends weight to the idea of “Celto-Britishness” in which Welsh identity is viewed as essentially Celtic and thus the progenitor of the ancient Britons and indigenous people of modern Britain.

The Anglesey Reverend, Henry Rowlands, published his *Mona Antiqua Restaurata: An Archaeological Discourse on the Antiquities of Anglesey* in 1723 – a book in which he equates the practice of druidism with stone circles and similar reliquaries and places Anglesey (the Isle of Mona) – as “one of the first and most ancient nurseries of the British druids”:

The Isle of Mona is by warrantable suffrage of antiquity, celebrated for one of the first and most ancient nurseries of the British druids; from whom, no doubt, the profound mysterious theorems of that learned sect flowed in the choicest and most elaborate language of the time.²²⁸

In several of the poems examined in this chapter, the Welsh poets connect druidism and, as we have seen, poetic talent, with Anglesey (aside from Edward Williams who considers Gwynedd as inherently barbarous and outside of bardism’s culture). One such poem is Evan Evans’ *Marwnad Wiliam Morris*, (An Elegy for William Morris):

Os cyfarwydd Derwyddon

²²⁶ Lake, A. Cynfael (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas o Ganu Caeth y Ddeunawfed Ganrif*, (Felindre, Swanswea: Barddas). 88-9.

²²⁷ Conran, Tony (trans.) (2003), *Welsh Verse: Fourteen Centuries of Poetry*, (Bridgend: Seren). 233-5. Lines 17-20.

²²⁸ Rowlands, Henry (1723), *Mona antiqua restaurata. An archæological discourse on the antiquities, natural and historical, of the isle of Anglesey, the ancient seat of the British druids. In two essays. With an appendix, containing a comparative table of primitive words, and the derivatives of them in several of the tongues of Europe; with remarks upon them. Together with some letters, and three catalogues*, (Dublin). 36.

A fu wŷr mawr o fro Môn,
Celfydd ym mhob pwnc eilwaith
Ym Môn fu am awen faith.²²⁹

If the great men of Anglesey
Were learned druids
There was expertise in every subject in Anglesey
Because of enduring awen.

Goronwy Owen (1723–1769), a native of Anglesey, is particularly fond of thinking that Anglesey housed great druidic minds in his *Annerch Wiliam Elias*, (Addressing William Elias):

Bu gyfarwydd dderwyddon
Gwir hyddysg ymysg gwŷr Môn.
Priod iddi prydyddiaeth;
Cadd beirddion ym Môn eu maeth.
Môn sydd ben er ys ennyd
Ar ddoethion a beirddion byd.²³⁰

Learned, truly knowledgeable, druids,
were among the men of Anglesey.
Poetry belongs to her [=Anglesey];
poets received their nourishment in Anglesey.
Anglesey which is chief since long ago
for sages and poets of the world.

According to Owen, Anglesey “owns” poetry because of its connection with the druids and he laments that these great men about whom Caesar wrote (the reference to Classical literature intending to emphasize the civility of the druids) “went to the grave” in *Cywydd yn Ateb y Bardd Coch o Fôn*, (A *Cywydd* Answering the Red Poet of Anglesey):

Pwy rydd i lawr wŷr mawr Môn?
Awenyddol iawn oeddynt
Yn gynnw medd Caesar cynt.
Adroddwch, mae'r Derwyddon,
Urdd mawr a fu'n harddu Môn?
I'r bedd yr aethant o'r byd

²²⁹ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 131-3.

²³⁰ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 86-7.

– Och eilwaith! – heb ddychwelyd.²³¹

Who will bring down the great men of Anglesey?
They were greatly inspired
from early on says Caesar of old.
Tell, where are the druids,
a great order, that beautified Anglesey?
They went from the world to the grave
– oh again! – without return.

Because of these links between Wales and druidic history in Anglesey (and Glamorgan, according to Edward Williams), many eighteenth-century Welsh poets thought of the Ancient Britons – equated with the druids – as the natural precursor of the modern Welsh. The idea of the Welsh as the indigenous race of Britain was an idea that had been widespread across England and Wales a few centuries before during the Tudor period (see Chapter One for discussion) but it was Edward Lhuyd, later in 1707, who connected the Britons with the Celts (and therefore druids) through linguistic survey. Lhuyd consistently referred to the Welsh as Britons or British in his *Archaeologica Britannica*. In a poem by Jonathan Hughes, Llangollen (Bardd Pengwern; 1721–1805), *Cerdd o anogaeth i lanciau chwe sir Gwynedd, am godi yn glau ym mhlaid Britannia, pan oedd y deyrnas mewn perygl o gael ei gorthrechu gan y gelynion*, (A poem of encouragement to the lads of Gwynedd’s six counties for rising quickly in the cause of Britannia when the kingdom was in danger of being overcome by the enemies), the French, like “an ugly swarm of bears,” “seek to destroy the Ancient Britons.” Here, the ancient race refers to the English (and Welsh) resistance to the French Revolution:

Er bod cedyrn Ffrainc ar ffrwst,
Yn fawr eu trwst a’u trawster,
Fel eirth am ddifa hylla’ haid,
Yr hen Frytaniaid tyner [...] ²³²

²³¹ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 110-15.

²³² Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 88-93.

Though France's warriors are in haste,
and make great clamor and oppression,
like bears (ugliest swarm),
they seek to destroy the gentle Ancient Britons [...]²³³

This romanticization of the resistance as an ancient race is not by any means uncommon in Welsh poetry, and, as is seen in Chapter One, was often associated with the subjugated figure of Britannia. This ancient British race, to Welsh eyes, is exclusionary of the Scottish Gaels in almost all cases.

The use of “British” to refer to the Welsh language, as Edward Lhuyd was wont to do, continued to validate eighteenth-century Welsh culture by creating a past centered on the antiquity and continued purity of both language and culture.²³⁴ The unbroken lineage of the Welsh and the imagined pure “blood of the Briton” appears in Goronwy Owen’s poem *Awdl Farwnad Lewis Morris*, (An Ode on the Death of Lewis Morris):

A thra bo urddol athro beirddion,
A mwyn dysg wiwles mewn dwys galon,
Gwiwdeb ar iaith, a gwaed y Brython,
Ac awen Gwyndud, ac ewyn gwendon,
Daear a nef, a dŵr yn afon,
Ef a gaiff hoywaf wiw goffeion.²³⁵

And while there is a dignified teacher of poets,
and gentle, beneficial learning in an earnest heart,
excellence in language, and the blood of the Briton,
and Gwyndud's muse, and the spume of a white wave,
earth and heaven, and water in the river,
he will be remembered most cheerfully and excellently.

Lewis Morris is here eulogized as a “dignified teacher of poets” and recipient of “Gwyndud’s muse” (more on the *awen* later in this chapter).

²³³ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 88-93.

²³⁴ Wood (1997), “Perceptions of the Past in Welsh Folklore Studies.” 97.

²³⁵ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd*. 116-20.

The strength of the Britons in the face of the Roman invasion was taken by the English as well as the Welsh as a symbol of national pride. For the Welsh, however, the strength of the Britons during the Saxon invasions captured more of the imagination and in the eisteddfodic poem, written during the French Revolution, *Arwyrain rhyddid* (Praise to liberty), Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain; 1761–1849) lists a series of invasions to stress the courage of the Britons (read, Welsh):

Bu'n hynafiaid dan Rufeiniad,
Du arw fleiddiad, hir o flwyddi;
Yno'r Saeson ddeuai'n drawsion
Anwar alon i'w rheoli:

Mil a hanner, blwyddau caethder,
Heb rai tyner i'r Brytaniaid;
Tan iau greulon eu caseion,
A'u twysogion, dewrion diriaid [...]²³⁶

Our ancestors were under the Romans
(black savage wolves) for many years;
then the Saxons came as oppressors,
a barbaric enemy, to rule us:

One thousand five hundred years of captivity
without gentle years for the Britons;
under the cruel yoke of their enemies,
and their valiant ill-fated princes [...]²³⁷

Chastising the “Saxons” and the “Romans” – “black savage wolves” – for placing the Britons under the “cruel yoke” of “captivity,” Davies emphasizes the place of the Britons as the original inhabitants of Britain, separate from those who later invaded. Despite the Romans’ “civilized” empire and the many attempts of the Welsh to attach themselves to Classical civilization (including William Salesbury’s attempts at “proving” Latin etymologies for Welsh words in his *A dictionary in Englyshe and Welshe*, 1547), the Roman invasion had,

²³⁶ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 290-317.

²³⁷ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 290-317.

from Nennius's time, been seen as illegitimate and proof of the Britons' hardness in the face of adversity.²³⁸

Galfridian, Gomeri, and Babelian Origins

The identity of the Britons and, thus, Welsh as the indigenous heirs to Britain was bolstered in Paul-Yves Pezron's work. His explanation of Welsh origins as Celtic became the standard origin myth of the eighteenth century and superseded several other earlier origin myths in circulation. Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Historia Regnum Britanniae* (discussed in Chapter One) popularized the myth that the whole island of Britain was populated by Brutus and his sons: England (*Lloegr*), Scotland (*Yr Alban*) and Wales (*Cymru*) were the lands ruled by Brutus' sons, Loegrinus, Albanactus and Kamber, respectively, and Cornwall was named after Cornelius who was the leader of the band of Trojans who had joined Brutus.²³⁹ In the twelfth century, contemporaneous with Geoffrey of Monmouth, examples survive of the poet Gwalchmai ap Meilyr referring to the prince of Gwynedd, Owain Gwynedd, as belonging to "the race of Aeneas."²⁴⁰ In the *Triads* (*Trioedd Ynys Prydein*; [The Triads of the Island of Britain]), extant in earliest manuscript form in the third quarter of the thirteenth century but thought to have been compiled from a much earlier oral tradition, there is a completely different origin tale that asserts that Britain derived its name from Prydain son of Aedd the Great – the eponymous conqueror of the

²³⁸ See: Thomas, Rebecca (2022), "Origin Legends I: The Britons" in *History and Identity in Early Medieval Wales* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer). pp. 89-120.

²³⁹ Thorpe, Lewis (trans.) (1966), *Geoffrey of Monmouth, History of the Kings of Britain*, (London: Penguin Books). 54-75.

²⁴⁰ Williams, Caerwyn J. E. (ed.) (1994), *Gwaith Meilyr Brydydd a'I ddisynyddion*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). No. 8. Line 57. (arddwyrhaef haul o hil Eneas).

island.²⁴¹ This is supposed to be a pre-Brutus belief and was revived much later in the work of Edward Williams.

During the early modern period, belief in the Galfridian pseudo-history continued and protecting the Trojan myth was of utmost importance. “Galfridian” refers to the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the myth in question is found in *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain), a work completed around 1136. Siôn Prys († 1640?), for example, wrote, in Latin, in an essay entitled *Defensio*, a defense of the Galfridian origin myth, boasting of the nation’s ancient narrative. Adherence to the Galfridian mentality was still strong in the later works of the Welsh men Charles Edwards (1623–after 1691) and Theophilus Evans (1693–1767). Although he avoids naming Geoffrey explicitly due to reading most of his history in works of Renaissance scholars such as the Irish man James Ussher (1581–1656) and the English-turned-American Henry Spelman (1595–1623), Theophilus Evans supports the Galfridian point of view in his work of history *Drych y Prif Oesoedd* (A Mirror on the Principal Ages) (1716), proving that the Trojan myth had credibility even into the eighteenth century. Indeed, the editor and littérateur David Owen (1795–1866) chose “Brutus” as his pseudonym. Evans does, however, state that Brutus was not the first on the island, wavering somewhat from Geoffrey’s supposition. Instead, he follows Paul-Yves Pezron’s position that Gomer son of Japheth son of Noah landed soon after the fall of the Tower of Babel.²⁴²

The Gomer legend took hold of Wales in the eighteenth century, positioning the Welsh as the aboriginal Britons and thereby differentiating them from the later invaders of

²⁴¹ Bromwich, Rachel (ed.) (2014; 2nd edition), *Triodd Ynys Prydein: The Triads of the Island of Britain*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). cxxvi-cxxvii, 228, 495-6.

²⁴² Alter, Dewi (2022), *Ailddarganfod ac Ail-Greu Cof Diwyllianol yng Nghymru'r Cofnod Modern Cynnar*, (Dissertation, Cardiff University). 276-280.

the Anglo-Saxons, and connecting Wales and greater Britain with Classical and Celtic origins. Paul-Yves Pezron, in his *Antiquité de la Nation* (1703; English translation, 1706), and Edward Lhuyd soon after in his *Archaeologica Britannica* (1707), posited that Welsh was a language connected to the Celtic tribes of Gaul (as mentioned earlier). Pezron, however, went a step further and published a thesis like that of Welsh humanist writers such as John Davies of Mallwyd (c. 1567–1644) and Charles Edwards that proposed a Gomerian line of succession for the Celtic and Welsh people. The Celtic element gave the Gomerian origin story more legitimacy – Pezron not only claimed that the Gomerians were men of great importance in Antiquity, but he also connected Brythonic languages with Scripture and the Classical world, much as Geoffrey of Monmouth had done with the Brutus origin story:

A strange Thing, that so ancient a Language should now be spoken by the *American Britons* in *France*, and by the Ancien [sic] *Britons* in *Wales*: These are the people who have the Honour to preserve the Language of Posterity of *Gomer*, *Japhet's* Eldest Son, and the Nephew of *Shem*, the Language of those Princes called *Saturn* and *Jupiter*, who passed for great Deities among the Ancients.²⁴³

According to Adam Coward, linking the Welsh with Celtic (and Gaul) and the descendants of Gomer, the Welsh became “not just the aboriginal inhabitants of Britain, but most of western Europe.”²⁴⁴

In *Drych y Prif Oesoedd*, Theophilus Evans followed in Pezron’s footsteps stating that the Welsh were descended from both Gomer and the Cimmerians. The Cimmerians were an ancient people living north of the Caucasus and the Sea of Azov – they were driven

²⁴³ Pezron (1706), *The Antiquities of Nations*. xii-xiii.

²⁴⁴ Coward, Adam (2016), “Exiled Trojans or the Sons of Gomer: Wales’s Origins in the long Eighteenth Century” in Jensen, Lotte (ed.) *The Roots of Nationalism: National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press). 170.

out of southern Russia by the Scythians, over the Caucasus, and into Anatolia towards the end of the 8th century BC. Pezron had written about this a decade earlier, equating the ancestry of the Gauls with that of the Bretons and the Welsh:

Now from all these testimonies and others that at present do not occur to me, there are two things that appear to me to be incontestable; the first, that Gomer was the chief of the Gomerians, Comarians, or Gamarians, for anciently they bore various names; and the other is, that these Gomarians afterwards were called Galatians or Gauls.²⁴⁵

The terms Cimmerian, Germanic, or Celtic were identifications for the Cimbri, a tribe settled on the Jutland peninsula in Germania (now Denmark) *c.* 200 BCE. A false etymology with Cimbri and Cymry was perpetuated by the English antiquarian William Camden (1551–1623) in his *Britannia* (first published in 1586). This etymology is now disproven and the etymology deriving Cymry from the Brythonic word *Combrogos (fellow countryman) is preferred.²⁴⁶ The name Gomer (taken, for instance, as the bardic name of the poet Joseph Harris [1773–1825]) and its false derivatives such as Gomeraeg (as an alternative name for the Welsh language: *Cymraeg*) became popular throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Wales.

The idea that the Welsh language is the original “British” tongue is seen in Evan Evans’ poem, *Marwnad Siôn Owain*, (An Elegy for Siôn Owain):

Pur ydyw'n iaith Prydain hen
Ei bêr gywydd brig awen.²⁴⁷

Pure is our old language of Britain
its sweet *cywydd* is the pinnacle of the muse.

²⁴⁵ Pezron (1706), *The antiquities of nations*. 17.

²⁴⁶ See: Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru, “Cymro.” [accessed 04/12/2024].

²⁴⁷ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 127-9.

Evans clearly believes the notion that the Welsh language is “pure” and ancient. The following excerpt from *Arwyrain Cymdeithas y Cymmrodorion* (“Praise for the Society of *Cymmrodorion*”) shows confidence in the Gomic legend:

Am goledd iaith berffaith, bêr,
Ddigymysg, wiwdda Gomer
Ac adfer dysg, di-fai'r dawn,
Dra addas y Derwyddon [...] ²⁴⁸

For the cultivation of the perfect, sweet-sounding,
unmixed excellent language of Gomer
and for restoring the extremely worthy learning – the gift is faultless –
of the Druids [...]

Here we also see a belief in the druidic origins of the Welsh.

The Gomic origin legend fitted nicely into the idea, perpetuated by Dr. John Davies in 1621, that Welsh was one of the languages ordained at the Tower of Babel. According to the Biblical story, found in Genesis 11: 1-9, God scattered the people who built the Tower, “whose top may reach unto heaven” so that he could “confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”²⁴⁹ In Theophilus Evans’s *Drych y Prif Oesoedd*, he began his history with Genesis, situating the Welsh and their origins after the fall of Babel with the language: “And who do you suppose spoke Welsh at that time but *Gomer*, *Japhet’s* eldest son.”²⁵⁰ With Babel, the languages and peoples of the world were created and so the Biblical associations of the Gomic myth validated, in a supreme sense, the Welsh past. The antiquarian Jerome Stone (1727–1756) went even further and asserted that “the Celtic was once the universal speech of all Europe and that Greek, Latin, and

²⁴⁸ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 139-40.

²⁴⁹ Authorized King James Version.

²⁵⁰ “A phwy oedd yn siarad *Cymraeg* y dybiwch chwi y pryd hwnnw ond *Gomer*, mab hynaf *Japhet*.” Evans, Theophilus (1716) *Drych y Prif Oesoedd yn ôl yr argraffiaf cyntaf*, ed. Garfield H. Hughes (1961) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 19.

Teutonic were all... derivations from that most ancient idiom.²⁵¹ Goronwy Owen, an Anglican cleric, amongst other things later in life, adheres to the Gomic and Babelian myths in his poem *Awdl Farwnad Lewis Morris*, (“An Elegy for Lewis Morris”):

Honni a gafodd o hen gofion [xcix]
 Achoedd dewr bobloedd o dŵr Bablon;
 Coffa bri ethol cyff y Brython,
 Gomer a'i hil yn Gymry haelion [...] ²⁵²

Claiming that which he got from old memories/memorials [xcix]
 the genealogies of brave peoples from the tower of Babel;
 Remembering the esteemed lineage of the Briton,
 Gomer and his race were generous/bountiful Welshmen [...]

Here, Owen equates the Welsh with Gomer and thus the “esteemed lineage of the Briton.”

Literary Origins

The lineage of the Briton was connected in the eighteenth century with the ancientness of Welsh-language literature, with an emphasis on poetry as poetry was seen to have an unbroken link to the druids. As antiquarians such as Lewis Morris, Evan Evans, Edward Williams, and Rhys Jones (among others) uncovered and transcribed several manuscripts and collated anthologies, allusions to the earliest Welsh poetry made their way into contemporary poetry of the eighteenth century. These earliest poets belong to the period of the *Cynfeirdd*, (Early Poets) (< c.1100), and Evan Evans lauds several *Cynfeirdd* poets in the beginning of *Some Specimens* – he talks of the “The works of Taliesin, Llywarch Hên, Aneurin Gwawdrydd, Myrddin Wyllt [Merlin], [and] Avan Verddig, who all flourished about the year 560.”²⁵³ Although he did not publish and translate Aneirin’s poetry, Evan Evans

²⁵¹ Quoted in: Sorenson (2016) “Genuine Remains: The Celtic Linguistic Artefact”, *Modern Philology*, Vol. 113, No. 3. pp. 373-397. 394.

²⁵² Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 116-20.

²⁵³ Evans (1764), *Some Specimens*. ii.

discovered the *Gododdin* – traditionally ascribed to Aneirin – and he was aware of its contents. Instead, as noted earlier, Evans’s anthology largely deals with the *Gogynfeirdd* (Not-so-early poets), also known as *Beirdd y Tywysogion* (Poets of the Princes) (c. 1100–c. 1300), and the *Cywyddwyr* (Poets who composed in the *cywydd* meter) (c. 1100–c. 1600). The poems Evans chose were mostly composed before the Edwardian conquest (1282) and the “massacre of the bards” of Thomas Gray’s *The Bard* and Evans’s *Paraphrase of the 137th Psalm* (discussed earlier in this chapter). The *Cynfeirdd*, the closest poets to druidic succession, were the jewels in the crown of Welsh literature as they far preceded any known English literature and Evan Evans alludes to Aneirin, Merlin, and Llywarch Hen in the following passage from *Marwnad Wiliam Morris*, (An Elegy for William Morris):

Cynnull gwaith, kannwyll y gân,
Y prydyddwyr pêr diddan:
Taliesin, Aneirin wawl,
A Myrddin emau urddawl,
A Llywarch, benaig lluoedd,
Gelyn i Sais, glân was oedd.²⁵⁴

Collecting the work, the choicest song,
Of the sweet-sounding, entertaining poets:
Taliesin, bright Aneirin,
And Merlin of fine [poetic] jewels,
And Llywarch, lord of hosts,
Enemy of an Englishman, he was a pure lad.

In this poem, Evans eulogizes the “pure lad” William Morris (1705–1763), a prominent figure in antiquarian activity of North Wales and brother to Lewis Morris.

Evan Evans’s *Cynfeirdd* poets, listed above, all date, supposedly, to the sixth century CE. This is also the century of King Arthur, the legendary king of the Britons, mentioned in the *Gododdin* itself. The earliest references to Arthur are Welsh in origin and are found in *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (The Black Book of Carmarthen; mid-thirteenth century), and *Llyfr*

²⁵⁴ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 131-3.

Aneurin (The Book of Aneirin; late thirteenth century but dated earlier) which contains the *Gododdin*, and a few other codices. Largely, the references are short and throwaway but nevertheless show that Arthur was a commonly known character in early Welsh literature.²⁵⁵ Surprisingly, however, Arthur did not flourish in eighteenth-century poetry although he was part of Edward Williams's bardic vision, and this is probably because of the emphasis on poetry over prose – most Welsh references to Arthur are in prose tales or triads. There were attempts in the nineteenth century to reappropriate Arthur for the Welsh but this did not come to pass in any reality until T. Gwynn Jones's *Ymadawiad Arthur*, (the Death of Arthur) in 1902.²⁵⁶ In a poem by Lewis Morris, *Moliant Wiliam Fychan, Corsygedol*, (A Eulogy for William Fychan, Corsygedol), Arthur is mentioned, in likeness to William Fychan, as *gŵr a'i feirddion ger ei fyrddau* (a man with his poets at his table):

Croen hwrdd ar ei fwrdd i feirddion – lle caid
 Cadarn ddysgedigion
 Fel Arthur a'i awduron
 A'u grym oddeutu'r Ford Gron.
 Gŵr a'i feirddion ger ei fyrddau,
 Mawr ei drysor, mawr ei drasau;
 Gŵr ar bob gŵr, gorau – ei fod,
 Un sy barod nos a borau.²⁵⁷

A ram's skin [i.e. manuscript] on his table for bards where one found
 Strong learned men
 Like Arthur and his powerful men
 And their strength around the Round Table.
 A man and his bards by his tables,
 Great is his treasure, great is his lineage;

²⁵⁵ Jones, Nerys Ann (2019) "Arthurian References in Early Welsh Poetry" in Lloyd-Morgan, Ceridwen and Poppe, Eric (eds.) *The Arthurian Legend in Celtic Literatures and Traditions* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 15-34.

²⁵⁶ Gwyn Lewis, Llŷr (2019) "Arthurian Tradition in Modern Welsh Literature," *The Arthurian Legend*. 245-259. 255.

²⁵⁷ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 17-18.

A man of men, the best,
One ready day and night.

Praising lords and kings for their poetic patronage, as in the above example – often in the *awdl* meter – was common in bardic poetry of the medieval period and Rhys Jones uses this motif in his own poem:

Aml i'w fyrddau mae mil o feirddion,
Myrdd o groyw seigiau, myrdd gwresogion;
Pwns, medd a bragod diwaelodion
A chwrw a biroedd, gwinoedd gwynion;
A llais clau tannau tynion, – mêl fwyniant, [...] ²⁵⁸

Often at his tables are a thousand poets,
a myriad of fresh dishes, a myriad of rich dishes
punch, mead and bottomless bragget
and beer and ales, white wines;
and the swift voice of tight strings, honeyed pleasure, [...]

The emphasis on providing for poets – “often at his tables are a thousand poets” – and sustaining them with “punch, mead, and bottomless bragget / and beer and ales, white wines” is particularly reminiscent of the *Gododdin* in which Aneirin eulogizes the fallen heroes of the Battle of Catraeth and praises the ruler Mynyddog Mwynfawr for providing the warriors with a year’s feasting on mead in his halls before launching the campaign.

It is common in poetry of the *Cynfeirdd* and *Gogynfeirdd* to praise lords and kings as patrons of poetry and Arthur is perhaps the most respected king of them all. This allusion gives high praise indeed to William Fychan. Morris’s poem also alludes to Dafydd ap Gwilym (c.1315/1320–c.1350/1370), a leading poet of the *cywyddwyr*, whom he names “our Welch Ovid” in his collection *Tlysau yr Hen Oesoedd*. He states that the subject of the eulogy, William Fychan, is an *ail Gwilym* (second Gwilym):

Doniau ar ŵr, ni 'dwaenwn – ail Gwilym,
Galwai arna' 'n dalgrwn;
Yn llonwych ni ddarllenwn

²⁵⁸ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 59-61.

Yr hen lyfr â'r croen hyfr hwn.
 Cywydd cae awen, a bod yn llawen,
 Yn deirllith darllen ar ben y bwrdd.
 Awdlau clyrnau clod, hen ddifyr ddefod,
 Ac yno diod o'r gwirod gwrdd.
 Englyn dehonglyd, cân fwyn y Cyn-fyd,
 Ac yno dwedyd, gwin a dadwrdd.²⁵⁹

Talents of a man, we recognize a second Gwilym,
 he would call on me directly;
 cheerfully we read
 this old manuscript book with the goatskin cover.
 A *cywydd* which is the adornment of the muse, and being merry,
 earnestly? [=i.e. threefold?] reading [it] on the tabletop.
 Odes of praise, an old amusing ritual,
 and there is a drink of the powerful liquor.
 Interpreting an *englyn*, sweet song of the Ancient world,
 and then deliberating, wine and hubbub.

This reference, though seemingly praising William Fychan's poetry, is in fact praise of Fychan's reputation as a lover among women. Dafydd ap Gwilym was known to have had several mistresses and some of his poems are explicitly erotic (thinking specially of *Cywydd y Gal*, [A *Cywydd* to the Penis]). Lewis Morris also composed a poem to William Fychan's mistress, Sarah.

Dafydd ap Gwilym is well-known for the use of the literary motif of *llatai* (love messenger). Dafydd, according to Helen Fulton, appropriates God's creations to the advantage of the lover, acknowledging "the natural beauty and divine function of individual aspects of the countryside, while at the same time diverting them towards a more earthly purpose."²⁶⁰ In Dafydd's poetry he exhorts, amongst other things, the lark, the seagull, the thrush, the wind, and the deer to carry love messages to his chosen ladies. In *YGwynt* (the wind) Dafydd tries to capture the element and send it to his lover, Morfudd. Although the

²⁵⁹ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 17-8.

²⁶⁰ Fulton, Helen (1989), "Popular Tradition in Dafydd's Love Poetry" in Fulton, *Dafydd ap Gwilym and the European Context*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 145-185, 165.

convention of *llatai* comes to the fore in *Cywyddwyr* poetry, it is likely that its inception took place among *Beirdd y Tywysogion*. For instance, Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr sends a horse as a love messenger to Efa, daughter of Madog ap Maredudd in *Rhieingerdd Efa ferch Madog mab Maredudd*, (A Poem in Praise of Efa daughter of Madog son of Maredudd).²⁶¹ In the following poem by Goronwy Owen *Annerch Wiliam Elias*, (Greeting William Elias), Owen sends his poem as a *llatai* to his subject, William Elias:²⁶²

Y BARD

Dos, fy nghân, at fardd annwyl;
(O byddi gwan na bydd gŵyl.)
Bydd gofus, baid ei gyfarch,
Dywed dy bwyll, a dod barch.

THE POET

Go, my song, to a dear poet;
(If you are weak don't be bashful.)
Be mindful, venture to greet him,
Speak your mind, and give respect.

The abstract notion of a song is the *llatai* here, that Owen sends to “venture to greet him [Elias], a “dear poet.”

In 1789 Edward Williams published his first set of forgeries amid the texts in *Barddoniaeth Dafydd ab Gwilym*, (“The Poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym”). The volume is, primarily, a collection of the work of Dafydd ap Gwilym himself, but it also included a staggering number of poems “found” by Williams, and later edited by Owen Jones and William Owen Pughe. William Owen Pughe writes in the introduction:

“in his love poems, our Bard [Dafydd ap Gwilym] delighted most in the agency of the animal creation—numerous are his dialogues with birds and beasts, and even the finny tribe are employed on his love errands.—These compositions are so peculiarly attractive, that most of the succeeding poets of Wales have taken them as a model: and this forms the most prominent

²⁶¹ Jones, Nerys Ann and Parry Owen, Ann (eds.) (1991), *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr I*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 55-75.

²⁶² Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd*. 86-7.

feature in the poetry of that country, in which it differs from that of other nations.”²⁶³

According to Pughe, “most of the succeeding poets of Wales have taken them [*llatai*] as a model,” stating that it forms the prominent feature of Welsh poetry. Dafydd does send natural elements to profess his love for subjects, but Williams goes a step further to send the abstract notion of the summer, to another abstract subject: the county of Morganwg. Williams was intent on advancing the reputation of Morganwg – the county from which he hailed – and South Wales, claiming Dafydd ap Gwilym for Morganwg, even though he came from Ceredigion. According to Cathryn Charnell-White, Williams’s own forgeries in the appendix to *Barddoniaeth Dafydd ap Gwilym* were “only the first stage in Iolo’s [Williams’s] appropriation of Dafydd as a Glamorgan man,” and essentially, Williams conferred authority on himself as one of the last surviving bards by claiming his own descent from an illegitimate child of Dafydd ap Gwilym and Morfydd (Dafydd’s mistress).²⁶⁴

Dafydd ap Gwilym has two poems to the summer: *Yr Haf*, (The summer) and *Mawl i’r Haf*, (Praise to the Summer), but in neither does he exhort the season to carry a message.²⁶⁵ The following is an excerpt from Edward Williams’s *Gyrru’r Haf i Annerch Morgannwg*, (Sending the Summer to Greet Morgannwg):

Clyw fi, haf, o chaf i'm chwant
Yn gennad di'n d'ogoniant,
Hed drosof i dir Eryllt
O berfedd gwlad Wynedd wyllt.
Gyr onis boch i'm goror,
Anwyla' man yn ael môr.
F'annerchion yn dirion dwg

²⁶³ Jones, Owen and Pughe, William Owen (eds.) (1789) *Barddoniaeth Dafydd ap Gwilym: O Grynhoed Owen Jones, a William Owen*. (London: H. Baldwin). xxvii.

²⁶⁴ Charnell-White (2007), *Bardic Circles*. 107.

²⁶⁵ Find these at: <https://dafyddapgwilym.net/eng/3win.php> [accessed: 04/06/2023].

Ugeinwaith i Forgannwg.²⁶⁶

Hear me, summer, if my desire to have you,
is realized, in your glory, fly on my part to the land of Esyllt
from the heartland of wild Gwynedd.
Drive until you are at my border,
most dear place at the edge of the sea.
Take my addresses tenderly
twenty times to Morgannwg.

“Esyllt” is the Welsh form of Isolt, a character in the Arthurian tale, Tristan and Isolt.

Hereby, Williams strengthens Morganwg’s claim to ancient Welsh literary figures and exhorting summer to fly “from the heartland of Gwynedd” shows his tendency to view Gwynedd as backwards and barbarous.

One important series of texts in *The Myvyrian Archaiology* is *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, (The Triads of the Island of Britain). Robert Vaughan’s manuscript, *Y Diarhebbion Camberäec*, (The Welsh-language Proverbs), compiled around 1652, was the ultimate source for the first series of triads published in the *Myvyrian Archaiology* and the only surviving copy, kept in the library of Richard Morris (an antiquarian and brother to Lewis Morris), was the copy used by the editors. The *Myvyrian Archaiology* published three series of triads; the first was obtained from the transcripts of Robert Vaughan’s manuscript which had been made previously by the Morris brothers and Evan Evans; the second was found in *Llyfr Coch Hergest*, (The Red Book of Hergest); and the third has no true manuscript origin aside from that in Edward Williams’s own creative hand. In this third series, around two thirds of the triads were based on the triads in the first series, albeit expanded in length and content, but another third is thought to be of Williams’s own fabrication. As a caveat to this, however, some have recently been found to be authentic, so it is dangerous to consider all as simply made up with no basis.

²⁶⁶ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 209-11.

Williams's *Triads* dealt with the remote early history of the Welsh under their leader Hu Gadarn (a character of his imagination) before they had even come to Britain. Perhaps the impetus for this was that the *Triads*, in Rachel Bromwich's words, "look back upon the essential and still ideal sovereign unity of Britain, and upon the violation of this unity by successive waves of invaders."²⁶⁷ This suited Williams's agenda of proving Welsh literary legitimacy; in his mind they were memorials in memory of remarkable events that took place among the Ancient Britons. He strongly emphasized the oral nature of transmission of the *Triads*, and he places particular value on oral records in general. As Rachel Bromwich explains:

Through the time-honored framework of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, he expressed the ideas which he shared with many of his contemporaries about liberty and democratic government and constitutional monarchy, laying emphasis always upon the arts of peace – which he asserts had been fully developed among the Cymry in the remote Golden Age which he postulated for them in their prehistoric past – as was apparent alike in their agriculture, their incipient legal and social systems, and in their poetry.²⁶⁸

Williams used the *Triads*, accordingly, to remind the Welsh and English of Wales's illustrious, peaceful past; a past that is still remembered to have been recorded long before the successive waves of immigration from the continent.

Williams stresses the importance of oral transmission. However, in reaction to the Ossianic controversy and the lack of manuscript evidence from Macpherson, he stated that he found his genuine and forged triads in a manuscript written in 1601 by Thomas Jones of Tregaron (Twm Siôn Cati). Updating the triadic form in the following poem, *Hymn i Siôr y Crinwas*, ("A hymn to George the Miser"), Williams expresses his republicanism and hatred of King George III:

²⁶⁷ Bromwich (2014), "*Trioedd Ynys Prydain*." 5.

²⁶⁸ Bromwich (2014), "*Trioedd Ynys Prydain*." 31.

Tri phrif ddinistrydd atgas:
Tân gwyllt yn fflamau gwynias,
Gwynt mawr cynddeiriog ar y môr,
A'r cythraul, Siôr y Crinwas [...] ²⁶⁹

The three chief vile destroyers are:
a wild fire whose flames are White-hot,
a great, angry wind at sea,
and the devil, George the Miser [...] ²⁷⁰

More on Edward Williams's views of the monarchy and French Revolution will be found in Chapter Four.

Ymrysonau (poetic debates) were an important expression of bardic identity as the contention between poets was an indicator of poetic circles. *Ymrysonau* often held similar levels of vitriol to Edward Williams's poem above as poets vied against one another. This form of poetry was common from the earliest manuscripts and, according to Ann Matonis, they were "traditionally Celtic" in their use of *cynganedd* and form. ²⁷¹ The purpose of the *ymryson* was to establish the poet's authority and superiority over their poetic opponent.

Rhys Jones here answers Dafydd ap Iago in verse in *Ateb Dafydd ab Iago*, (Answering Dafydd ap Iago). In this example, however, Rhys Jones praises his recipient's superiority over his own abilities:

Haeru wnest o ryw hir nwyf
(Breuddwydiaist) mai bardd ydwyf;
Y'm gelwir, nod gwir, nid gau,
Rhimynwr yn rhai mannau.
Breuddwyd wyf, yn lle bardd daeth
Enynnu awen annoeth;
Eilio cân yn ael ceunant,
Ofer, o bleser i blant;
Tan ruo tynnu'r awen,

²⁶⁹ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 148-153.

²⁷⁰ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 148-153.

²⁷¹ Matonis, Ann (1982), "Barddoneg a rhai ymrysonau barddol Cymraeg yr oesoedd diweddar", *Ysgrifau Beiriadol* XII. 157-200. 159.

Gwyllt ffull, gerfydd gwallt ei phen.
Tydi yw'r bardd hardd ei hwyl,
Gwiw ei ddwned, gwedd annwyl.
Mae ynot, walch, mwyna' tôn,
Mawr ddoniau myrdd o ddynion.²⁷²

You asserted in some great passion
(you dreamed) that I am a poet;
I am called, a true not false mark/aim
a rhymester in some places.
I am a dream, instead of a wise poet,
Kindling an unwise muse;
composing a poem at the edge of a ravine,
Futile, of pleasure to children;
roaring, drawing the muse,
quick and wild, by the hair of her head.
You are the poet with a beautiful temper,
apt in grammar, dear image.
It's in you, hero, the sweetest tune,
great talents of a myriad men.

Jones claims that his own bestowal of the *awen* (muse) is “futile” and a “pleasure to children” only.

The *Awen*

Awen is a curious word to explain but, essentially, it is a word meaning “poetic inspiration, muse, poetic genius or gift, Muse (in classical myth), also figurative.”²⁷³ This sense of poetic gift, given by God, was an important factor in poetry up to and including the eighteenth century. The same Proto-Celtic and Indo-European root connects the word *awen* with Old Irish *aí* (< **auī*) “poetic art” and Welsh *awel* “breeze,” and is also related to the English word *wind*. As in the Taliesin legend, first textually attested in a sixteenth-century manuscript in Elis Gruffydd’s hand but claimed to have been well-known in Wales in both written versions and lore much earlier, the *awen* has the etymological meaning of the “breathing

²⁷² Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 70-3.

²⁷³ See: Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru s.y. *awen*.

in” of a gift of genius bestowed by a supernatural source. Taliesin, for instance, receives the *awen* and becomes a great, omniscient poet by touching the contents of *Pair Ceridwen*, (Ceridwen’s Cauldron), and Ceridwen was seen as the source of all *awen*. The earliest extant reference to the *awen* probably dates to the sixth century CE and is written as the personal epithet of Talhaern Tat Aguen, (Modern Welsh: Talhaearn Tad Awen), (Talhaearn, the father of the muse). This is found in the Memorandum of the five poets in the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*, attributed to Nennius. *Beirdd y Tywysogion* poets fully believed that the bestowal of the *awen* set them apart from lesser poets and Llywarch ap Llywelyn (Prydydd y Moch; fl. 1173-1220) in a poem to Gruffudd ap Cynan ab Owain Gruffydd claims that God, bestowed the *awen* onto him, like the contents of *Pair Ceridwen*²⁷⁴:

Duw Ddofydd dy-m-rhydd rheiddun awen—bêr
Fal o bair Cyridfen.

The Lord God gives to me the gift of sweet inspiration
As from the cauldron of Cyridfen [Ceridwen].²⁷⁵

As Marged Haycock also explains, “the *awen* is imagined as a liquid force, flowing from the depths, ebbing and boiling; poetic utterance is a “river” or a “torrent”.”²⁷⁶

The *awen* as the birthplace of all creative inspiration is present in the eighteenth-century poem *Molawd i Syr Watkin Williams Wynn*, (Praise of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn) by Thomas Edwards (Twm o'r Nant; 1738–1810):

Ac awen a ddeil gywir
Goffadwriaeth helaeth hir.
Goffadwriaeth helaeth hir.

²⁷⁴ All information in this paragraph stems from: Parry Owen, Ann (2006), “Awen” in Koch, John T. *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1*, (ABC CLIO). 148-9.

²⁷⁵ Elin M. Jones, *Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn* 99. Quoted in: Parry Owen, Ann (2006), “Awen” in Koch, John T. *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1*, (ABC CLIO). 148-9.

²⁷⁶ Haycock, Marged (2008), “Literary Criticism in Welsh before c. 1300” in Minnis, Alastair, Johnson, Ian (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. II: The Middle Ages*. 333-344. 336.

Cyn y byd, cân heb oedi,
 Awen oedd lle'r hanoedd hi.
 A chwedi'r byd, gwynfyd gwên,
 Tragwydd y trig awen.
 Sant, sant, addoliant ddilyth,
 Cawn ei bod yn canu byth.²⁷⁷

The muse holds a true
 Long [and] extensive memorial/memory.
 A long [and] extensive memorial/memory.
 Before the world, a song without delay,
 The muse was at its source.
 And after the world, the joy of a smile,
 The muse will live forever.
 Saint, saint, unfailing worship,
 We will find that she sings forever.

Thomas states that the *awen* was present before the “source” of the world, being a “saint” of “unfailing worship” and will “sing forever.” The religiosity of the bestowal of *awen* is also found in the following poem by David Thomas, *Awdl ar Ryddid*, (An *Awdl* on Liberty), written during the French Revolution, working almost as a *llatai* messenger sent to the abstract notion of liberty:

Arddwyrea'r ddewr awen
 A chyrch hyd yn entrych nen;
 Dyrcha fawl bywiawl o ben, - yn ddilid,
 I ryddid, wawr addien²⁷⁸

Arise, brave muse
 and go to the highest heaven;
 and from that height, worthily raise spirited praise
 to liberty, splendid dawn.²⁷⁹

Thomas's *awen* can arise and “go to the highest heaven.”

²⁷⁷ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 160-3.

²⁷⁸ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 230-249.

²⁷⁹ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 230-249.

Notions of the poetic muse are abundant in Welsh poetry of the eighteenth century and, it was a belief that the *awen* was God-given.²⁸⁰ We again find this notion in the following eulogy of Thomas Edwards to Goronwy Owen, *Awdl Farwnad Goronwy Owen*, (An Elegy for Goronwy Owen):

Llong oedd e garie'n gywren – bell drysor
 O bwyll draserch awen,
 Gronwy graff, heulbraff hwyllbren,
 A llyw'r beirdd, llew aur ei ben.
 Cadd awen burwen yn berwi, – a than
 Doethineb Duw ynddi;
 Seraffin roes er hoffi
 Farworyn i'w hennyn hi.²⁸¹

He was a ship that skillfully carried a distant treasure
 Of the passionate wisdom of the awen,
 Sagacious Gronwy, a strong and sturdy mast,
 And the leader of poets, his head a golden lion.
 He kept a pure muse boiling, and the fire of
 God's wisdom in it;
 Seraphim gave in order to like
 An ember to kindle it [=the muse].

Apparently, “sagacious” Goronwy kept the “pure muse boiling” – a reference perhaps to *Pair Ceridwen* containing the notion, as Marged Haycock quoted above, that the *awen* acts as a liquid force – and was a “leader of poets.” The Seraphim were heavenly beings originating in Ancient Judaism, playing a later role in Christianity. Tradition places the Seraphim as the highest rank in Christian angelology. As with Llywarch ap Llywelyn’s poem, quoted above, Thomas Edwards considers the *awen* to be a God-given gift.

²⁸⁰ Jenkins, Ffion Llywelyn (2000), “Celticism and Pre-Romanticism: Evan Evans” in Jarvis, Branwen (ed.) *A Guide to Welsh Literature c.1700-188, Volume IV*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 104-126. 107.

²⁸¹ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 167-70.

Expressions of the Welsh *awen* became conflated with the Classical Muse in the eighteenth century as is seen in the following poem by Goronwy Owen, *Bonedd a Chyneddfau'r Awen*, (The Nobility and qualities of the Muse):

Bu gan Homer gerddber gynt
 Awenyddau, naw oeddynt,
 A gwiw res o dduwiesau
 Tebyg i'w tad, iawn had Iau.
 Eu hachau o ganau gynt,
 Breuddwydion y beirdd ydynt.
 Un awen a adwen i,
 Da oedd, a phorth Duw iddi.²⁸²

Homer had a melodious song in days of yore
 Muses, they were nine,
 and an excellent row of goddesses
 similar to their father, true seed of Jupiter.
 Their lineage from former songs,
 they are the poets' dreams.
 I know one muse,
 she was good, and may God bless her.

The word “Awenyddau” (Muses) personifies the *awen* as it had not been before the eighteenth century and, in line with Owen’s Augustan tastes, he replaces the Welsh *awen* with the Muses of Jupiter’s “seed” – Muses who inspired Homer. Again, in Lewis Morris’s *Cywydd y Rhew a’r Eira*, (Poem of Frost and Snow), the *awen* is personified as the Classical Muse:

Gwell y rhed awen ledpai
 Wres Mehefin a min Mai²⁸³

Better the awkward Muse might,
 Run in May or June’s sunlight²⁸⁴

²⁸² Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 97-100.

²⁸³ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 20-23.

²⁸⁴ Conran (trans.) (2003), *Welsh Verse*. 229-30.

This personification assumes that the *awen* can “run” as the characterization of the Classical Muse can.

The Bardic Order

As the notion of the *awen* persisted into the eighteenth century, so did the interest in the Welsh Bardic Order. As the Welsh vied for recognition of their indigenous culture, they used a connection to the bardic order to display their unbroken line of succession from the druids. The authentic Bardic Order (as opposed to Edward William’s imaginatively reconstructed version discussed below) existed in Wales for over a thousand years and the poets were highly trained craftsmen. Poets were as equally recognized in the law books as the doctor, the smith, and the cleric but it is unclear to what period the categories of offices belonged. The offices were divided, in descending order of prestige into the *Pencerdd* (Chief of Song), an officer of the king’s domain with his own chair at court; the *Bardd Teulu* (Household Poet) or (Poet of the Retinue), one of the twenty-four officers of the king’s court; and the *Cerddor* (Minstrel) who came under the jurisdiction of the *pencerdd*, responsible for entertainment with jests and satire.²⁸⁵ It is also unclear to what extent this categorization reflects actual practices. The aims of the Bardic Order were to maintain the prestige of the craft and encourage excellence, discouraging unskilled poets from usurping the livelihood of the professional poets. To this end, the canonical twenty-four strict meters were enforced.

Versions of the Bardic Order and professional patronage of poets continued until approximately 1650. The gradual loss of patronage, the dissolution of the monasteries (a source of generous patronage), the rise in popularity of the free meters and challenge to the traditional meters all contributed to the Bardic Order’s demise. The widespread effects of

²⁸⁵ This information comes from Lewis, Ceri W. (2006), “Bardic Order” in Koch, John T. *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1*, (ABC CLIO). 176-183.

inflation in England and Wales in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries also eroded the income of the gentry and the Welsh language gradually became degraded in the eyes of a rapidly English-speaking gentry. It can also be said that the failure of the sixteenth-century bards to respond to changes in poetic culture led to disaster.²⁸⁶ The last bard of note in the seventeenth century, Edward Dafydd of Margam, Glamorgan, died around 1678. Dafydd had been regularly patronized by the Bassetts of Beaupre and was one of the last poets in Glamorgan to live by his craft. It was Edward Williams, however, who elevated Dafydd's status from, as Cathryn Charnell-White says, a "nonentity into a leading bardic personality."²⁸⁷

Patronage was an important establishment in the Middle Ages up to the last patronized bards in the seventeenth century. Ifor Hael (Ifor the Generous) was the name given by Dafydd ap Gwilym to his patron Ifor ap Llywelyn, Bassaleg, Monmouth. Evan Evans uses the backdrop of the desolation of Ifor Hael's court as an opportunity to lament the death of the Bardic Order and professional patronage in *Englynion i Lys Ifor Haul*, (*Englynion* to the Hall of Ifor Hael), which he composed following a visit to the ruins in the company of Edward Williams:

Llys Ifor Haul, gwael yw'r gwedd – yn garnau
Mewn gwerni mae'n gorwedd;
Drain ac ysgall mall a'i medd,
Mieri lle bu mawredd.²⁸⁸

A poor sight is the hall of Ifor Hael – mounds
In a swamp are lying,
Thorn and blasted thistle own it,

²⁸⁶ See: Lewis, Ceri W. (1997), "The Content of Poetry and the Crisis in the Bardic Tradition," in Jarman, A. O. H., Hughes, Gwilym Rees, and Johnson, Dafydd (eds.), *A Guide to Welsh Literature, 1282-c.1550*, (Cardiff). 72-94.

²⁸⁷ Charnell-White (ed.) (2007), "Documents: The History of the Bards", *Bardic Circles*. 99.

²⁸⁸ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 145.

Bramble where was greatness.²⁸⁹

According to Evans, Ifor Hael's court – "bramble where once was greatness" – represents the degradation of the Bardic Order in Wales. Again, Evans writes of the last poets' demise in *Annerch Siôn Gruffydd, Cefnamwlch*, (Addressing Siôn Gruffydd, Cefnamwlch) and conflates the death of the Bardic Order with the death of Welsh culture at large:

Aeth y beirdd doeth heb urddas,
Aeth iawn gerdd weithian yn gas,
A heddiw ni wahoddir
Lên o daw i Lëyn dir.
Aeth wlad y Cymry'n noeth lom,
Daeth oerni'n adwyth arnom.
Aeth ar goll yr iaith a'r gân
A dyddiau'r henwyr diddan.²⁹⁰

The wise poets have become without dignity,
True poetry has now become hated,
And today
Literature is not invited to come to Lëyn's land.
The land of the Welsh has become bare,
Coldness has become an affliction upon us.
The language and poetry has become lost
And the days of amusing old men.

The "land of the Welsh has become bare" as "the language and poetry has become lost."

In the poem *Hymn i Siôr y Crinwas*, (A hymn to George the Miser), discussed earlier in this chapter for appropriating the triadic form, Edward Williams again displays his ire towards George III for disrupting the Bardic Order:

Pa frenin mawr ei urddas
A roir ar gerddi barddas?
Pa fleiddgi bin ar dir a môr?
Pa walch, ond Siôr y Crinwas?

Gwilied pob un fo'n medru
Bras lunio gair o ganu;
Dan angau'n boen, mae Siôr yn gw'ardd

²⁸⁹ Conran (trans.) (2003), *Welsh Verse*. 238.

²⁹⁰ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 122-6.

Pob eilun bardd yng Nghymru.²⁹¹

Which king of great dignity
is sung about in bardic poems?
Which angry wolf-hound on land and sea?
Which rogue, but George the Miser?

Beware all you who are able
to put together a few lines of poetry;
under pain of death, George prohibits
every sort of poet in Wales.²⁹²

According to Williams, the miserly “wolfhound” George III “prohibits every sort of poet in Wales” “under pain of death.” Rhys Jones also laments the death of professional poetry in *Marwnad Siôn Rhydderch*, (An Elegy for Siôn Rhydderch):

I feirdd Cred farw ddoe eu crair.
Fe aeth doethder, wiwber wedd, [...] ²⁹³

The treasure of the poets of Christendom died yesterday.
wisdom, excellently sweet in aspect, is gone [...]

He bemoans the fact that the “treasure” and “wisdom” of Christendom’s poets has died out.

Interest in the Welsh Bardic Order peaked in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially in Edward Williams’s case and, subsequently, through the *Gorsedd* that Williams created. The *Gorsedd* was and is a society of Welsh-language poets, writers, and musicians who contributed to the Welsh language and public life in Wales. It was and is responsible for the ceremonies held at the *Eisteddfod*. There is some historical basis for the *Gorsedd* but the iteration we see today was revived and invented by Edward Williams in 1792. Edward Williams had planned to publish A “History of the Bards,” which unfortunately never materialized but we do have several manuscripts of his which contain

²⁹¹ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 148-153.

²⁹² Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 148-153.

²⁹³ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 65-7.

sketches and notes for the proposed volume. According to his categorization, which diverges enormously from that of the medieval law books, the bards were ordered thus:

The genuine succession of the Welsh bards is not entirely extinct yet, tho' nearly so, and will be entirely so in a few years in all probability. They call themselves *Beirdd Ynys Prydain*, The Bards of Britain. There are five orders of them.

First. *Prifardd Ynys Prydain*, Chief Bards of Britain, or National Chief Bards. Their number must be no more than three.

Secondly. *Prifeirdd Gwlad a Chfoeth*, Chief Provincial Bards. The number twenty four.

Thirdly. *Dryw* or *Derwydd*, plural *Drywiaid* or *Derwyddon*, Druids. The term signifies very wise or very learned. They were the highest order, properly speaking, for the national and Provincial Chief Bards were of this order, only elected from amongst them to offices. The number of Druids unlimited.

Fourthly. *Bardd Trwydded*, Bard of Discipline or Graduated Disciple. One that had passed the lowest stage of probation.

Fifthly. *Ofydd*. The word signifies man of genius. It is an honorary degree, bestowed without the delay of discipline on a man who was found to possess very extraordinary abilities and knowledge. He however could not be admitted a Druid without undergoing the probationary discipline, which was a very long; sometimes ten or fifteen years, and possibly, more. It could no be shorter than three years.²⁹⁴

Of course, Williams's version of the Bardic Order had to include *derwyddon* (druids), the "highest order," proving the unbroken line of poetic succession from pre-history.

Edward Williams, self-professed descendant of the druidic Bardic Order and Dafydd ap Gwilym, updates the idea of patronage in *Y Gwir Degwch (III)*, (The True Beauty [III]). In his view, poets, although no longer patronized by the gentry, can still belong to their subjects and in this excerpt, he writes that his "patronage" comes from his wife, Margaret/Peggy for whom he often used the name Euron Wen as an alias in a series of love poems:

Prydydd llon i Euron wyf
A'i didwyll gariad ydwyf,
A dyfal i'm cerdd dafod,
Wych loer, y cenais ei chlod.
Pe medrwn mynnwn i 'myd

²⁹⁴ Charnell-White (ed.) (2007), "Documents: The History of the Bards", *Bardic Circles*. 173.

Yn rhullfalch fawl yr hollfyd; [...]²⁹⁵

I am a Euron's happy poet/*prydydd*
and I am her honest love,
and diligent at my poetic art,
splendid moon, whose praise I sang.
If I could, I would proudly insist that my world/life [=i.e. Euron],
has the praise of the whole world; [...]

Williams imagines Margaret (Euron Wen) as his patron, as he is “her happy *prydydd*,”

“diligent at [his] poetic art” to sing her praise.

Female Bardic Identity

The flurry of antiquarian interest in Welsh-language material, as evidenced above, was a male-dominated endeavor. As I have shown, bardic identity for these male poets included the concept that modern poets descended from the druids, Celts, and ancient Britons, peoples whose ethnic origins had their naissance in Galfridian, Gomic, or Babelian myth. Proving connection to this illustrious line of poets was important and they strove to confirm their allegiance through use of strict-meter and archaic forms and themes. Knowledge (real or imagined in the case of Edward Williams) of the Bardic Order was also present. This begs the question: how did female poets express their bardic identity? Marged Dafydd (also known as Margaret Davies; c. 1700–85?) was recognized by Lewis Morris as being one of two female collectors and transcribers of manuscripts in eighteenth-century Wales – the other being Angharad James (1677–1749). Lewis Morris named her, along with Angharad, in the list of people who were in possession of collections of Welsh-language manuscript, NLW 604D.²⁹⁶ With 25 or more surviving poems, all published posthumously, Dafydd's body

²⁹⁵ Lake (ed.) (1993), *Blodeugerdd Barddas*. 200-1.

²⁹⁶ In terms of manuscripts, Marged wrote the following: Cwrtmawr 128 (“Llyfr Ofergerddi Margaret Davies”/ “Marged Dafydd's Book of Worthless Poems”) (1738), Cwrtmawr 129 (c.1760-2), Cwrtmawr 448 (1725), Minor Dep. 56 (1738), Card. 4.156 (1736-7) and Add. 14996 part (ii). She also made contributions or additions to: Cwrtmawr 27, Cwrtmawr 244, Minor Dep. 1206 (c.1767-8), NLW 1746,

of work is the second largest we have before 1800 by a woman (the largest belonging to the medieval woman poet Gwerful Mechain). She not only wrote poetry but showed an allegiance to manuscript culture, collecting and transcribing manuscripts – an unusual activity for women of the period. The subjects of these were women’s poetry from the Middle Ages to the modern day with some manuscripts preserving work by Welsh-language women poets that would otherwise be lost to us today.²⁹⁷ Dafydd’s manuscripts are also the only known source for one of the *englynion* written by Gwerful Mechain. It seems that Dafydd was attempting, in her own way, to present the women’s canon in Welsh as was being done parallel in men’s poetry by antiquarians such as Evan Evans in his *Specimens*.

Dafydd was aware of native strict- and free-meter poetic traditions and wrote most poems in the strict meters, on which she tutored Michael Pritchard. This was not without insecurity, however, and in her poem *I Ofyn Pymtheg Bai Cerdd gan Ferch Ieuan o Sir Feirionnydd*, (To Ask Fifteen Poetic Faults from a Young Girl from Merionethshire) – an *ymryson* (poetic conversation) – she apologizes:

Un wyf i o awen feth
Mawr ei brys mewn dyrys daith
A thebyga-i bara byth,
Di a bardyni, o mynni maeth.²⁹⁸

I am one of failing [poetic] inspiration,
whose haste is great on a difficult journey,
and, I believe, will last forever,
you will pardon me if you desire sustenance.

NLW 5241, NLW 12732, Pen. 244, Pen. 245 (1730), Pen. 327iii, Aber. UL D/M7/22, Card. 2.201, Card. 2.202 and Card. 5.30 (c.1737). Huws, Daniel (2022), *A Repertory of Welsh Manuscripts and Scribes, c.800-c.1800, Vol. II* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales and University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies). 18.

²⁹⁷ Namely in ‘Llyfr Ofergerddi Margaret Davies’ (Cwrtmawr 128A): Frances Parry and Margaret Rowland whose work appears in NLW Cwrtmawr 128, 129, 483, and 485; and Jane James whose work appears in NLW, Dep. 56B, 391.

²⁹⁸ Charnell-White, Cathryn (ed.) (2005), *Beirdd Ceridwen: Blodeugerdd Barddas o Ganu Menywod hyd tua 1800*. (Llandybïe: Barddas) 180-183.

Apologias – “you will pardon me if you desire sustenance” – are not uncommon amongst amateur and free-meter poets of the eighteenth century in general but for female poets we see them often, signaling the depths of the poets’ insecurities.²⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Marged Dafydd was versed in *cynghanedd*, as shown in the opening line of a *marwnad*, (elegy) to her mother, *Cwyn Colled ar ô lei Mam, 1726*, (A Lament on Losing her Mother, 1726): “Och! Gan hiraeth, maith methiant,” (Oh! With longing, a great calamity)³⁰⁰ Women of this period, including Dafydd, mostly saw their poetry as an private pursuit – indeed, none of Dafydd’s poems were published during her lifetime – and perhaps this is the impetus behind Dafydd’s *apologia* as she feared making her work public through correspondence.

Dafydd was aware, as many of the male poets were earlier in this chapter, of the medieval poetic convention of *llatai* (messenger poems) – popular with Dafydd ap Gwilym but also employed by and for the female poet Gwerful Mechain – in which an animal or natural element is sent to convey love to the recipient. In Dafydd’s case she sends a swallow to her friend as a display of platonic love – a poem with a question-marked title – *Cywydd i Anfon y Wennol yn Gennad i Annerch Merch Ifanc oddi wrth ei Ffrindiau Fain*, (A *Cywydd* to send the Swallow as a Messenger to Greet a Young Woman from her Vain Friends):

Y wennol fain, annwyl fach,
Luniaidd, pa un lanach?
Yn d’wyneb, y mae donie,
Aderyn wyd, Duw o’r ne’.³⁰¹

The dear small, graceful, slender swallow,
who is more pure?
In your face there are talents,

²⁹⁹ For more on female poetic authority, see: Charnell-White, Cathryn A. (2009), ““Megis Archoll yw ’Ngholled”: Marwnadau Mamau i’w plant” *Ysgrifau Beirniadol XXVIII*, 21-46, 30-31.

³⁰⁰ Charnell-White (ed.) (2005), *Beirdd Ceridwen*. 171-175.

³⁰¹ Charnell-White (ed.) (2005), *Beirdd Ceridwen*. 188-191.

you are the bird of the God from heaven.

There is also a reference in Dafydd's body of work to the character from Welsh legend, Ceridwen (discussed earlier in the section on the *awen*). Marged Dafydd writes in this untitled *englyn* to Michael Prichard:

At brydydd â'r awenydd wen, - dywedaf
Nid ydwyf i'w adwen;
Ond credaf mai bardd Caridwen,
Sŵn y pair sydd yn y pen.³⁰²

To the bard who has the bright muse, I say [that]
I do not recognize it:
but I believe that [you] are Ceridwen's poet
[and] the sound of [her] cauldron is in [your] head.

Pair Ceridwen (Ceridwen's Cauldron) again makes an appearance, and she bestows great praise on Prichard by saying that he possesses the *awen* and is in fact "Ceridwen's poet." It is striking that while poets such as Lewis Morris, Evan Evans, Edward Williams, and Rhys Jones were looking towards Aneirin and Taliesin as the fathers of their cherished poetic tradition and lineage, Dafydd looks to Ceridwen and sees the birthplace of all poetic inspiration.

Marged Dafydd can, I would argue, even by her own trepidation, be considered a bardic poet as she demonstrates competency in and knowledge of the ancient traditions of bardic poetry, valued and worked to preserve the poetic tradition of women, and worked within a bardic sphere as evidenced by her correspondence with Michael Prichard, among others. Cathryn Charnell-White agrees that she can be said to have been "actively participating in the literary renaissance in the eighteenth century."³⁰³ It is clear that a

³⁰² For this poem, see: "Nodiadau" in Charnell-White (ed.), *Beirdd Ceridwen*, 390.

³⁰³ Gellir dweud ei bod yn gyfrannog o fwrlwm y dadeni llenyddol yn y ddeunawfed ganrif. Charnell-White (ed.) (2005), *Beirdd Ceridwen*, 390.

bardic identity was important to Dafydd as she mourns, in letters to Dafydd Jones of Trefriw and Michael Prichard, that people in her area – Trawsfynedd, North Wales – were ignorant of the bardic tradition.³⁰⁴ I suggest, even, that Marged Dafydd displays a similar sense of Celto-Britishness to Lewis Morris, Evan Evans, Edward Williams, and Rhys Jones in that she situates her *oeuvre* within a bardic past and present, albeit on a much smaller local and Welsh level, rather than a British or European one.

Marged Dafydd was writing during and earlier than my chosen period, but I have selected her, despite her earlier writings, as she is the only female poet of the eighteenth century that seems to display a sense of bardic identity that was the same as the men's version. Rebecca Williams, on the other hand (fl.1810–1820) inhabited the same space of time as Edward Williams. I have chosen Rebecca Williams for this reason and because there are five poems attributed to her – an unusual number as most female poets of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, if named, have only one or two compositions to their name. The question is: why do we see nothing of bardic identity in William's work when we know that it was possible, in Marged Dafydd's case at least, for women to attach themselves to it? One would expect poets of Rebecca Williams time – the time after Edward Williams eisteddfodic revolution – to be aware of bardism. Little is known of Rebecca Williams and the details we can glean come from her ballads themselves. She published her songs in ballad pamphlets and wrote a Christmas *plygain* carol. She writes of a murder in her area, the sinking of a ship in the Menai Straits and a eulogy to a local man, Sir Robert Williams. What links her poetry is a keen and deep sense of religiosity and the only sense of obvious Britishness we find is that she is a supporter of the

³⁰⁴ See: Charnell-White (ed.) (2005), *Beirdd Ceridwen*.

Hanoverian succession in a common, formulaic passage in *Cân Newydd, sef Cwynfan*

Prydain am yr Arian, (A New Song, which Mourns Britain for Money):

Duw fendithio George y trydydd
Pen llywydd ae ei lle,
A'i holl frenhinol deulu
Yn gyfan gydag ef;
A'i swyddogion dano
Hyd y gwaela' ddyn,
Amen, mai felly byddo
Yn nyfodiad Mab y Dyn.³⁰⁵

“God bless George the third
Head ruler of this place,
And his whole royal family
With him;
And his officials under him
To the poorest man,
Amen, that so
He be in the advent of God's Son.

This excerpt lacks anything but formula and is reminiscent of the references to “God Save the King” which come in Chapter Four.

All of Williams's poems are in free meters. Although this discounts her from associating with bardic poetry, there is no doubt that her recounts of local narrative and eulogistic writing, strict-meter or not, perform a poetic function within her community. The same was also true of Thomas Edwards and Jonathan Hughes – poets discussed throughout this dissertation. The Christmas *plygain* would have been written for local performance. Surely, Williams's poetry operated to some degree at a local level, but it does nothing to intentionally situate itself within a wider historical Welsh or British tradition like Marged Dafydd's work did. According to Nia Powell, “there is no evidence of a further flowering of

³⁰⁵ Charnell-White (ed.) (2005), *Beirdd Ceridwen*. 326-333.

the strict meters amongst women during the eighteenth century” after Dafydd’s death.³⁰⁶ We do find examples of *englynion* and *cywyddau* – specific historical poetic meters – in several places but none of them display the quality or innovativeness of Dafydd’s work and certainly there is none in Rebecca Williams’s hand. Of course, bardic poets like Edward Williams and Lewis Morris also composed in free meter but they make pains to connect themselves to the bardic tradition by also knowing and composing in the older *cynhanedd* meters – meters which they held in much higher esteem. To examine the loss of bardic identity in women’s poetry in greater detail, I will trace what we do see in terms of Celto-British identities between the *oeuvres* of Marged Dafydd and Rebecca Williams by looking at poetry by other female poets of the eighteenth century.

Firstly, between the work of Dafydd and Rebecca Williams, we have Lowri Parry (fl. 1738-60). The following excerpt, *Ymddiddan rhwng gŵr ifanc a’i gariad ar “Fentra Gwen,”* (A conversation between a young man and his love on the tune “Fentra Gwen”) shows an engagement with the British military and a personification of Britannia (much like in the poems discussed in Chapter One) and Parry makes sure to label the king as England’s monarch alone:

Mi â’n f’union dros y dyfnder, yn was i frenin Lloegr,
I rodio i Gibralter, er i ti gael dy bleser, ...³⁰⁷

I will go directly over the deep, a servant to England’s king,
to walk in Gibraltar, for you to have your pleasure.

Later in the same poem we find:

Oni chaech chwi, lliw’r eira, trwy gennad Duw’r gorucha’

³⁰⁶ Powell, Nia W. (2000), “Women and Strict-Meter Poetry in Wales” in Roberts, Michael and Clarke, Simon (eds.) *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press). 145.

³⁰⁷ Charnell-White (ed.) (2005), *Beirdd Ceridwen*. 267-269.

I nofio'r dyfnion donnau ffarwél i dir Britannia³⁰⁸

Unless I get you, the color of snow, through God's consent,
I will swim the deep waves, farewell to Britannia

Secondly, we find harsh judgements on those who have left Britain to find riches in

America, as in Mrs Parry from Plas yn y Faerdre's (fl. c.1777) words in *Carol plygen i'w ganu ar "Susanna,"* (A *plygain* carol to be sung on the tune "Susanna"):

Mae yn America dinistrio, o achos pechod, Duw sy'n blino,
Nyni sy'n tynny llid i'n pobol, am ein bod ni'n byw'n annuwiol³⁰⁹

In America there is destruction as a result of sin; God is tired,
we attract wrath for our people, because of our ungodly lives

And, again, in a poem by Mary Rhys from Penygualan, Llanbryn-mair (c. 1747–1842), *Carol haf gan Mary Rhys, 1825*, (A summer carol by Mary Rhys, 1825), she accuses those "fleeing to America" of being "[un]godly people.":

Rhai'n ffoi i wledydd health
Cael cywaeth yn America.
Petaem ni yn byw yn dduwiolion,
Danfone Duw i'n fendithion
Ar diroedd Brydain dirion,
A ffrwythlon hinon ha'.³¹⁰

Some are fleeing to plentiful lands
To find riches in America.
If we were to live as godly people,
God would send blessings to us,
on Britain's pleasant land,
And a fair, fruitful summer.

It is common, when referring to military pursuits or overseas wars, to refer to Britain rather than the smaller nations or identities and this mirrors Rosemary Sweet's argument

³⁰⁸ Charnell-White (ed.) (2005), *Beirdd Ceridwen*. 267-269.

³⁰⁹ Charnell-White (ed.) (2005), *Beirdd Ceridwen*. 298-301.

³¹⁰ Charnell-White (ed.) (2005), *Beirdd Ceridwen*. 277-279.

that identifying as a (modern) Briton works only on a political and rhetorical level.³¹¹ This is also what we have seen in the work of poets in Chapter One and Chapter Four.

This is all the engagement with Britishness, Celto-Britishness, or bardic identity that I can find in Welsh women's poetry between or around Marged Dafydd and Rebecca Williams. The reason for the move away from bardic identity is not easy to pinpoint but as Nia Powell suggests: "Changes in behavioral expectations in polite society, in England as much as in Wales, encouraged an amusing frivolity in women and this may have discouraged serious literary endeavor on their part."³¹² Marged Dafydd had the luxury of being financially independent and able to devote herself to the study of poetry and the collection of manuscripts. Alongside this, we have the growth in bardic identity as seen in Edward Williams's work and activity which excluded rather than included women because of the male-dominated circles it burgeoned within, although personally, Williams was not against corresponding with female poets.³¹³ Marged Dafydd had a connection to manuscript culture – a culture within which great Welsh antiquarians and poets had a hand and she used it to compile books of her own that contained poetry by women. Rebecca Williams, a free-meter poet, however, did not have this connection which almost definitely prevented her from having knowledge of the older bardic traditions and strict meters of male poets, never mind that composed by women. Of course, we also have the general lack of poetic

³¹¹ Sweet, Rosemary (2004), *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, (Hambledon and London: London and New York).

³¹² Powell, Nia (2000), "Women and Strict-Meter Poetry in Wales." 145.

³¹³ See: Charnell-White, Cathryn (2005), "Women and Gender in the Private and Social Relationships of Iolo Morganwg", in Jenkins, G. H. (ed.), *A Rattleskull Genius: The Many Faces of Iolo Morganwg*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press).

education for women which was seen as an endeavor, millennia-old, of unbroken male tradition.

Conclusion

The romantic idea of bardic succession in Wales was druidically based. Thomas Gray's *The Bard*, Edward Williams' English-facing work, and the eighteenth-century anthology tradition in Wales perpetuated this notion that Celtic poetry had a prestigious druidic lineage, directly inspired by the *awen*. These Celtic poets were seen as primitive and uncorrupted, bearded, robed, and harp-wielding, and could feel nature in a way that the modern poet could not. Accordingly, the eighteenth-century Welsh poet was portrayed as the inheritor of this faultless poetic gift. The druids feature heavily in Welsh poetry of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, not least in Edward Williams' work, and their stronghold was said to have been in Anglesey. Many eighteenth-century Welsh poets (particularly those from the north) felt a sense of ownership over the druids because of this and they boasted their claim to British indigeneity.

While the native Welsh-language version of bardic identity shared much with the Celto-British one, several features make the Welsh version more nuanced and intricate. As is discussed at length in Chapter One, the Welsh considered their claim to the island of Britain to be without question and the Galfridian Brutus myth popularized this notion in English eyes as well as Welsh ones. In the eighteenth century, however, Paul-Yves Pezron and Edward Lhuyd took a different tack to validate Welsh ancestry through Biblical origins, thereby endorsing Wales's legitimacy as a nation with ancient roots. The idea put forward was that the Celts and therefore the Welsh were descendants of Gomer, son of Japhet and grandson of Noah in the Old Testament. Again, the adherence to the Babelian myth that Welsh was one of the languages ordained at the Tower of Babel strengthened

this claim. There are several excerpts in this chapter that profess belief in these origin stories.

The symbiotic relationship between antiquarianism and strict-meter poetry in eighteenth-century Wales meant that allusions to medieval poetry and history were common in the poetry of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, providing the proof Welsh poets needed to claim that their illustrious poetic history and lineage was longer and more ancient than England's, and independent of it too. Knowledge of the earliest Welsh poetry – Taliesin, Aneirin, Merlin, and Llywarch Hen, for instance – is professed in the poetry and references to early literary figures abound. The poets also make use of older forms such as *cynganedd*, *awdlau*, and *englynion*, and medieval themes such as *llatai* or triads. The God-given *awen* also features heavily in Welsh-language poetry of the eighteenth century and, presumably due to Augustan and Neo-Classical tastes, the *awen* became personified – as was the Classical Muse – where it had not been before. Belief in the reality of the *awen* bestowing poetic genius upon poets exists in several poems. Wales's druidic history meant that interest in the Bardic Order burgeoned in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as it proved the unbroken succession of poetic output and continuation of the *awen*. The Bardic Order was in its prime in the high Middle Ages and continued until around 1650 and several poets mourn its demise.

Poetry of this period was overwhelmingly male-dominated and male-orientated, and we have little surviving poetry from women poets. That which does survive does not seem to center itself around bardic identity, presumably because female composers felt excluded from the poetic world. Marged Dafydd, however, can be thought of as a bardic poet as she traced the women's cannon back to Gwerful Mechain and Ceridwen, composed in strict meters, and worked within a defined poetic sphere. The reason for departure is perhaps that, unlike in medieval and early modern poetry, the free meters became more popular,

and, with little training, female poets felt that this was the best medium for their poetry. Poets like Rebecca Williams, for instance, published solely in ballad pamphlets and, importantly, she did not have access to the circle of bardic poets and antiquarians or training that the self-financing Marged Dafydd had. There are many examples of, as Cathryn Charnell-White, earlier cited, terms “amphibious” male poets in the eighteenth century – Edward Williams, Johnathan Hughes, and Thomas Edwards all wrote in both strict and free meters, for example – but it was their ability to compose in the strict meters and trace the male poetic tradition that set them apart as peculiarly bardic. On the other hand, while we can build a case for there existing a women’s canon, there is no female poetic tradition.

CHAPTER THREE

Gaelic Bardic Identity

This third chapter explores the question of whether there is a Celto-British bardic identity present in eighteenth-century Scottish Gaelic poetry, the understanding of which is based on the definition in the previous chapter which examines the phenomenon in Wales and England. What is seen in the Welsh poetry is the invocation of an ancient and traditional bardic order of professional poets within which male (and female, in the case of Marged Dafydd) poets positioned themselves. There is also a preoccupation with Gomic (Biblical) lineage, and an enthusiasm for an unbroken poetic tradition dating back to the druids, allusions to medieval poetry and an effort to recover the oldest material. The work of James Macpherson (Seumas MacMhuirich or Seumas Mac a' Phearsain; 1736–1796) most closely mirrors the Welsh and English obsession with druidry and antiquity with his adaptations of Gaelic heroic verse, placing the Gaelic literary tradition within a Celtic one. The Gaelic poetic material in this chapter, however, suggests that poets operated outside of Macpherson's paradigm rather than within it, preferring to follow in the footsteps of their existing tradition and resisting the eighteenth-century taste for druidry.

That is not to say that there are no elements of Celto-British identity present in Gaelic poetry, but they are not as explicitly stated as in the Welsh material. The Ossianic influence on Gaelic poetry should not be overstated although it is essential to explore in any discussion of Gaelic bardic identity of the eighteenth century. This chapter begins with a look into what bardic identity meant in a pre-Culloden sense, using Culloden as the cutoff. Culloden and its repercussions effectively ended the last vestiges of heroic society in the Gàidhealtachd and with this panegyric had to adapt and change. An examination of how Macpherson's Ossianic works affected Gaelic literature will follow this. I have chosen to

sandwich this section between the pre-Culloden and post-Culloden discussions on bardic identity as Macpherson epitomized the literature of the first Celtic Revival which took place in the mid-eighteenth century. This will allow me to see whether Macpherson influenced what came after him. In the following bardic identity post-Culloden section, I will explore the adaptations of panegyric in a post-heroic Gàidhealtachd, investigate what allusions we have to the poetry of the past, and examine Gaelic origin tales.³¹⁴

Bardic Identity pre-Culloden

Bardic Poetry

The poetry I am examining in this chapter is vernacular Gaelic poetry. It is important, however, to also understand material from Classic Gaelic (or, bardic) poetry because imagery and tropes, particularly those pertaining to panegyric, were shared between the traditions. Professional (bardic) poetry was composed in Classical Gaelic, a conservationist, literary register composed by trained *filidhean*. Classical Gaelic poetry in Scotland survived into the eighteenth century with the work of Niall MacMhuirich. Niall MacMhuirich (c. 1637–1726) was one of the last poets fully competent in Classical Gaelic verse, writing into the beginning of the eighteenth century. MacMhuirich came from a family of celebrated Classical Gaelic poets, known as Clann MhicMhuirich or Clann Mhuirich in Gaelic – anglicized as “Clan Currie” – who practiced bardic poetry between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. Niall MacMhuirich also composed two poems in vernacular Gaelic,

³¹⁴ Poetry that had its performance during work or religious poetry will not be incorporated into this study. Instead, the study will focus on literary artistic expression.

showing that he did and had to belong to two worlds, bearing witness to the 1715 Jacobite Uprising in both Classical Gaelic and vernacular Gaelic.³¹⁵

Unfortunately, by the time we have any contemporary sources reporting on medieval and early modern Classical Gaelic poets and their work, the world to which they belonged – with its established systems of poetic training and patronage, best represented in Scotland in the seventeenth century – was disintegrating.³¹⁶ By the late seventeenth century, few Scottish Gaelic poets read or composed in Classical Gaelic. Even in the late medieval period, it is unlikely that many, apart from the principal clans, were wealthy enough to patronize *filidhean* (the highest grade of professional poet).³¹⁷ What we can do is glean information from later Gaelic bardic poetry and the system as it stood in Ireland. The fragments which are extant from Scotland, and historical evidence also help to create an incomplete figure of the bardic poet in the Gàidhealtachd.³¹⁸ *Bàrd* has two meanings: the first is a medieval classification of poet that was less highly trained than the *filidhean* – they were further divided into *saorbhaird* and *daorbhaird* with each of these being subdivided. The second meaning is simply equivalent to “poet,” and this is what we find in the eighteenth century when we call Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir a *bàrd*, for example. In

³¹⁵ Thomson, Derick (1977), *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.). 115. 155.

³¹⁶ McLeod, Wilson (2004), “Scotland and Ireland: The Vision of Bardic Poetry” in *Divided Gaels: Gaelic Cultural Identities in Scotland and Ireland 1200-1650*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press). 108-193. 108.

³¹⁷ Stiùbhart, Domhnall Uilleam (2021), “Adaptation, Integration, and Renewal: Scottish Gaelic Literature, 1650-1750”, in Davis, Leith and Sorensen, Janet (eds.) *International Companion to Scottish Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century*, (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International). 24-40. 29.

³¹⁸ Thomson (1974), *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*. 19.

this generic classification, a *bàrd* “covers a large range and variety of poets, songsters, and other entertainers,” as John MacInnes explains.³¹⁹

The Classical Gaelic language bridged the Gàidhealtachd and Ireland, being mutually understandable. Bardic poetry is highly stylized, working within a fixed set of images and subject matters, being constrained by a complex network of institutional relationships. The language, imagery, and metrics are also deliberately conservative and the *filidhean* mostly composed in technically exacting meters, characterized by a fixed number of syllables per line with variation in stress. This combined means that Classical Gaelic poetry was “not always readily conducive to political and cultural interpretation,” as Wilson McLeod writes, with direct political and cultural commentary being rare.³²⁰ More of this cultural and political commentary is seen in the vernacular poetry (i.e. the Gaelic specific to the Scotland), which was composed alongside Classical Gaelic poetry extant (we can likely assume a lot of loss) with increasing frequency into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (although only three vernacular poems are arguably dateable to before 1500, and another sixteen or so from the sixteenth century).³²¹

As Derick Thomson has calculated, the surviving corpus of Classical Gaelic poetry from Scotland (excluding heroic ballads and the poetry of the “bridging period” of the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries) numbers around one hundred and sixty items.³²² Some of this is in fragmentary quatrains and some in poems of over two hundred lines with the bulk

³¹⁹ MacInnes, John (1978), “The Panegyric Code in Gaelic Poetry and its Historical Background” in *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 50. 435–498. 445.

³²⁰ McLeod (2004), “Scotland and Ireland.” 110.

³²¹ McLeod (2004), “Scotland and Ireland.” 112-13.

³²² Thomson (1977), *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*. 20.

belonging to between around 1450 to 1650 and more than half of it – a total of eighty-six items – belonging to between 1450 and 1550. Around forty poems can be ascribed to poets working in the seventeenth century and a handful, not exceeding ten poems, to the post-1700 period. The corpus in Ireland is much larger. Panegyric was integral to the tradition of Classical Gaelic poetry and lies in between the extremes of chronicle and lyric.³²³ Approximately one thousand Irish-centered Classical Gaelic poems of a panegyric nature survive. The number of those referring to Scotland or by Irish poets on behalf of Scottish patrons, or those composed by Scottish poets, however, is significantly lower, consisting of under a hundred poems. Moreover, this material is unevenly spread in terms of times of composition.³²⁴ Only around ten Classical Gaelic poems in this strict panegyric sense can be ascribed to the post-1700 period in Scotland.

Bardic poetry was pan-Gaelic, but should, as Wilson MacLeod points out “be understood as an essentially Irish phenomenon, conceived and developed in Ireland on Irish terms.”³²⁵ Scottish Gaeldom became attached to this in a loose and ambiguous fashion. Poems composed by Irish poets almost never mention Scotland unless – as in the case of composing for Scottish patrons – there is specific reason for doing so. Scottish Gaelic poets, on the other hand, are indebted to Ireland for the bardic tradition – the basic idiom of Classical Gaelic poetry being Irish – and many of the names listed in genealogical passages are Irish ones. This esteem of Ireland is present in both Classical and vernacular Scottish poetry.³²⁶ Most bardic descriptions of Scotland are based on that of Ireland, consisting of

³²³ Thomson (1977), *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*. 27.

³²⁴ McLeod (2004), “Scotland and Ireland.” 108.

³²⁵ McLeod (2004), “Scotland and Ireland.” 114.

³²⁶ McLeod (2004), “Scotland and Ireland.” 156.

formulaic combinations of adjectives and images, lacking any specificity or highlighting any difference. Instead, their purpose is conventional panegyric, rather than accurate description.³²⁷

The clan system – comprising of notional kin-groups and affiliated families, focused on the clan chief for personal protection and administration justice – began to wither in the seventeenth century. Gradually, chiefs and clan elites came increasingly to manage estates commercially, treating previous clanspeople as rent-paying tenants. This was due to a number of factors: state pressure, elite indebtedness, wider commercial opportunities, cattle-droving, sheep farming, kelping, and fishing, and raising British army regiments. By the eighteenth century, the Gàidhealtachd was incorporated more fully into the cultural ambit of Britain and the British Empire.³²⁸ Upheavals in Ireland during the 1640s³²⁹ led to the final demise of the bardic schools of Classical Gaelic learning.³³⁰ Although, as noted above, Classical Gaelic poetry in the Gàidhealtachd continued in a diminished form until the 1750s.

The Vernacular Tradition and the Role of the Poet

³²⁷ McLeod (2004), “Scotland and Ireland.” 144.

³²⁸ Stiùbhart (2021), “Adaptation, Integration, and Renewal.” 25.

³²⁹ See: Barnard, Toby (2015), “State, Politics, and Society in Ireland, 1641-1662,” in Braddick, Michael J. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press). 379-394; Redmond, Joan (2021), “Religion, Civility and the “British” of Ireland in the 1641 Irish Rebellion,” *Irish Historical Studies* 45 (167). 1-21; Ó Siochrú, Micheál, Ohlmeyer, Janes (eds.) (2013), *Ireland, 1641: Contexts and Reactions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

³³⁰ The Catholic Rebellion of 1641 was an uprising aiming to end anti-Catholic discrimination, threatening the expanding power of the Cromwellian English Parliament. Quashing the uprising, most land owned by Irish Catholics was given to British settlers and the remaining Catholic landowners were displaced to Connacht. Additionally, Catholics were prohibited from holding office in parliament, living in towns, and marrying Protestants.

The high age of vernacular panegyric poetry was *circa* 1600–1745, abruptly ending – in the traditional manner of praising chiefs – with the defeat at Culloden. Traditional panegyric – the praising of said characters – in Classical Gaelic poetry has several characteristics, the first of which is praise of social roles (including warriorship) following on with praise of hunting prowess, praise of the household, praise of personal beauty, and kennings (metaphorical compound words or phrases).³³¹ According to John MacInnes, the panegyric style in Classical Gaelic poetry which can extend to love poetry and nature poetry “reflects an attitude to world” and this attitude seeped into Gaelic vernacular poetry.³³²

A common metaphor specific to the panegyric tradition is the imagining of the clan chief at the helm of a ship because, as MacInnes states, “the ship, with its crew and complement of warriors, is in reality a microcosm of society in its martial, and even convivial, aspect.”³³³ This is because men from all echelons of society (sailors, warriors, captains) created a temporary Gàidhealtachd on sea, informed by their societal values as seafaring people. In *ochtfhoclach* meter – a meter which is attested from the twelfth century – *A’ chnò Samhna*, (The Halloween Nut), by Eachann Bacach (fl. 1650) is an instance of vernacular poetry employing this trope to lament the death of Sir Lachlan Maclean in April 1648:

Ge bu lìonmhor ort frasachd
 Chum thu dìreach do mhacaomh
 Do bhrèid rìmhach gun sracadh;
 Cha do dhiobair ceann-slaite thu,
 On ’s e Crìosda b’fhear-beairt dhuit:
 Is sin an Tì a leig leat an taod-sgòid.

³³¹ For more detail, see: MacInnes, John (1978), “The Panegyric Code in Gaelic Poetry and its Historical Background” in *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 50. 435–498.

³³² MacInnes, John (1978), “The Panegyric Code in Gaelic Poetry.” 436.

³³³ MacInnes (1978), “The Panegyric Code.” 459.

A m'hic, ma ghlacas tu an stiùir so,
Cha bu fhathas gun dùthchas
Dhuit bhith grathann air t'urnaidh;
Cuir d'a caitheamh an Triùir oirre;
Cuir an t-Athair an tùs oirre,
Biodh am Mac 'na fhear-iùil oirre
An Spiorad naomh 'ga giùlan gu nòs.³³⁴

Though frequent rain's gusting
You kept for your son upright
Your fair sail untattered;
Your yard-man stood by you
Since Christ was your gear-man
He gave the sheet-rope in your hand.

If you take, son, this rudder,
Your traditional chiefship
Will incline you to prayer;
Let the Trinity crew her;
Put the Father at first there,
Let the Son be the helmsman,
Holy Ghost take her in to the roads.³³⁵

Eachann Bacach, using Biblical imagery to strengthen his panegyric, hopes that Maclean's "traditional chiefship" will allow him to take the "rudder" and lead himself into "prayer."

Similarly, the image of a great man as an apple tree is a common kenning in both Early Modern Gaelic and vernacular Gaelic panegyric and appears in *Cumha Ghriogair MhicGriogair Ghlinn Sreith*, (Lament for MacGriogair of Glenstrae), by Mòr Chaimbeul (Marion Campbell; late sixteenth century). In this poem, Chaimbeul laments her husband

³³⁴ MacInnes (1978), "The Panegyric Code." 459.

³³⁵ Thomson (1977), *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*. 132.

who was executed by aristocrats – her kinsmen – by surprise and through deceit.³³⁶ The poem was written not long after 7 April 1570:³³⁷

Chuir iad a cheann air ploc daraich,
'S dhòirt iad 'fhuil mu làr;
Nam biodh agamsa an-sin cupan,
Dh'òlainn dhith mo shàth.

...
'S ged tha mi gun ùbhlán agam
'S ùbhlán uil' aig càch,
Sann tha m' ubhal cùbhraidh grinn
'S cùl a chinn ri làr.³³⁸

They placed his head on a block of oak,
And spilt his blood on the ground;
Had I but had a cup there
I'd have drunk of it my fill

...
Though I am without apples
And all the rest have apples
My apple, fragrant and shapely,
Has the back of his head on the ground.³³⁹

Chaimbeul speaks of her husband as her apple. These two excerpts show how panegyric tropes were not confined only to Classical Gaelic poetry and that they could be molded to fit vernacular poetry as well. Such imagery was such an institution in Gaelic that it transcended traditions. That is not to say that it was the same in both and the metaphor of a ship is a good example of vernacular expansion of the panegyric code.

³³⁶ For a detailed look into the history behind the poem, see: MacGregor, Martin (ed.) (1999), "Surely one of the Greatest Poems ever Made in Britain": The Lament for Griogair Ruadh MacGregor of Glen Strae and its Historical Background," in Cowan, E. J. and Gifford, D. (eds.) *The Polar Twins*, (Edinburgh: John Donald). 114-153.

³³⁷ MacGregor, Martin (ed.) (1999), "Surely one of the Greatest Poems ever Made in Britain": The Lament for Griogair Ruadh MacGregor of Glen Strae and its Historical Background," in Cowan, E. J. and Gifford, D. (eds.) *The Polar Twins*, (Edinburgh: John Donald). 114-153. 115.

³³⁸ MacGregor (ed.) (1999), "Surely one of the Greatest Poems ever Made in Britain." 142-143.

³³⁹ MacGregor (ed.) (1999), "Surely one of the Greatest Poems ever Made in Britain." 142-143.

According to Liesbeth van Hulle, poets (usually, but not always men; see the discussion of women’s bardic poetry below) – second only to the chief – could “publicly rebuke members of the upper echelons of Gaelic society, fuel rebellious sentiments and steer them in a certain direction, or conversely, they could pacify a region about to revolt.”³⁴⁰ These poets had power. One of the responsibilities of the Gaelic poet was to keep records of Gaelic history and interpret current events and this is what we find in *Là Inbhir Lochaidh*, (The Battle of Inverlochy) by Iain Lom (John MacDonald; c. 1624–c. 1710). The poem is composed in the first person as Lom was present at the battle – a battle fought in 1645 during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms:

Dhìrich mi moch maduinn Dòmhnach
 Gu bràigh caisteil Inbhir Lòchaidh;
 Chunnaic mi ’n t-arm dol an òrdugh,
 ’S bha buaidh a’ bhlàir le Clann Dòmhnach.

...
 ’b’aithne dhuibh-se ’n Gairtean Odhar?
 ’S math a bha e air a thodhar;
 Chan innear chaorach no ghobhar,
 Ach fuil Dhuibhneach an déidh reodhadh.³⁴¹

I climbed early on Sunday morning
 To the brae above Inverlochy Castle;
 I saw the army taking up position,
 And victory lay with Clan Donald

...
 You remember the place called the Tawny Field?
 It got a fine does of manure;
 Not the dung of sheep or goats,
 But Campbell blood well congealed.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Van Hulle, Liesbeth (2022), “Anns Gach Gnìomh a nì duine ’s mór urram nan Gàidheal: Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir as the Voice of the Gael’s Military Masculinity in the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 42. 20-54. 23-24.

³⁴¹ MacKenzie, Anne (ed.) (1964), *Orain Iain Luim*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society). 20.

³⁴² Thomson (ed.) (1977), *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry*. 120-122.

Iain Lom was resident poet to the MacDonalds of Keppoch and his hatred of the Campbells is clear as he viciously dehumanizes their dead as “manure.” The MacDonalds of Keppoch and the Campbells had been at loggerheads for centuries at this point and anti-Campbell sentiment is present in a lot of Gaelic poetry across the ages.³⁴³ This type of political poem formed a staple of clan propaganda. Iain Lom also composed poems of the Battle of Killiecrankie (Gaelic: *Coille Chreithnich*) and the accession of William of Orange and Mary. The last poem ascribed to him comments on the 1707 Scotland-England Act of Union indicating that he could focus in different rings of concentric loyalties – (micro-)nation, (macro-)nation, and state – depending on his aim.

Eulogizing important members of the clan (panegyric) was an important job for the poet and it continued to be popular in the vernacular poetry of the seventeenth century. A list of clan allies is present in a eulogy to Domhnall a’ Chogaidh (Sir Donald of Sleat) by Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh (Mary MacLeod; c. 1625–c. 1705), a poet belonging to the MacLeod clan of Dunvegan:

Tha deagh ghàrd air th’ ainmealachd:
Do chàirdean an t-Iarla Earra-Ghàidhealach,
MacCoinich is Morair Tairbeirt leat,
Fir Bhealach is Bhràghaid-Albann leat,
Gleann Garadh ’s fir nan Garbh-chrìoch leat
'S an Colla-s' – cha bu chearbach e –

MacAoidh nam bratach meanmnach leat,
Sìol Airt is Chuinn is Charmaig leat,
Na Collanan cìosal armailteach
Len loingis luchdmhoir gheal-bhrèidich
Air fairge 's iad a' seòladh [...]³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Gillies, William (1976-1978), “Some Aspects of Campbell History”, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 50. 256-295. 269-273.

³⁴⁴ Ó Baoill, Colm (ed.) (2014), *Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh: Song-Maker of Skye and Berneray*, (Edinburgh: Scottish gaelic Texts Society). 162.

Your fame is well guarded:
Your friends the Earl of Argyll,
MacKenzie and Viscount Tarbat,
The men of Taymouth and Breadalbane,
Gleangarry, and the men of the Rough Bounds with you
And this Colla [of Keppoch] – a skillful man –
And the Camerons from Lochy.

Mackay of the high-spirited banners with you,
The seed of Art and Conn and Cormac with you,
The descendants of Colla with their vast tributes,
With their heavy-laden white-sailed fleet
Voyaging over the ocean [...] ³⁴⁵

This poem has a long list of clan allies from around Scotland, showing the level of respect to be paid to Sir Donald, and the strength of his just rule. Màiri follows the typical Gaelic panegyric pattern so closely that Anne Frater says it is indistinguishable as a woman's composition. ³⁴⁶

During the Early Modern period in Gaelic and into the eighteenth century, women had no say in political matters – their fortunes were entirely dependent on men. This, however, did not stop them from commenting on political matters as is found in a poem by Mairearad nighean Lachlainn:

Na Leathanaich bu phriseal iad,
Bu mhoralach nan inntinn iad;
'N diugh crom-cheannach's ann chitear iad,
'S e teann lagh a thug strìochdadh asd';
Is maìrg a bha cho dileas riutha
'Riamh do rìgh no 'phrionnsa.
Gu'm b' fhearr 'bhith cealgach, innleachdach.
Mar 'bha ur naimhdean miorunach;
'S e 'dh'fhagadh laidir, lionmhor sibh.
'S e 'dheanadh gnothach ciimteach dhuibh,
A bhith cho faicleach, crìonnta

³⁴⁵ Ó Baoill (ed.) (2014), *Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh*. 162.

³⁴⁶ Frater, Anne (2022), "Gaelic Poetry and Song" in Norquay, Glenda (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Women's Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press). 22-34. 23.

Is gu'm b' fhiach leibh a bhith 'tionndadh.³⁴⁷

The Macleans were greatly valued.
Their minds were dignified;
Now they are seen with bowed heads.
It was a hard law which caused them to submit;
Never were any as faithful as them
To King or to prince.
It would be better to be deceitful and cunning
As your malicious enemies were;
That would leave you strong and numerous.
It would make things certain for you
If you were so wary and cautious
That treachery was worth your while.³⁴⁸

This poem recounts the downfall of the Macleans of Duart in Mull, laying blame on the Campbells, who profited from the loyalty of the Macleans to the Stuart kings.³⁴⁹

The Role of Women.

Interspersed in my discussion of panegyric is poetry by women, despite how unusual such poems were, to highlight the fact that women *were* composing poetry. Women were expected to keen the dead and compose laments, according to Anne Frater, as well as compose lullabies, work-songs, and love-songs, although they were not generally expected to compose political panegyric which was reserved for trained male poets.³⁵⁰

Mòr Chaimbeul's lament, *Griogal Cridhe*, quoted in the previous section, is notable for being influenced by vernacular folksong but, metrically, the poem has a syllabic basis that indicates that she – although not bound by it – had access to the Classical Gaelic

³⁴⁷ Maclean Sinclair, *Na Baird Leathanach* (2 vols, Charlottetown, 1898-1900). i. 187.

³⁴⁸ Frater, Anne (trans.) (1999), "Women of the Gàidhealtachd and their Songs to 1750," in Ewan, Elizabeth, Meikle Maureen M. (eds.), *Women in Scotland: c. 1100-c. 1750* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press). 67-83. 70.

³⁴⁹ Frater, Anne (1999), "Women of the Gàidhealtachd." 70.

³⁵⁰ Frater, Anne (1999), "Women of the Gàidhealtachd." 69.

tradition.³⁵¹ In Martin MacGregor’s words, this could be because of formal tutelage – Chaimbeul was an aristocrat – as the education of the children of the Gaelic elite was one function of the learned orders, perhaps particularly the poets. This tutelage continued into the seventeenth century with, for example, the poetic training of Catrìona, daughter of Domhnall Gorm Óg, chief of the MacDonalds of Sleat who was taught by Cathal MacMhuirich.³⁵² Apparently, in Mòr Chaimbeul’s case, it would have been impossible to avoid Classical poetry as her father’s court was a “magnet for poets.”³⁵³ Martin MacGregor brings attention to the fact that for female poets of the late medieval Gàidhealtachd, the classical tradition became a “means to personal utterance,” utterances which sometimes responded to the dilemmas confronting women specifically.³⁵⁴ We saw this in *Griogal Cridhe*, Mòr’s response to the death of her husband which included tropes only found in female lament such as drinking the blood of the beloved.

Mòr Chaimbeul’s lament was appropriate to her gender. More formal panegyric compositions by women – some of which I quoted in the previous section – were not always readily accepted within contemporary Gaelic society. All four female poets – Sileas na Ceapaich (Cicely MacDonald; *c.* 1660–*c.* 1729), Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh (Mary MacLeod; *c.* 1625–*c.* 1705), Maighread nighean Lachlainn (born *c.* 1660), and “An Aigeannach” (known only by this nickname) (fl. *c.* 1718) – discussed by Colm Ó Baoill in his article ““Neither Out nor In”: Scottish Gaelic Women Poets 1650-1750” (2004), for instance,

³⁵¹ MacGregor, Martin (ed.) (1999), “Surely one of the Greatest Poems ever Made in Britain”: The Lament for Griogair Ruadh MacGregor of Glen Strae and its Historical Background,” in Cowan, E. J. and Gifford, D. (eds.) *The Polar Twins*, (Edinburgh: John Donald). 114-153. 137.

³⁵² MacGregor (ed.) (1999), “Surely one of the Greatest Poems ever Made in Britain.” 137.

³⁵³ MacGregor (ed.) (1999), “Surely one of the Greatest Poems ever Made in Britain.” 137.

³⁵⁴ MacGregor (ed.) (1999), “Surely one of the Greatest Poems ever Made in Britain.” 138.

are charged with unacceptable sexual behavior and unnatural, or magical powers and were refused full acceptance as poets. Ó Baoill continues that the legendary oral traditions that surrounded these women, both in their lifetime and beyond, show the “profound anxieties within the culture regarding women poets; perhaps, specifically, concerning the legitimacy of women composing serious song about politics and clan.”³⁵⁵ Both Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh and Maighread nighean Lachlainn were both buried face-down – the Norse way to bury a witch.³⁵⁶ Nevertheless, some women such as the aforementioned Mòr Chaimbeul, Sìleas na Ceapaich, Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh and another slightly later poet Mairearad nighean Lachlainn (b. c. 1660), succeeded in breaking the taboo of female authorship. Màiri was even exiled from the household of her patron, Sir Norman MacLean of Berneray for composing panegyric poetry.³⁵⁷ In Anne Frater’s words, “the story of Gaelic-speaking Highland women before 1750 is one of subservience and subjugation but also of rebellion.”³⁵⁸

Female poets in the Gàidhealtachd have had prominence since the beginning of the recorded Gaelic tradition. For instance, the sixteenth-century manuscript collection *The Book of the Dean of Lismore* contains three poems in the medieval anti-courtly love tradition ascribed to a Campbell woman from the fifteenth century. This manuscript presents the earliest evidence we have of distinctly Scottish Gaelic poetry.³⁵⁹ Much more

³⁵⁵ Ó Baoill, Colm (2004), ““Neither Out nor In”: Scottish Gaelic Women Poets 1650-1750” in Dunnigan, Sarah M., Harker, C. Marie, and Newlyn, Evelyn S. (eds.) *Woman and the Feminine in Medieval and Early Modern Scottish Writing*, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan). 136-153. 150.

³⁵⁶ Frater, Anne (2022), “Gaelic Poetry and Song,” *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Women’s Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press). 22-34. 26.

³⁵⁷ Frater, Anne (1999), “Women of the Gàidhealtachd.” 69.

³⁵⁸ Frater, Anne (1999), “Women of the Gàidhealtachd.” 67-83.

³⁵⁹ Ó Baoill, Colm (2004), ““Neither Out nor In.” 137.

poetry by women composers survives in Scotland than it does in Ireland. One possible reason for this is that heroic Gaelic society continued longer in Gaelic Scotland (up to Culloden in 1745) than it did in Gaelic Ireland meaning that Gaelic art forms such as formal praise of leaders were sustained further.³⁶⁰

The eighteenth century is remarkable in that Gaelic women's poetry – in stark opposition to Irish, Scots, or English – found increasing visibility within the manuscript collections that flourished in its latter half. It is also a remarkable century in that women were brought into print with the earliest single-authored anthology by a woman compiled in 1785.³⁶¹ This anthology is *Orain Nuadh Ghaidhealach* ("New Gaelic Songs") by Maraiead Cham'ron (Maighread Chamshron or Margaret Cameron; fl. 1785). Only five male poets – Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair (Alexander MacDonald; 1751), Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir (Duncan Ban Macintyre; 1768), Lachlann MacLachlainn (Lachlan MacLachlan, 1770), Donnchadh Lobhdain (Duncan Lothian, 1780), and Peter Stuart (1783) – preceded her. Unfortunately, however, the reception of *Orain Nuadh Ghaidhealach* was mostly invisible with its first edition described as "exceedingly rare" and its second as "very rare."³⁶²

The most prolific of the early eighteenth century's collectors of Gaelic verse and prose were Rev. Donald McNicol (Domhnall MacNeacail, 1735-1802) who completed a collection in 1755 and also aided Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir in transcribing over 6,000 lines of the non-literate poet's work, Ewen MacDiarmid (Eoghain MacDiarmaid, †1801), James McLagan (Seumas MacLathagain, 1728-1805), Archibald Fletcher, who dictated

³⁶⁰ Ó Baoill, Colm (2004), "Neither Out nor In." 137.

³⁶¹ Mathis, Kate Louise (2021), "Gaelic Women's Poetry," in Leith, David and Sorenson, Janet (eds.) *International Companion to Scottish Gaelic Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century* (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International). 199-219. 199.

³⁶² Mathis (2021), "Gaelic Women's Poetry." 209.

poetry to local scribes in 1750, and Jerome Stone (c.1727-1756) who made his collection around 1755. All these collectors showed interest and scholarly activity before Macpherson's fame and there was clear antiquarian appetite for the collection of Gaelic literature. These collections contained work of named poets from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, as well as a large collection of anonymous songs, in addition to heroic verse. While generally in these collections women's poetry is neither segregated nor subordinated to men's, these types of collections prioritized encomiastic and rhetorical verse above *òrain luaidh* (waulking songs), meaning that there was a preference for the type of poetry men produced.³⁶³ However, the scale of these collections, especially McLagan's, was great and preserved over a hundred poems that employ a female voice, with around a third of these being named as female authors. The best represented in the McLagan collection are Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh and Sìleas na Ceapaich. These two poets also enjoy inclusion in the "Eigg Collection" (a collection which will be discussed in the next section). Although much contemporary poetry was indeed collected, the concept of what was most important and worthy of preservation was, in William Gillies's words, "age and antiquity over recent contemporary times, heroic and martial over agriculture and peasant society, [and] gentlemanly and aristocratic tastes and pursuits over those of the rest."³⁶⁴

What we find in James Macpherson's *Ossian* certainly follows this paradigm: he chooses antiquity over writing about modernity, he chooses the heroic, and he chooses to

³⁶³ Mathis (2021), "Gaelic Women's Poetry." 201.

³⁶⁴ Gillies, William (2010), "Clan Donald bards and scholars," in Munro, Gillian and Cox, Richard V. A. (eds.) *Cànan & Cultar/ Language & Culture: Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig* 4, (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press). 91–108. 93. Some exceptions are discussed by Clancy, Thomas Owen, (2011) "Gaelic Literature and Scottish Romanticism," in Pittock, Murray (ed.) *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press) 47–60.

portray his bards as uncorrupted, upper members of society. Bardic poetry pre-Culloden was tied to Ireland in a way that vernacular poetry was not, and it is striking that the last practitioner of Classical Gaelic verse (Niall MacMhuirich) died just after the Scotland-England Act of Union in 1707 (he died in 1726). This gave room for the vernacular poets to explore a fully Scottish Gaelic identity. It is under these circumstances that Macpherson's *Ossian* was born, and identity is at the forefront of Macpherson's mind.

This next section explores Macpherson's own ideas of bardic identity and how they compare to both the Classical Gaelic one and the Celto-British one. Of course, a look into the controversy surrounding Macpherson's work is necessary to understand the effects that *Ossian* had on literature in Great Britain at the time. The Celto-British version of bardic identity centered itself around the druid and a subsection in druidic lore will follow to assess how far Macpherson subscribes to Celto-British bardic identity. As we saw above, there was an appetite for antiquarian collection pre-Macpherson, but an investigation into how his Ossianic works influenced poetry collection and production is essential for analyzing any poetry that follows in his wake.

***Ossian* and Ideas of Bardic Identity**

The Ossianic productions of James Macpherson placed the formerly despised Gàidhealtachd at the center of sublime existence as a means of exalting the status of the Gaelic language and its culture.³⁶⁵ In Leith Davis's words, Macpherson's Ossianic poems "appear equally as concerned with gaining a wider English-speaking audience's approval as with improving

³⁶⁵ Meek, D.E. (2004) "The sublime Gael: The impact of Macpherson's *Ossian* on literary creativity and cultural perception in Gaelic Scotland," In Gaskill, H. (ed.) *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* (London: Thoemmes Continuum). 40-66. 66.

the Highlanders' self-image."³⁶⁶ Indeed, Macpherson's stated aim was to counteract "the prejudices of the present age against the ancient inhabitants of Britain, who are thought to have been incapable of the generous sentiments to be met in the poems of Ossian."³⁶⁷

Macpherson works within a sentimental frame, placing thoughts and emotions at the forefront of a character's actions and reactions, as opposed to them acting out of reason.

There is some contradiction in the "sentimental epic," however, and Dafydd Moore writes, "sentimental set-pieces are hostile to the confident dynamism and triumphalism of the traditional heroic narrative: faced with the choice between a glorious victory or an opportunity to provoke sympathetic tears, the text [Ossian] engineers the latter."³⁶⁸

As we read in Chapter Two, the explosion of interest in Celticity and sentimentalism in the mid-1700s changed the way Welsh and English poets imagined Britain's indigenous bardic (druidic) culture. Macpherson's work put Scotland at the center of this. The question raised in this section, however, is whether Macpherson shaped or changed the existing idea of bardic identity in Gaelic poetry itself (as opposed to the exported version that English-language readers could access).

The Ossianic Controversy

James Macpherson, born in 1736, grew up in sight of the Ruthven (Gaelic: *Ruadhainn*) barracks, near Kingussie (Gaelic: *Ceann a' Ghiùthsaidh*). Built in 1718, the barracks were erected with the aim to subdue Jacobite Gaels and it was at Ruthven that the Jacobite

³⁶⁶ Davis, Leith (1993), "'Origins of the Spacious': James Macpherson's Ossian and the Forging of the British Empire," *The Eighteenth Century* 34.2. 132-150. 138.

³⁶⁷ Macpherson, James (1760-1765), in Jiriczek, Otto L. (ed.) (1940) *James Macpherson's Ossian 2 Volumes* (Heidelberg). I-VIII.

³⁶⁸ Moore, Dafydd (2000), "Heroic Incoherence in James Macpherson's 'The Poems of Ossian'," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34.1. 43-59. 51

army was disbanded after Culloden in 1746. This environment surely made a deep impression on the bilingual Macpherson as he vied to prove the validity of Gaelic literature in the face of colonial pressure on a depressed culture.³⁶⁹ Macpherson first published his English-language work, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, in 1760. The writing style was musical measured prose. In 1761, he published *Fingal: An Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books, together with Several Other Poems composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal, Translated from the Gaelic Language*. Another subsequent epic poem, *Temora*, followed in 1763, and a collected edition, *The Works of Ossian* was published in 1765. The early publications were adaptations and collations of traditional (Scottish) Gaelic heroic verse that Macpherson had collected or been inspired by, but Macpherson's imagination truly took off in *Temora*.

The popularity of Macpherson's Ossianic works was immense and translation into major European languages began as early as 1762 – fragments were translated into French in this year with the whole corpus following in 1777.³⁷⁰ The authenticity of Macpherson's Ossianic publications, however, was immediately challenged. The legibility of a third-century series of poems accessible to modern readers was too much to believe and the inability (or refusal) of Macpherson to produce any originals was thought to be a tell-tale sign of forgery. Evan Evans (Ieuan Fardd or Ieuan Brydydd Hir; 1731-1788), for example, stated that “the language of their [Scottish] oldest poets, it seems, is still perfectly intelligible, which is by no means our case [in Welsh literature].”³⁷¹ It was also incredible to

³⁶⁹ See: Stafford, Fiona J. (1988), *The Sublime Savage: a Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).

³⁷⁰ Le Tourneur, Pierre (1777), *Ossian, fils de Fingal, barde du troisieme sile: poies galliques*, (A Paris: Chez Musier, Fils, Libraire...).

³⁷¹ Evans, Evan (1764), *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards* (London: R. and J. Dodsley). ii.

many such as Samuel Johnson and David Hume that the oral tradition in the Gàidhealtachd could have sustained poetry for that long. Again, in Chapter Two, Evan Evans accused Macpherson of pulling the wool over everyone's eyes. Samuel Johnson (Dr. Johnson; 1709–1784), the English writer who toured the Highlands and wrote of his experiences in *A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland* (1775), was an outspoken contemporary critic of *Ossian's* validity. In his journal he writes:

I believe they [the Ossianic works] never existed in any other form than that which we have seen. The editor, or author, never could shew the original; nor can it be shewn by any other; to revenge reasonable incredulity, by refusing evidence, is a degree of insolence, with which the world is not yet acquainted; and stubborn audacity is the last refuge of guilt.³⁷²

As Samuel Johnson stoked the flames of the Ossianic controversy, Rev. Donald MacNicol (Domhnall MacNeacail; 1735–1802) wrote a scathing response to him in his *Remarks on Dr. Samuel Johnson's journey to the Hebrides; in which are contained, observations on the antiquities, language, genius, and manners of the Highlanders of Scotland* (1779), complaining of Johnson's hatred towards all things Scottish³⁷³:

The objects of any moment, which have been chiefly distinguished by that odium which Dr. Johnson bears to every things that is Scotch, seem to be – the Poems of Ossian, - the whole Gallic language, - our seminaries of learning, - the Reformation, - and the veracity of all Scotch, and particularly Highland narration.³⁷⁴

It is difficult, as Donald Meek explains, “to find any native Gaels [even into the nineteenth century] who were Gaelic-speakers and who were prepared to reject outright the

³⁷² Johnson, Samuel (1775), *A Journal to the Western Islands of Scotland*, edited by Black, Ronald (2007), (Edinburgh: Birlinn). 209.

³⁷³ For more on MacNicol's response, see: Ferguson, William (1998), “Samuel Johnson's Views on Scottish Gaelic Culture,” *The Scottish Highland Review*, LXXVII, 2, 204. 183-198.

³⁷⁴ MacNicol, Donald (1779), *Remarks on Dr. Samuel Johnson's journey to the Hebrides; in which are contained, observations on the antiquities, language, genius, and manners of the Highlanders of Scotland*, (London: T. Cadell). 7.

authenticity of *Ossian* as published.”³⁷⁵ Gaels generally took pride in the work and treated it, as Meek again posits, as a “literary and ethnological yardstick, a mark of the True Gael, which was not to be surrendered easily.”³⁷⁶ This general support meant that the discourse between Johnson and McNicol led to Gaelic literary activity saluting and praising McNicol and degrading Dr. Johnson. These poems, usually satirical, cast the dispute as a bardic contention in which poets vie for poetic superiority over one another, much like that of the Welsh *ymrysonau*.³⁷⁷ An excellent example of an anti-Johnson satire is *Òran don Ollamh MacIain*, (“A Song to Dr. Johnson”) by Seumas mac an t-Saoir (James Macintyre; 1727-1799):

An t-ollamh thàinig à Sasann
 'N coinneamh ri masl' thoirt do dh'Alba,
 Ged fhuair e suairceas da chleachdadh
 'Na astar air feadh nan Garbhchrioch,
 Cho luaithe ràinig e dhachaigh
 Gu garaidh altram an t-seana-bhruic
 Na rug an trùileach an asaid
 De bhreugan ascaoin 's de shalachar.
 ...
 Gur tu an losgann sleamhainn tàrbhuidh,
 S tu màigein tàirrngeach nan digean,
 Gur tu dearc-luachrach a' chàthair
 Ri snàg 's ri màgaran mìltich;
 S tu bratag sgreadaidh an fhàsaich,
 S tu 'n t-seilcheag ghrànda, bhog, litheach,
 S tu 'n cartan nach fhurasta thàrsainn

³⁷⁵ Meek, Donald E. (2004), “The sublime Gael: The impact of Macpherson’s *Ossian* on literary creativity and cultural perception in Gaelic Scotland,” in Gaskill, Howard (ed.) *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, (London; New York: Thoemmes/Continuum). 40-66. 41.

³⁷⁶ Meek (2004), “The sublime Gael.” 41.

³⁷⁷ Three poems of uncertain authorship followed this publication – all found in the Gillies Collection of 1786: *Oran do’n Olla Shasgunnach*, *Samuel Johnson* (“A Song to the English Doctor, Samuel Johnson”); *Oran Connsachaidh, &c* (“A Song of Disputation, &c”); and *Oran do Mr. Domhnul Macneacail, Minisdeir Liomoir, Eirson a ro scairtealachd agaus a Chothaich e, ann Adhaighan Olla Lunduinnich* (“A Song to the Rev. Donald MacNicol, the Minister of Lismore, for the Great Vigour with which he Opposed the London Doctor”). See: Black, Ronald (ed.) (2001), *An Lasair*, (Edinburgh: Birlinn). 497-498.

Uait na thàrras tu 'nad ìngnean.³⁷⁸

The doctor that came from England
For the aim of slandering Scotland,
Though he found civility practices
In his trip round the Highlands,
No sooner was he home again
In the old badger's nursing-set
Than the rogue bore a fetus
Full of coarse lies and rubbish.

...

You're the slimy yellow-bellied toad,
You're the sluggish crawler of ditches,.
You're the lizard of the swamp
Which creeps and slithers through sweet-grass;
You're the ugly wasteland caterpillar,
You're the foul, soft, slimy snail.
You're the botfly hard to relieve
Of what you're seized in your claws.³⁷⁹

In Gaelic tradition, as Terrence McCaughey has shown, there is an intricate system of noble versus ignoble animals and *mac an t-Saoir* seems to have used most of the ignoble ones in this excerpt.³⁸⁰

To address the growing controversy, the Highland Committee of Scotland commissioned a report into the authenticity of Macpherson's work in 1805: the *Report of the Highland Committee of Scotland Appointed to Inquire into the Nature and Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian*. The report is explicit in saying that its objective is not "to enter into any elaborate argument or discussion on the authenticity of those [Ossianic] poems."³⁸¹

Rather, the stated aim is "collecting what materials or information it was still practicable to

³⁷⁸ Black, Ronald (ed.) (2019), *An Lasair*. 292-295.

³⁷⁹ Black, Ronald (trans.) (2019), *An Lasair*. 292-295.

³⁸⁰ See: McCaughey, Terrence (1989), "Bards, Beasts and Men," in Breatnach, Liam, McCone, Kim, and Ó Corráin, Donnchadh (eds.) *Sages, Saints and Storytellers*. (Maynooth: An Sagart) 102-121.

³⁸¹ Highland Society of Scotland (1805) *Report of the Highland Committee of Scotland Appointed to Inquire into the Nature and Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press). 1.

collect.”³⁸² The report is interesting as it begins with a series of “queries.” The first in the series is:

Have you ever heard repeated or sung, any of the poems ascribed to Ossian, translated and published by Mr. Macpherson? By whom have you heard them so repeated, and at what time or times? Did you ever commit any of them to writing, or can you remember them so well as now to set them down? In either of these cases, be so good to send the Gaelic original to the Committee.

These queries show that the *Report's* audience was intended to be educated Gaels who operated within the Gaelic social sphere, questioning tradition bearers. The conclusion of the report was that Macpherson's work was mostly of his own fabrication, taking, at times, material from genuine Gaelic ballad texts.³⁸³ Following up on the *Report*, in the 1950s, Derick Thomson seconded the evidence that Macpherson had used a large amount of authentic ballad material. Macpherson is known to have had manuscripts of Gaelic in his possession, including the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, and some manuscripts ascribed to the famous bardic family of the MacMhuirichs.³⁸⁴ As Thomson worked to discover, he used sixteen or seventeen ballads across his compositions, sometimes following the Gaelic closely and sometimes paraphrasing. Material was also expanded, misunderstood, or repressed and often Macpherson inserted excerpts from a ballad into a structure entirely his own. Despite Thomson's work, however, Sebastian Mitchell found that this did little to change the contemporary consensus that “the poetry lacked intrinsic merit and that it should be

³⁸² Highland Society of Scotland (1805) *Report*. 1.

³⁸³ Gunderloch, Anja (1996), “Eighteenth-Century Literary Fraud and Oral Tradition: the “Real” Ossian,” *Orality, Literacy, and Modern Media*. 44-61. 52.

³⁸⁴ See: Thomson, Derick S. (1998), “James Macpherson: the Gaelic dimension,” in Thomson, Derick S. (ed.) *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi). 17-26; Thomson, Derick S. (1963), ““Ossian” Macpherson and the Gaelic world of the eighteenth century,” *Aberdeen University Review* 40. 7-20; Thomson, Derick S. (1958), “Bogus Gaelic literature,” *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow* 5. 172-188. A useful summary of Thomson's work can be found in Poncarová, Petra Johana (2020), “Derick Thomson and the Ossian controversy,” *Anglica* 29, 3. 125-133.

treated as little more than a curiosity, part of that quaint if perplexing eighteenth-century vogue for literary forgery.”³⁸⁵ Interest in analyzing the literary merit of Macpherson’s Ossianic works began in earnest in the 1980s with the work of scholars such as Howard Gaskill and Fiona Stafford.³⁸⁶

Gaelic-British Identity

Macpherson’s works may have been controversial for their lack of validity, being collations and adaptations instead of true “translations” but Macpherson had an agenda in mind, according to Clare O’Halloran, which was “to forge a truly British identity for the Scots” and claim the “Highland Celt as the authentic British aborigine.”³⁸⁷ That the Gaels were the progenitors of the British was a thesis shared by Rev. John Macpherson of Barra whose *Critical dissertations on the origin, antiquities, language, government, manners, and religion, of the ancient Caledonians, their posterity the Picts, and the British and Irish Scots* was published, posthumously, in 1768:

The Caledonians were the most powerful, and, to speak with Galgacus, the most noble of all the nations that were of old settled in that division of Britain, which has since obtained the name of Scotland. By the joint consent of all the writers who give us any account of them, the Caledonians were reckoned the Aborigines of that country.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ Mitchell, Sebastian (2016), “Introduction: Ossian: Past, Present and Future,” *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, 2. 159-170. 162.

³⁸⁶ For more on this, see: Mitchell (2016), “Introduction: Ossian.” 159-170.

³⁸⁷ O’Halloran, Clare (2005), *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations: Antiquarian Debate and Cultural Politics in Ireland, c. 1750-1800*, (Cork: Cork University Press). 32.

³⁸⁸ Macpherson, John (1768), *Critical dissertations on the origin, antiquities, language, government, manners, and religion, of the ancient Caledonians, their posterity the Picts, and the British and Irish Scots*, (London: T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt). 23.

James Macpherson was directly influenced by John Macpherson, reading the book in manuscript form before it was published.³⁸⁹ Now, it is thought that the Scottish Gaels migrated from Ireland and settled in Scotland. This thought was also present in the eighteenth century but was not universally accepted and certainly was not by James Macpherson who dismissed it as “improbable fiction.”³⁹⁰ The counter tradition was that the Gaels of Scotland, or “Caledonians” were, in fact, the progenitors of the Irish Gaels. John Macpherson writes, in his *Critical Dissertations* that Ireland was a “British colony... too much wedded to the indigested fictions of a Spanish extraction.”³⁹¹ This reference to “Spanish extraction” is a reference to the Milesian legend, a legend which claims that the Irish and Scottish Gaels originated in Spain. This will be discussed at length below.

Oisean (Irish: *Oisín*) and Fionn are, and always have been, pan-Gaelic heroes. James Macpherson, however, takes care to paint his Ossian and Fingal as entirely Scottish historical figures, eschewing any Irish connections because of his wish to portray the Scottish Gaels as the “virgin” race of Britain. To demonstrate the purity of the Caledonians, Macpherson includes the following etymology of “Caledonia” in the preface to *Temora*:

When South-Britain yielded to the power of the Romans, the unconquered nations to the north of the province were distinguished by the name of *Caledonians*. From their very name, it appears, that they were of those *Gauls*, who possessed themselves originally of Britain. It is compounded of two *Celtic* word, *Caël* signifying *Celts*, or *Gauls*, and *Dun* or *Don*, a *hill*, so that *Caël-don*, or Caledonians, is as much as to say, *the Celts of the hill country*. The Highlander, to this day, call themselves *Caël*, their language *Caëlic*, or *Galic*, and their country *Caëldoch*, which to the Romans softened to

³⁸⁹ Ferguson, William (1998), *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: An Historic Quest*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press). 213.

³⁹⁰ Macpherson, James (1760-1765) in Gaskill, Howard (ed.), *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press). 206.

³⁹¹ Macpherson, John (1768), *Critical dissertations on the origin, antiquities, language, government, manners, and religion, of the ancient Caledonians, their posterity the Picts, and the British and Irish Scots*, (London: T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt). 101.

Caledonia. This, of itself, is sufficient to demonstrate, that they are the genuine descendants of the antient Caledonians, and not a pretended colony of *Scots*, who settled first in the north, in the third or fourth century.³⁹²

By his reckoning, the “Caël” were completely separate to the two nations (the *Firbolg* or *Belgæ* of Britain) that occupied the south of Ireland and, in fact, the “Caël” passed over from Caledonia and the Hebrides to Ulster.³⁹³ Macpherson also “proves” with his Ossianic “translations” that the poems are not “of Irish composition,” making the “favourite chimæra, that Ireland is the mother-country of the Scots, [...] totally subverted and ruined.”³⁹⁴ Macpherson does give credit to the Irish bards as displaying “a genius worthy of any age or nation,” but states that “in matters of antiquity, that they were monstrous in their fables.”³⁹⁵

Druidic lore

Macpherson’s understanding of Scottish prehistory is echoed in Hugh Blair’s *A Critical Dissertation in the Poems of Ossian*. Hugh Blair (1718-1800) was a Scottish Presbyterian minister, author, and rhetorician and *A Critical Dissertation in the Poems of Ossian* was his first well-known publicly authored publication. A stoic supporter of *Ossian*’s ancient roots as the earliest Gaelic poetry, he argued against the accusation that *Ossian* was a modern fabrication:

That the ancient Scots were of Celtic original, is past all doubt. Their conformity with the Celtic nations in language, manners and religion, proves it to a full demonstration. ... So strong was the attachment of the Celtic nations to their poetry and their Bards, that amidst all the changes of their government and manners, even long after the order of the Druids was

³⁹² Macpherson (1760-1765), *The Poems of Ossian*. 207.

³⁹³ Macpherson (1760-1765), *The Poems of Ossian*. 209.

³⁹⁴ Macpherson (1760-1765), *The Poems of Ossian*. 217.

³⁹⁵ Macpherson (1760-1765), *The Poems of Ossian*. 224.

extinct, and the national religion altered, the Bards continued to flourish; not as a set of strolling songsters, like in the Greek ῥαψωδοὶ or Rhapsodists, in Homer's time, but as an order of men highly respected in the state, and supported by a public establishment.³⁹⁶

This use of Classical comparison strengthens his claims – he states that the bards were more skilled than the Greek “ῥαψωδοὶ or Rhapsodists” – as he places *Ossian* and the “Celts” within a European historical and literary context. Ossian was a bard and as Blair explains, “the bards continued to flourish” “even long after the order of Druids was extinct.” Ossian is not in fact a druid. However, as he is the descendant of the druids and as the bardic line of succession was conflated with druidic religion and manners, one would expect druidic lore in Macpherson's work like there is in so much of the Welsh poetry of the eighteenth century. It is, however, never overly obvious.³⁹⁷

In the preface to the first edition of *Fingal*, Macpherson lays out his reasoning behind avoiding the eighteenth-century appetite for druidry that we find in England and in the Welsh poetry of Chapter Two: it was around the second century CE that the druids in Caledonia began to decline and Fingal's grandfather, chief druid, was commanded by the Romans to “lay down his office.” He refused, and a civil war broke out, resulting in the extinction of the druids. “A few that remained [like Allad, to be discussed below], retired to the dark recesses of their groves, and the caves they had formerly used for their meditations. It is then we find them in the circle of stones, and unheeded by the world.” After their recession, the druids were abhorred in Scotland, their knowledge was lost, and the nation fell into “the last degree of ignorance of their rites and ceremonies.” Because of this, Macpherson states, “it is no matter of wonder then, that Fingal and his son Ossian

³⁹⁶ Macpherson (1760-1765), *The Poems of Ossian*. 350.

³⁹⁷ Macpherson does not use druids as romantic stage props in his works, although he does discuss them at length in his *History of Great Britain*, 1773.

make so little, if any, mention of the Druids, who were the declared enemies to their succession in the supreme magistracy.”³⁹⁸

Although Macpherson’s characters Ossian and his son Fingal were post-druidic characters, that is not to say that there is not some hint of the druidic about Ossian’s appearance and chosen locale:³⁹⁹

By the side of a rock on the hill, beneath the aged trees, old Oscian sat on the moss; the last of the race of Fingal. Sightless are his aged eyes; his beard is waving in the wind. Dull through the leafless trees he heard the voice of the north. Sorrow revived in his soul: he began and lamented the dead.⁴⁰⁰

This description is classically druidic: there are numerous references to this kind of druid – an aged man with a long, flowing beard, situated in a wild locale, listening to poetic inspiration coming on the wind – in the Welsh and English poetry of the time.

There is an explicitly druidic character, Allad, in the *Fragments* but his story is less than a page long. Firchios is sent by Lamderg to find Allad for information on his love interest, Gaelchossa:

Go, Firchios! Go to Allad, the grey-haired son of the rock. He liveth in the circle of stones, he may tell of Gaelchossa.⁴⁰¹

Allad is certainly a druid. Called the son of the rock, he dwells in a “circle of stones,” stones which, during the eighteenth century, were thought to have been the remains of druidic temples.⁴⁰² He is consulted as he has supernatural knowledge and, entering in style, “he

³⁹⁸ All of the quotations of Macpherson in this paragraph are found in: Macpherson (1760-1765), *The Poems of Ossian*. 45.

³⁹⁹ Macpherson (1760-1765), *The Poems of Ossian*. 45.

⁴⁰⁰ O’Halloran, Clare (2005), *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations: Antiquarian Debate and Cultural Politics in Ireland, c. 1750-1800*, (Cork: Cork University Press). 18.

⁴⁰¹ O’Halloran (2005), *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations*. 31.

⁴⁰² William Stukeley (1687–1765) was the English antiquarian famous for connecting the druids with stone circles, in particular Stonehenge and Avebury.

came in like a cloud from the hill; he hummed a surly song as he came, like a storm in leafless wood.”⁴⁰³

Tradition formation post-Macpherson

Macpherson, working within a sentimental frame, places thoughts and emotions at the forefront of a character’s actions and reactions. Dafydd Moore argues, however, that it is dangerous to consider *Ossian* as a work of full sentimentalism as “the sentimental in *Ossian* all-too-often functions by dismantling the confidences, by interrogating the very value and meaning, of epic heroism.”⁴⁰⁴ That is not to say, however, that the sentimental was not at work in *Ossian* and, according to Moore, it is important to understand that the discourse around sentimentalism represented for Macpherson “the most inviting grounds on which to stake a claim for Celtic cultural superiority.”⁴⁰⁵ There was a widespread desire to replicate the Celtic sentiment in *Ossian* – the purity and nobility of the bards, equally celebrated by nature and celebrating nature, emotionally charged and sensitive, weeping and dying – and this is shown in the significant number of anthologies that followed in its wake.

For instance, soon after Macpherson’s publications that appeared between 1760 and 1765, the Eigg Collection of 1776 (*Comh-chruinneachidh Orannaigh Gaidhealach*), compiled by Ronald MacDonald (Raonuill MacDomhnuill), Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair’s son, appeared. This collection is exclusively in Gaelic with an attachment at the end that contains five “translations of some of the foregoing poems.” Ossianic, sentimental style is

⁴⁰³ Macpherson (1760-1765), *The Poems of Ossian*. 31.

⁴⁰⁴ Moore, Dafydd (2000), “Heroic Incoherence in James Macpherson’s *The Poems of Ossian*,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34, 1. 43-59. 53.

⁴⁰⁵ Moore (2000), “Heroic Incoherence.” 56.

not the aim of this collection, but no collection of the late eighteenth century can shake the shadow of *Ossian* and in the English introduction to the translation of “The Aged Bard’s Wife,” MacDonald writes:

From the Poem itself it is evident, that the Bard who composed it lived in times later than those of Ossian, and at a period when the manners of the Caledonians had undergone a considerable change.⁴⁰⁶

Ossian clearly worked in the back of MacDonald’s mind as he compiled his manuscript.

Works of the Caledonian Bards by John Clark (†1807) appeared next in 1778 and Clark fully partook in the druidic bardic framework that Macpherson, Lewis Morris, and Evan Evans had posited a couple of decades before:

A mind, eager to examine the appearance of nature in her simplest garb, and solicitous [sic.] to contemplate the extent of her power, without the aid of art, must enjoy a rational pleasure from the poetical compositions of the Celtic bards.⁴⁰⁷

We see from this extract that Clark believed in the accession of modern bards from ancient Celtic ones.

Dr. John Smith (1747–1807) took part in the Ossianomania in 1780 with the publication of his *Galic Antiquities*, which begins with a history of the druids, and a dissertation about the authenticity of the poems of *Ossian* before moving into the poetry itself. Smith, on the first page of “A History of the druids, particularly those of Caledonia,” laments the lack of scholarly attention to druidical history:

⁴⁰⁶ MacDonald, Ronald (1776), *Comh-chruinneachidh Orannaigh Gaidhealach*, (Edinburgh: clò-bhuailt ann le Walter Ruddiman). 359.

⁴⁰⁷ Clark, John (1778), *The Works of the Caledonian Bards. Translated from the Galic [sic.]. Volume I*, (Edinburgh: T. Cadell London). 5.

There is nothing, perhaps, in which we have greater reason to lament this inattention of antiquities to our own history, than in their almost total silence concerning the Druids.⁴⁰⁸

Smith's poems are also in English "translation" with no Gaelic originals and are very similar in style to *Ossian*, written in musical measured prose. Most of the action takes place around Morven, the chosen locale of Macpherson's *Ossian*, and many of the characters are directly taken from Macpherson's work. For instance, both talk of Artho, Cathula, Dermid, Dargo, Gaul, and Trathal. Smith's *Gaelic Antiquities* also included a "Dissertation on the Authenticity of Ossian's Poems," delving deeply into religious questions. The Ossianic epics were understood by Smith to have been composed between the decline of druidism and the triumph of Christianity, but Smith presented a sympathetic depiction of druidic religion, seeing them as "faithful guardians of the original patriarchal revelation."⁴⁰⁹

The province of the bards was to celebrate the praises of heroes, and to immortalize their name in songs. By repeating these constantly at their entertainments, and setting them off with all the charms of vocal and instrumental music, they excited in the minds of their hearers a love of virtue, a thirst for glory, and an enthusiasm for fame, which now we can scarce have any conception of.⁴¹⁰

Later, in 1787, Smith published the "originals" of his 1780 English translations, under the name *Sean Dàna* (Ancient Lays). Smith was not simply a poetry collector – there is plenty of imaginative composition involved in his work. He did use some authentic ballad material,

⁴⁰⁸ Smith, Dr. John (1780), *Galic antiquities: consisting of a history of the Druids, particularly of those of Caledonia; a dissertation on the authenticity of the poems of Ossian; and a collection of ancient poems, Translated from the Galic of Ullin, Ossian, Orran, &c.*, (London: T. Cadell). 1.

⁴⁰⁹ Savonius-Wroth, Celestina (2019), "Bardic ministers: Scotland's Gaelic-speaking clergy in the Ossian controversy," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 52, 2. 225-243. 235.

⁴¹⁰ Smith (1780), *Galic Antiquities*. 7.

however, and as Derick Thomson writes, “he sometimes refers to passages from genuine ballads, sometimes quoting these, only to discredit them as ‘ur-sgeuls’ or later tales’.”⁴¹¹

Duncan Kennedy (b. c. 1758/1763) was a collector of poetry, poet, man of letters, and schoolmaster at Kilmelford between 1774 and 1783.⁴¹² He left behind a corpus of thirty-three texts – one collection, compiled between the years 1774–1780, containing thirty and another collection, dating from between 1774–1783 containing twenty-three. Of course, this math does not add up – there is a considerable amount of material that is shared between the collections.⁴¹³ As Anja Gunderloch claims, “there is no reason to believe that he got from these sources anything other than oral versions that were close to other contemporary texts from the same environment.”⁴¹⁴ In other words, his imagination was not as active as Smith’s and Macpherson’s and, although he doctored his versions, “they are always recognizably related to the ballads of tradition,” according to Derick Thomson.⁴¹⁵ John Francis Campbell of Islay published a selection of Kennedy’s collected and composed ballads in *Leabhar na Fèinne* in 1872. It is likely that the passages of text he collected were incidentally comparable to that of Smith and Macpherson through derivation from the

⁴¹¹ Thomson, Derick S. (1958), “Bogus Gaelic Literature, c. 1750-c. 1820,” *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow*. 172-188. 180.

⁴¹² For dates of his birth, see: Gunderloch, Anja (2011), “Duncan Kennedy, Collector and Poet,” *Scottish Gaelic Studies*. 55-95. 55-56.

⁴¹³ Gunderloch, Anja (2011), “Duncan Kennedy, Collector and Poet,” *Scottish Gaelic Studies*. 55-95. 55

⁴¹⁴ Gunderloch, Anja (2011), « Duncan Kennedy, Collector and Poet,” *Scottish Gaelic Studies*. 55-95. 58.

⁴¹⁵ Thomson, Derick S. (1958), “Bogus Gaelic Literature, c. 1750-c. 1820,” *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow*. 172-188. 182.

same source material.⁴¹⁶ Kennedy was wary of the Ossianic controversy, but it is shown in his work that he was indebted to Macpherson in his use of the names Ossian and Fingal.⁴¹⁷ Duncan Kennedy and John Smith, however, had a fraught relationship – Kennedy accused Smith of plagiarizing his own material for monetary gain without crediting him.⁴¹⁸ Apparently, in 1778, Kennedy lent his first collection to Smith and the material surfaced in both *Galic Antiquities* of 1780 and *Sean Dàna* of 1787.⁴¹⁹ The matter was not, as Gunderloch explains, however, “clear-cut,” and it could even be the case that both Smith and Kennedy were accessing texts that were related or even texts from the same tradition-bearers.⁴²⁰

Of course, the most Ossianic of all publications – *The poems of Ossian, in the original Gaelic, with a literal translation into Latin* – the Gaelic “originals” of *Ossian* – worked on by Macpherson himself among others – Robert Macfarlan (1734-1804) translated the work into Latin – was published in 1807 on behest of the Highland Society of London.⁴²¹ The following is the first few lines from *Cath-Loda, Duan First*:

Sgeul ri aithris air àm o aois.
 Chaoin aiteil, gun t’ fhaicinn a chaoidh,
 Lùbadh cluaran mu Lora nan sian;
 Thu air asta an caol-gleann na gaoith,
 C’uime thrèig thu mo chlusa co dian?

⁴¹⁶ Gunderloch, Anja (2011), “Duncan Kennedy, Collector and Poet,” *Scottish Gaelic Studies*. 55-95. 67.

⁴¹⁷ Gunderloch (2011), “Duncan Kennedy, Collector and Poet.” 78.

⁴¹⁸ Gunderloch (2011), “Duncan Kennedy, Collector and Poet.” 68.

⁴¹⁹ Gunderloch, Anja (2012), “Duncan Kennedy and his Heroic Ballads,” *The Gaelic Finn Tradition* (Four Courts Press). 179-194. 181.

⁴²⁰ Gunderloch (2011), “Duncan Kennedy, Collector and Poet.” 69.

⁴²¹ Ostrowski, Donald (2020), “How Inauthentic was James Macpherson’s “Translation” of Ossian?” in *Who Wrote That? Authorship Controversies from Moses to Sholokhov* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press). 190-208. 191.

Cha chluinnear gairm nan liath shruth ard;
 No guth clarsaich o charn nan gas.
 Mhalmhina nan teud this do d' bhard,
 Till anam do bhaire air ais;
 Till m' anam, a lamh-gheal, dhomh fèin.⁴²²

A tale of the times of old! Why, thou wander unseen! Thou bender of the
 thistle of Lora; why, thou breeze of the valley, hast thou left mine ear? I hear
 no distant roar of streams! No sound of the harp, from the rock! Come, thou
 huntress of Lutha, Malvina, call back his soul to the bard.⁴²³

As *Cath-Loda*, *Duan First* has shown, Macpherson and his collaborators of this volume
 worked backwards from the English *Ossian* to create the Gaelic.⁴²⁴ The Gaelic “originals”
 follow the English closely as is evidenced above.

The second major collection of song texts of the eighteenth century was published in
 1786 by John Gillies of Perth (1747-1836). This collection gives pride of place to Ossianic-
 style verse but, on account of all the discussion about Ossian surrounding his publication
 date, he does not feel the need to introduce the poetry:

So much has of late been written and published concerning Gaelic Poetry,
 that it was reckoned unnecessary to prefix any dissertation on that subject.⁴²⁵

It is clear that *Ossian* underpins all of these anthologies as they are all linked, somehow, to
 the controversy, and are all indebted, in their naissance, to Macpherson's success.

Macpherson's influence also had a direct impact on Rev. John MacDonald, later known as
 “the Apostle of the North,” who went on an Ossianic tour to collect Gaelic ballads in 1805.⁴²⁶

⁴²² Macfarlan, Robert et al. (1807), *The Poems of Ossian, in the original Gaelic, with a Literal Translation into Latin*, (London: W. Bulmer and Co. Cleveland Row). 2.

⁴²³ Macpherson (1765), *The Works of Ossian*, vol 2 (London: T. Becket and P. A. Dehondt). 237.

⁴²⁴ Ostrowski (2020), “How Inauthentic was James Macpherson's “Translation” of Ossian?” 191.

⁴²⁵ Gillies, John (1786), *Sean dain, agus orain Ghaidhealach, air an Tabhairt o Ghaoine Uaisle, araid an Gaeltachd Alba*, (Perth: Clo-bhuailt' am Peairt). Advertisement.

⁴²⁶ Meek (2004), “The Sublime Gael.” 59.

Hugh and John MacCallum also produced what Derick Thomson calls “a curious mixture of the spurious and the genuine” in *An Original Collection of the Poems of Ossian, Orrann, Ulin and Other Bards who Flourished in the Same Age* (1816).⁴²⁷

Dùghall Bochanan (Dugald Buchanan; 1716-1768), hymnist, teacher, evangelist, and aid in the Gaelic New Testament project, was also considerably impressed by Macpherson’s *Ossian*, taking it to be authentic. In a letter he wrote to Sir James Clerk of Penicuik, a major proponent in the Scottish Enlightenment, he states that anyone compiling a Gaelic dictionary would have to “collect the work of the antient and modern bards.”⁴²⁸ Bochanan clearly subscribes to the idea that modern poets in Scotland inherited the ancient poetry of Macpherson’s pre-historic bards. *Ossian*’s influence on Bochanan’s own hymns is unclear although it seems likely. Donald E. Meek, for instance, questions whether the turns of phrase in the following extract stem from Ossianic sentiment or other sources. The predominantly Biblical imagery of *Là a’ Bhreitheanais*, “The Day of Judgement” (1767), is interrupted by a tone reminiscent of *Ossian*:

Tha ’m bogha-frois mu’n cuairt d’a cheann,
'S mar thuil nan gleann tha fuaim a ghuth ;
'S mar dhealanach tha sealladh shul,
A’ spùtadh as na neulaibh tiugh’.⁴²⁹

The rainbow encircles his head,
And like the torrent of the glens in the sound of his voice;
And like lightning is the sight of his eyes,
Spouting out if the thick clouds.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ Thomson, Derick (1958), “Bogus Gaelic Literature, c. 1750-c. 1820,” *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Glasgow*. 172-188. 183.

⁴²⁸ Quoted in: Meek (2004), “The Sublime Gael.” 44.

⁴²⁹ Quoted in: Meek (2004), “The Sublime Gael.” 46.

⁴³⁰ Meek (trans.) (2004), “The Sublime Gael.” 46.

The image, Meek writes, “immediately recalls the frequent comparison of heroes’ voices to Highland streams in Macpherson’s *Ossian*.”⁴³¹ However, Meek goes on to say that Bochanan’s style or main material, even though he may have borrowed from Macpherson occasionally, was not drawn from *Ossian*.⁴³²

The tradition formation that followed Ossian’s wake is thus varied: we have collections of genuine collected verse such as that of Ronald MacDonald, spurious and forged works in an Ossianic style such as Dr. John Smith’s work, and (possibly) influenced compositions such as the work of Duncan Kennedy and Dugald Bochanan.

Welsh poets and antiquarians were also vying for ethnic supremacy through druidic succession as is discussed in Chapter Two. Not once, however, do the Welsh recognize the Scottish druidic claim that was so popular with Macpherson’s contemporaries, if not him himself, as authentic or vice versa. There was a Welsh reaction to *Ossian*, and it was mostly negative.⁴³³ William Morris, for instance, writes that he would be “delighted to see the Old Bards chase Ossian and his page boy [Macpherson] beyond the borders of England to go hang, as Urien Rheged pursued his barbarous fellow countrymen of old.”⁴³⁴ Macpherson’s bardic vision, however, is not dissimilar to the Welsh one: druidic in origin, the original proprietors of Gaelic poetry were mystical, nature-loving bards who belonged entirely within a Gàidhealtachd landscape and culture and could only be claimed as Gaels. In Welsh poetry, of course, the bards belonged only in Wales. Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg;

⁴³¹ Meek (2004), “The Sublime Gael.” 46.

⁴³² Meek (2004), “The Sublime Gael.” 47.

⁴³³ For more on this, see: Constantine, Mary-Ann (2004), “Ossian in Wales and Brittany,” in Gaskell, Howard (ed.) *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, (London: Thoemmes). 67-91.

⁴³⁴ Gwŷch a fai genny feu Gweled yn ymlid Ossian ai Faccwy iw crogi tu hwnt i gyf-finiau Lloegr gôch, fal y byddai Urien Rheged gynt yn Gorllwyn ei cydwladwyr lledffer. Quoted in: Constantine (2004), “Ossian in Wales and Brittany.” 71.

1747–1826) made a case for the true druids inhabiting south Wales, upholding south Walian cultural supremacy, with north Wales being corrupted from their druidic origins. David Thomas (Dafydd Ddu Eryri; 1759-1822), Evan Evans, Goronwy Owen (1723–1769), however, all agree that the druids were of Anglesey origin. Both societies worked hard to prove their ownership of a bardic tradition through Celtic origins but, even so, felt no common connection to each other in this respect. In Welsh poetry, this sense of ancient bardic identity seeped into literary and non-literary poetry of the eighteenth century.

Bardic Identity post-Culloden

We have seen that Gaelic poetry collection and anthology compilation was influenced by *Ossian* but the question in this next section is whether, like in Welsh, Macpherson's version of bardic identity had an impact on Gaelic poetry of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. For this, I would expect a preoccupation with ancient Celtic roots, a push to revive the ancient poetic traditions and an obsession with the bardic order, use of origin legends to prove legitimacy, and well-established bardic circles within which the poets operated. I start by looking into panegyric – the long tradition of Gaelic praise-poetry. The reason I have chosen to explore panegyric is that it has its roots in the oldest Gaelic poetry and transcended both Classical Gaelic verse and vernacular verse. With this, I can see how Gaelic poets of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century treated panegyric and glean whether they thought of it as their bardic inheritance. Next follows a foray into Gaelic heroes. As Macpherson popularized Fingal and Ossian, one might expect a preoccupation with Gaelic heroes in contemporaneous poetry in Gaelic, showing Macpherson's influence. Finally, there is a subsection on origin tales. As we have seen, Macpherson supported an anti-traditional claim that the Scottish Gaels were the progenitors of the Irish Gaels, thereby securing Gaelic Scotland's place as the indigenous

nation. A look into origin tales shows whether or not these anti-traditional claims were taken on by Gaelic poets.

Panegyric

In Welsh, the continuation of the ancient strict meters and the intricate sonic and syllabic technique of *cynghanedd* was a signifier of bardic identity for eighteenth-century poets – poets could compose in the more modern free meters, but to be considered “bardic” they had to know and use the older meters. One aspect of Gaelic poetry that I can see mirroring this in some way is panegyric. Panegyric has a long history in Gaelic in both professional and vernacular verse and it seems that the eighteenth-century vernacular poet composes within the “panegyric code” – a name for the series of themes, tropes, and conventions to give praise which was popularized by John MacInnes – to situate themselves within the Gaelic poetic tradition.⁴³⁵ The continuation of the panegyric code was, in John MacInnes’s words, the continuation of the “Gaelic sense of social psychology, of history, of geography.”⁴³⁶

The practice of the clan chief patronizing a poet had died off into the eighteenth century. It was not forgotten, however, and some eighteenth-century lairds such as Alasdair Ranaldson MacDonell, fifteenth chief of Glengarry (1773–1828) took up having a poet almost as an affectation. MacDonell, for example, who Ronald Black calls “one of the greatest hypocrites of this hypocritical era,” patronized Allan MacDougall (Ailean Dall; c. 1750–1828).⁴³⁷ As Black continues, Alasdair “was busy raising his people’s rents to levels which they could not afford while ostentatiously strutting the part of an old-style Highland

⁴³⁵ See: MacInnes (1978), “The Panegyric Code.”

⁴³⁶ MacInnes (1978), “The Panegyric Code.” 436.

⁴³⁷ Black (2001), *An Lasair*. 517.

chieftain.”⁴³⁸ It is clear that by the mid eighteenth century, the chief’s poet was seen as a thing of the past and a thing, perhaps, in MacDonell’s case, that exemplified the chief’s position within society. This was not, however, common and in the place of such a chief, or laird, panegyric began to be composed for men in positions of military leadership within the British army or navy (the Gaels and Welsh in military service will be discussed in Chapter Four). As the older panegyric poetry had emphasized the chief as protector and war-leader, military leaders begin to take their place in panegyric of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and, after the Highland regiments began to be formed in 1725 onwards and generate victories, we find praise poetry composed to generals.⁴³⁹ This structure meant that poets still had subjects for panegyric, and so traditional panegyric poetry continued in a diminished form throughout the eighteenth century.

An example of panegyric to a military figure can be found in a poem by Mairearad Ghriogarch (Margaret MacGregor; c.1750-1830). This poem is to the Colonel Alasdair Robertson of Strowen, landlord of Glen Errachty who, Michel Byrne suggests, “may have cultivated an image of old-fashioned patronage”:⁴⁴⁰

Bu mhòr do thlachd do luchd-òran, ’s b’è do dheòin bhith gan cluinntinn;
 ’N àm bhith gabhail mo cheòil dut, Rìgh bu mhòr mo thoil-inntinn;
 Fhuair mi meas aig do bhord-sa nach tèid rim bheò as mo chuimhne,
 Fhuair is gealladh air a chàirdse...⁴⁴¹

You took great pleasure in songsters and you were keen to hear them;
 When it was my turn to make music for you, oh great was my pleasure;
 I was shown respect at your table which I will never forget,

⁴³⁸ Black (2001), *An Lasair*. 517.

⁴³⁹ Gillies, William (2011), “Some Eighteenth-Century Developments in Scottish Gaelic Poetry” in *Language and Power in the Celtic World: Papers from the Seventh Australian Conference of Celtic Studies*. 61-96. 86.

⁴⁴⁰ Byrne, Michel (2010), “A Window on the Late Eighteenth-Century Scottish Highlands: The Songs of Mairearad Ghriogarach,” *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 30. 39-60. 49.

⁴⁴¹ Byrne (2010), “A Window on the Late Eighteenth-Century Scottish Highlands.” 49.

That and the promise of friendship...⁴⁴²

Talking of the household – “I was shown respect at your table” – and relaxation and music in the household are traditional age-old tropes in panegyric poetry. This type of poem in praise of Colonel Robertson is not out of the norm for past panegyric and is reminiscent of the previous relationship the poet would have had with the chief. What is striking, however, is that Ghriogarach considers herself to be close enough to the Colonel to talk of “friendship.” This is unusual in earlier panegyric, partially because women did not usually compose panegyric and when they did it was highly stylized, but partly because the relationship between a tenant and a landlord is presumably closer than that of a clansperson (not a trained poet) and a chief.

One again sees the survival of the old traditions of praise poetry in Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir’s poems about or addressed to Campbell chiefs and dignitaries. In the following poem, he praises the wealth and learnedness of the Lord Glenorchy, while also bringing attention to his prowess in hunting, praising his personal endowments and social roles:

Sàr phòitear an fhion thu,
'S tu dh'òladh 's a dhìoladh;
Fhuair thu fòghlam gach rìoghachd,
Meòir as grinne nì sgrìobhadh;
Bu tu sealgair na sìdhne
Le d'chuilbheir caol dìreach,
Nuair a thàrladh tu 'm frìth nam beann àrda⁴⁴³

Excellent drinker of wine,
You could drink and pay for it;
You got the education of every country,
Fingers that write most neatly;

⁴⁴² Byrne (2010), “A Window on the Late Eighteenth-Century Scottish Highlands.” 49.

⁴⁴³ Quoted (no source given) in: Thomson, Derick S. (1987) “Gaelic Poetry in the Eighteenth Century: the Breaking of the Mould” in Hook, Andrew (ed.) *The History of Scottish Literature*, Vol 2, 1660-1800. 175-190. 185.

You were the hunter of game
With your slim, accurate caliever
When you were in the game-forest in the high mountains⁴⁴⁴

Praise of the hunt, the deer, and the hunter goes back to the earliest examples of panegyric.

The following poem by Donnachadh Bàn, *Moladh Beinn Dòbhrain* (“The Praise of Ben Dòbhrain”), exemplifies this love of the hunt. According again to John MacInnes, the poem is an “excellent example to cite of the remarkable development and application of this panegyric code.”⁴⁴⁵ The code, in this sense, is only a framework rather than a set package of imagery and language and allows the imagination a good deal of freedom. *Moladh Beinn Dòbhrain* was composed between 1751 and 1766 when Donnachadh Bàn worked as a stalker in the deer-forests of Coire Cheathaich, Ben Dorain, and Glen Etive:

Lusan am bi brìgh
Chuireadh sult is ìth
Air a lòineanaibh;
Fuaran anns am bi
Biolaire gun dìth
As mìlse leath’ na ’m fion –
Se gun òladh i!
Cuiseagan is riasg
Chinneas air an t-sliabh B’ annsa leath’ mar bhiadh
Na na fòlaichean.⁴⁴⁶

Herbs full of substance
To put fat and tallow
Upon her loins;
A spring that contains
Unlimited watercress
That’s sweeter than wine to her –
How she’d drink it!
Rushes and sedge
That grow on the hill
She’d prefer as food

⁴⁴⁴ Thomson (trans.) (1987) “The Breaking of the Mould.” 185.

⁴⁴⁵ MacInnes (1978), “The Panegyric Code in Gaelic Poetry.” 436.

⁴⁴⁶ Black (ed.) (2019), *An Lasair*. 277.

To the grasses of dunghills.⁴⁴⁷

In this poem, Mac an t-Saoir sings of his home parish, celebrating it with strings of adjectives and the deer is the recipient of the panegyric. Terence McCaughey categorizes animals and plants in his article “Bards, Beasts and Men” (1989) into either “noble” or “ignoble” with the deer firmly in the former camp.⁴⁴⁸ The deer, therefore, must only feed on noble foodstuffs, of which “watercress,” “rushes,” and “sedge” are some. Panegyric remained a stable, effective tool in Gaelic poetry from its beginnings.

In the eighteenth century, panegyric had expanded its scope so far that it could be used of almost anything. Panegyric as a form of Gaelic expression was so ingrained in the psyche that it could be expanded to composing about flora, fauna, landscape, seasons – and muskets – objects deemed just as worthy of praise as great men. In the following poem, *Oran do’n Mhusg*, (Song to my Musket), Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir writes a panegyric to his musket:

Chan ’eil mi gun stòras on phòs mi ’n aonnie.

...

’N uair bhios cion an stòrais air doinibh ganna,
Cha leigeadh nighean Deòrsa mo phòca falamh;

...

’S Fòghnaidh i dhomh daonnan a dhèanamh, arain;
Cha bhi fàilinn aodaich orm no anairt,
’S chaidh cùram an t-saoghail a nis as m’ aire.⁴⁴⁹

I am not without resources since I wedded the lady

...

While needy men are short of means,
George’s daughter, would not allow my pocket to be empty;

...

She is all I ever need to make a livelihood;

⁴⁴⁷ Black (trans.) (2019), *An Lasair*: 277.

⁴⁴⁸ McCaughey (1989), “Bard, Beasts and Men.” 102–121.

⁴⁴⁹ MacLeod, (ed.) (1978), *Orain Dhonnchaidh Bhàin*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Gaelic Texts Society). 16-19.

There will be no deficiency in my clothes or linen,
And worldly care has now vanished from my mind.⁴⁵⁰

Mac an t-Saoir's musket, which he named Seonaid, is his "wife" and he elegizes it as though she were a beautiful woman, providing his "livelihood."

Gaelic Heroes

Gaelic poets had been drawing on their native heroes and genealogical figures for centuries and the poetry composed in Classical Gaelic instances this profusely. Usually, as one would imagine, the device is merely to compare the valor of the subject being praised to that of their illustrious forerunners.⁴⁵¹ Cù Chulainn, the greatest warrior of them all whose feats are famously narrated in the literary text *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, an Old Irish text surviving in manuscripts from the twelfth century, appears more than any other hero in Scottish bardic poetry and other figures from the Old Irish Ulster Cycle are common, such as Conchobhar and Gathbhadh. The Fenian characters – from which Macpherson drew his own characters Ossian and Fingal – are also present. Fionn mac Cumhaill and Oscar feature heavily. The Fianna (Gaelic, *Fèinne*, *Fhèinn*, *Na Fiantan*, or *Na Fiantaichean*) were a legendary war-band led by Fionn mac Cumhaill. Oisean (Macpherson., *Ossian*) was a member of Fionn mac Cumhaill's Fianna. There is an expansive collection of folkloric and manuscript material relating to Fionn and his war-band and the Irish, Manx, and Scottish oral expressions of this can be found in the Fionn Folklore Database, headed by Natasha Sumner.⁴⁵² Probably due their famous exile to Scotland which connects them specifically to

⁴⁵⁰ Van Hulle, Liesbeth (trans.) (2022), "Anns Gach Gnìomh a nì duine 's mór urram nan Gàidheal." 45.

⁴⁵¹ McLeod (2004), "Scotland and Ireland." 115.

⁴⁵² See: <https://fionnfolklore.org/#/> [accessed: 10/31/2023].

Scotland, Naoise and the other sons of Uisneach are also popular in Scottish Classical verse. This is all to say that Gaelic heroes had a long past of inclusion in Classical poetry and vernacular verse also includes them. The question is whether Macpherson's own use of the Fenian characters Fingal and Ossian, among others, had any bearing on poetry in its wake (after 1760).

The reality is, in the poetry I have examined, that Oisean and his fellows appear relatively infrequently and where they are referenced the references are uninvolved. It is also important that the references listed below spell Oisean and Fionn in the proper, Gaelic way, not the Macphersonic one. However, the "Gaelic originals" in *The Poems of Ossian, in the original Gaelic, with a Literal Translation into Latin* (1807), also use the Gaelic spellings so the instances of Gaelic spellings do not necessarily mean that the Gaelic poetry has not interacted with English-language literary tastes. The following excerpts seem to show that Gaelic heroic characters were used in the poetry in the way that they had been for centuries, rather than following in Macpherson's footsteps.

The panegyric tradition, with its praise of notable chiefs and aristocrats (this is only one use of panegyric as we have seen further developments above), allows room for allusions to heroic figures. Praise of one's genealogy and warriorship are essential in traditional praise of great men. For instance, in Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir's poem *Òran do Iarla Bhràghaid-Albann*, ("A Song to the Earl of Breadalbane"), Donnchadh Bàn uses the Fianna to describe the warriorlike characteristics of the Earl of Breadalbane:

'S tu thog na ciadan
A shliochd nam Fianntan,
'S an am a' ghnìomha
Bu dian 'sa charraid iad.⁴⁵³

You raised hundreds

⁴⁵³ Macleod, A. (ed.) (1978), *Òrain Dhonnchaidh Bhàin*. 366.

Of Fianna descendants,
And, in time of action,
They were swift in strife.⁴⁵⁴

Donnchadh Bàn suggests that the Earl of Breadalbane had an army full of men descended from Fionn's war-band.

In another example of panegyric from the early nineteenth century, we again see a reference to Fionn and his war-band. This poem is by John MacLean (Bàrd Thighearna Chola; 1787-1848) who wrote of the Fianna in his panegyric to Mac 'ic Alasair, *Deoch-Slainte, Mhic 'Ic Alastair, Ghlinne-Garaidh*, ("A Toast, to the Son of the son of Alasdair, of Glengarry"):

Chan eil coimeas do Ghleann Garaidh
'S d' a chuid Ghaidheal,
Bhon a chaochail Fionn Mac Cumhail
'S feachd na Feinne.⁴⁵⁵

There is no equal to Glengarry
And his Gaels,
Since the death of Fionn MacCool
And the army of the Fenians.⁴⁵⁶

MacLean draws a likeness between Mac 'ic Alasdair to Fionn mac Cumhaill stating that he can be paralleled by none other than the greatest of war chiefs.

Again, we see reference to the Fenian Cycle in *Cumha, do Dhonnachadh Mac-Aonghais, a Tiriodh*, ("A Lament, for Duncan MacInnes, of Tiree"). John Maclean uses Oisean as a symbol for old age and the fall of the heroic age. The Fenian character himself

⁴⁵⁴ My own translation update from: Macleod, A. (trans.) (1978), *Òrain Dhonnchaidh Bhàin*. 367.

⁴⁵⁵ Dunbar, R. D. (ed.) (2006), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean, "Bàrd Thighearna Chola", "Am Bàrd MacGilleain"* (The University of Edinburgh: PhD). 534.

⁴⁵⁶ Dunbar (ed.) (2006), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*. 534.

has no backstory or narration and is simply a cultural touchstone. Arguably, however, one could say that Oisean needs no introduction due to his fame:

S beag an t-ìoghnadh sin dhomhsa
'Bhith fo mhulad an comhnaidh le sgios;
Tha mi 'nis ann am onrachd,
Mar bha Oisean, 's am bron air mo chlaoidh,
A' caoidh an ailleagain bhoidhich [...] ⁴⁵⁷

It is of little surprise to me
To always be sorrowful and weary;
I am now all alone,
As was Oisean, and sadness has fatigued me,
Mourning the handsome young jewel [...] ⁴⁵⁸

Oisean outlived his family and war-band in the native tradition and there is a proverb, “mar Oisean an dèidh nam Fiann” which is used to express loneliness. Although this reference to Oisean in MacLean’s work could be an allusion to Macpherson, this is dangerous to assume as, even according to Macpherson himself in the preface to *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760), “The story of Oscan... is so generally known, that to describe one in whom the race of a great family ends, it has passed into a proverb “Oscan the last of the heroes” [this proverb is a translation of the Gaelic above].” ⁴⁵⁹

In *Dara Blàr na h-Èipheit Òran air blàr na h-Èipheit* (The Second Battle of Egypt; A Song of the Battle of Egypt) by Alasdair MacFhionghain (Alexander MacKinnon; 1770-1814), moreover, MacFhionghain references Fionn when writing of his service in the British military:

Bha ar 'n-ard cheann-feadhna toirteil
Ann san àm ga 'r propadh suas;
Bho dhream gu dream gu 'm brosnachadh,
Cha b' ann le moit na ghruaidh;

⁴⁵⁷ Dunbar (ed.) (2004), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*. 514.

⁴⁵⁸ Dunbar (trans.) (2004), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*. 514.

⁴⁵⁹ Macpherson (1760-1765), *The Poems of Ossian*. 5.

Ghlacadh cuibhle 'n fhortain,
Ann san laimh nach tionndadh toisgeal i,
'S a dhùsgadh sunnt gu cosnadh dhuinn,
Mar Fhionn a mosgladh sluaigh.⁴⁶⁰

Our strong commanding leader was
At the time supporting us;
From band to band encouraging them,
Not with sullenness in his face;
The wheel of fortune was caught,
In the hand that would not turn it back,
And that would arouse joy among us,
Like Fionn awakening an army.⁴⁶¹

These poems show that, while not as frequent as I expected, references to Gaelic heroes are used in various ways: to praise great men, to express loneliness (Oisean), and to explore military themes. None of these examples, although it would be near impossible to prove, seem connected to Macpherson. My reason for saying this is that there is no sentimentalism attached to the heroic characters and the characters themselves are not explored. Rather, the examples are short and appear to be the product of a long tradition of referencing heroic characters as a cultural tie to Gaelic poetry. James Macpherson, with his Ossianic characters, was drawing on an existing tradition and this tradition was alive and well in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries among vernacular poets.

Origin Tales

Gaelic genealogy was as important to poets as were the heroes. The Gaelic pseudo-historic invasion of the Milesians into Ireland as recounted in *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (“The Book of Invasions”) (eleventh century) was present in much of the Gaelic early modern poetry and it appears in another of John Maclean’s poems to the Laird of Coll: *Marbhrann do dh'Alastair*

⁴⁶⁰ Black (ed.) (2019), *An Lasair*. 359.

⁴⁶¹ Black (trans.) (2019), *An Lasair*. 359.

MacGilleain, Tighearna Chola, (An Elegy for Alastair MacLean, The Laird of Coll).

According to the Milesian legend, the Gaelic people of Ireland (and the Gaels of Scotland) descended from the ancient peoples of Scythia although, first, they lived for a time in Egypt, wandered for several years, and eventually conquered Spain. It is from Spain that Ireland was spotted from the top of a tower, built by a fellow called Bregon, and Bregon's son Íth "...brings his ship on the sea, and sails with a number of his people including his son, Lugaid, son of Íth. They sailed towards Ireland, and... took harbor in Brentracht of Magh Itha. The neighbors went to the shore to interview them, and they communicated through the Scotie language."⁴⁶² Once in Ireland they meet the island's three kings who become jealous of Íth's ability to judge justly, and they have him killed. In retaliation, once Íth's body has returned to Spain, the sons of Míl Espáine (hence the "Milesians") set out to invade Ireland. Upon conquering Ireland, Éremón son of Míl and Éber Find son of Míl divide the island between themselves and rule. The Milesians, whose pedigree can be traced all the way back to Noah, are referenced by John Maclean to prove the laird's ancient progeny:

Do shliochd Mhìlìdh na feile,
'Dheanamh gnìomh anns na teughbhailean garg',
Is Gatheluis an treun-fhear,
Bu mhor urram 'san Eiphit is sealbh [...]⁴⁶³

Your progeny of Mìlìdh of the hospitality
Who would accomplish deeds in the fierce battles,
And Gathelus, the strong man,
Was highly respected and successful in Egypt [...]⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶² Malicaster, R. A. S., and Mac Neill, J. (eds.) (1916), *Leabhar Gabhála—the Book of Conquests of Ireland (The Rescension of Micheál Ó Cléirigh), Part I* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Company). 165.

⁴⁶³ Dunbar (ed.) (2004), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*. 556.

⁴⁶⁴ Dunbar (trans.) (2004), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*. 556.

Gathelus, mentioned in the above passage, was the supposed creator of the Goidelic languages out of the original seventy-two that emerged from the destruction of Babel, and eponymous ancestor of the Gaels. In the legendary narrative of *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, Gathelus is the son of Nel (son of Fénus, the Scythian prince) and Scota (daughter of an Egyptian Pharaoh). It is Gathelus's descendants, the Gaels, who undergo a series of trials, resembling those of the Old Testament Israelites, flourishing in Egypt at the time of Moses. During Exodus they leave before eventually settling in the Iberian Peninsula where Bregon and Íth built the tower. Because of the focus on the *Lebor Gabála* and Ireland's early history, the history of Scotland from the arrival of the Gaels onwards is largely a blank slate in Scottish bardic poetry.⁴⁶⁵ Macpherson, as evidenced above, eschewed this version of Scottish ancestry, positing, instead, that the Scottish Gaels were the progenitors of the Irish. It is notable that John MacLean, a poet writing after Macpherson, sticks to the original origin legend and not the counter tradition pushed by Macpherson in *Ossian*.

Another, earlier, instance of the Tower of Babel origin story of the Gaelic language is found in a poem by Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alastair (Alexander MacDonald; c. 1698–c. 1770), *Moladh an ùghdair don t-seann chàin Ghàidhlig*, (The Author's Eulogy for the Old Gaelic Language). The Tower of Babel, the source of all modern languages, was cited by some Welsh poets and historians as the origin also of the Welsh language and the myth also has a medieval Irish source: Auraicept na n-Éces (the scholars' primer) (Gaelic: *Uraiceahced nan Éigias*), an Old Irish text on language and grammar (thought to date from the seventh century). Alasdair understands that Gaelic was created by those who met at the Tower of Babel to select the best elements of each new language to create a “superior” language:

'S ge h-ioma càinain,
O linn Bhàbeil fhuair

⁴⁶⁵ McLeod (2004), “Scotland and Ireland.” 124.

A' sliochd sin Adhaimh,
'S i Ghàidhlig a thug buaidh.⁴⁶⁶

And though many languages,
From the time of Babel,
Received that seed of Adam,
It is Gaelic that won.

Alasdair states that Gaelic “won” the battle for language supremacy. It is clear that, as in Chapter One, the Gaels and the Welsh do not think of each other even when they are vying for the same ethnic superiority over Britain.

Conclusion

While Macpherson certainly had a great impact on how the world viewed the Gàidhealtachd and encouraged antiquarian interest, he was following an already existing tradition of poetry collection. Of course, *Ossian* was much more than a mere poetry collection and, indeed, a work of literary art. The collections that followed him, however, almost all had something of the Celtic or druidic in their preface which was direct Ossianic influence. Macpherson did stimulate the already existing interest in Gaelic verse, but he does not seem to have operated at great length within Gaelic poetic circles. Of course, there are writers such as John Smith and Duncan Kennedy that interacted directly with *Ossian* and others such as Robert MacFarlane who worked on the Gaelic “translations” of the Macphersonic English-language originals, but the consensus is that poets composing within the Gàidhealtachd for a Gaelic audience were following their own continuing traditions rather than interacting with the first Celtic Revival of which Macpherson was part.

Unlike in Welsh poetry of the eighteenth century, there does not seem to have been one correct way to be a “bard” rather than just simply a “poet.” For instance, in Wales, poets

⁴⁶⁶ Thomson, Derick S. (ed.) (1996), *Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair: Selected Poems*, (Edinburgh: The Scottish Texts Society). 75-83.

needed to compose strict-meter poetry and use *cynganedd*, reference Wales's literary past, access the *awen*, and write within well-formed bardic circles. We do not see any such criteria in Gaelic poetry. The traditional system of patronage had broken down in Gaelic Scotland by the mid eighteenth century and poetry was less restricted. The appointment of Allan MacDougall by Alasdair Ranaldson MacDonell, fifteenth Earl of Glengarry, however, and the consideration of Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir as a Campbell bard shows that there was some cognizance of the legacy of bardic identity.

One might expect, with this, a preoccupation with Classical Gaelic verse as the conceptualized continuation of the druidic bardic tradition but we have no such thing. Perhaps this is because we have a long vernacular tradition that existed alongside the Classical one. There is no lamentation that Classical Gaelic poetry had diminished by the eighteenth century and no indication that the poets felt inferior to their Classical Gaelic counterparts. Panegyric transcended the boundaries between Classical and vernacular Gaelic verse from the beginning and panegyric continued into verse of the eighteenth century adapting and changing to fit the changes in society. Allusions to Gaelic heroes from the Fenian cycles also seem to follow in the footsteps of a long tradition, and the traditional Gaelic origin tales persisted, uninterrupted by Macpherson's anti-traditional claims. The eighteenth-century poets do not seem preoccupied by their own sense of druidic, bardic lineage in the way that the Welsh are, and Celto-British identity does not appear to be present as it was in Wales. It certainly is a component of Macpherson's Ossianic works but it seems to be confined to English-language Gàidhealtachd literature and Gaelic literature that interacted with English-language tastes such as the works published by Dr. John Smith and Duncan Kennedy.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE KING AND CROWN

Reactions to the wars of the eighteenth century can be said to have created a united Britishism in the face of the Other (see Chapter One for a detailed discussion of this). At the beginning of my period (1746), however, the Gàidhealtachd – embroiled in the Jacobite threat to Britain – was this Other, as considered, at least, by the rest of Britain. It is untrue that the Gàidhealtachd was uniformly Jacobite, and this will be discussed at greater length in this chapter, but it was certainly portrayed that way by the London-based government.⁴⁶⁷ In Chapter One, I have shown that Welsh poets identified with Britain in a way that the Gàidhealtachd did not (they attach themselves to the patriotic figure of Britannia, for instance). In this chapter, I argue that, although the Gàidhealtachd identifies with aspects of the British military at large and ultimately turns its back on Jacobitism, the Welsh identification with the monarchy and the military is much more involved. For a Celto-British identity to be present I would expect a unity of idea and some kind of shared “Celtic” (i.e. non-Anglophone) reaction. This chapter begins with an exploration of Jacobitism and investigates how Gaelic poets express their views – positive or negative – on their recent Jacobite past. It is pertinent to look at Jacobite poetry from the ‘Forty-Five Uprising itself to provide contrast with later views post-Culloden. Then, this chapter moves into a discussion of the reactions of both the Gaels and Welsh to the King and Crown. The Welsh here are, again, much more sympathetic to a British identity.

Jacobitism and militarization in Scotland

⁴⁶⁷ See: Pittock, Murray (second edition: 2009), *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans: The Jacobite Army in 1745*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).

Jacobitism was one of the defining movements of the eighteenth century, especially in the Gàidhealtachd, and reactions to the battle of Culloden, both before – when they were inciting the clans – during, and after should be explored to discover how Gaels reacted to the expanding British state. Contemporary discourse and modern scholarship around Jacobitism show that it was a complex movement, involving issues of religion, culture, dynasty, and nationalism.⁴⁶⁸ Derived from the name *Jacobus* (Latin for “James”), Jacobitism was, in its simplest terms, the politically and religiously motivated desire to restore king James II and VII following the invasion of William of Orange in November 1688. This so-called “Glorious Revolution,” which granted William of Orange the throne, was intended to restore Protestant control of the British state after James II and VII had introduced a series of pro-Catholic policies which alarmed his government. As William and his troops marched on London, James fled to France and, after the meeting of the Convention Parliament (22 January-12 February 1689), William and his wife, Mary (James II and VII’s Protestant daughter) were declared joint monarchs of England, Ireland and later Scotland on 11 May 1689, despite a short series of unsuccessful, bloody uprisings in Ireland and the Highlands, mounted by James and intended to re-assert his kingship. Upon William’s death in 1702, the throne passed to Mary’s sister, Anne.⁴⁶⁹

It was under Anne’s rule that in 1707 the parliaments of England and Scotland passed the Acts of Union that joined the kingdoms of Scotland and England (and Wales).

⁴⁶⁸ See: MacInnes, Allan I. (2007), “Jacobitism in Scotland: Episodic Cause or National Movement?” *Scottish Historical Review* 86, 225-252; Pittock, Murray, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans: The Jacobite Army in 1745*; Pittock, Murray (1998), *Jacobitism*, (Hampshire: Macmillan); Pittock, Murray (2003), “A Nation Divided, 1560-1746,” in *A New History of Scotland*, (Gloucestershire: Sutton), 161-225; Cook, Daniel (2024), “Jacobitism,” in Carruthers, Gerard (ed.) *A Companion to Scottish Literature* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons), 218-232; MacInnes, Allan I., German, Kieran, and Graham, Lesley (eds.) (2014), *Living with Jacobitism, 1690-1788: The Three Kingdoms and Beyond*, (London: Pickering & Chatto).

⁴⁶⁹ Pittock (2003), “A Nation Divided.”

This union added fuel to the fire for Jacobite supporters whose central wish was for the restoration of the multi-kingdom monarchy of England, Scotland, and Ireland, instead of the centralist state formed after 1688. The commonality for Scottish Jacobites in the eighteenth century was the wish to restore the Edinburgh Parliament and Episcopal Church government.⁴⁷⁰

After 1707, the House of Stuart became closely associated with nationalism and upon the accession of the Hanoverian George I in 1714, the Jacobites rose in 1715 in several different locations within Britain, this time on behalf of James II and VII's son, James. Other conflicts took place in 1708 and 1719. The Jacobites' efforts to overthrow the Hanoverian dynasty ended, however, with the rising of 1745 led by Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie), the grandson of James II and VII.⁴⁷¹ The Jacobites were decimated at the Battle of Culloden on 16 April 1746. The battle of Culloden was followed by a concerted effort by the Hanoverian forces to eradicate the clan system and the culture in the Gàidhealtachd.⁴⁷²

It is now agreed that the government legislation passed after Culloden was “epoch-making,” being both reflective of the power of the British state and successful in assimilating the “barbaric” Scottish Gàidhealtachd into a London-centered Britain.⁴⁷³ The series of laws enacted between 1746 and 1752 serve, in Matthew P. Dziennik's words, as

⁴⁷⁰ Pittock (2009), *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*. 43.

⁴⁷¹ MacInnes (2007), “Jacobitism in Scotland.”

⁴⁷² Davis, Leith and Janjua, Jasreen Kaur (2021), “Fierce Females and Male Pretenders: Gender, Cultural Memory and Anti-Jacobite Print Culture in the 1745 Rising” in Davis, Leith and Sorenson, Janet (eds.) *International Companion to Scottish Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century* (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International). 117-131. 117-8.

⁴⁷³ Dziennik, Matthew P. (2021), ““Under ye Lash of ye Law”: The State and the Law in the Post-Culloden Scottish Highlands”, *Journal of British Studies* 60. 609-631. 609-610.

“an important marker of state power in eighteenth-century Britain.”⁴⁷⁴ Firstly, immediately after Culloden, the wounded of the rebel army were shot, bayoneted, or burned alive along with members of their camp followers and civilians.⁴⁷⁵ By the summer of 1746, there had been violence throughout Gaelic Scotland as military patrols campaigned causing starvation, pillaging, and terror through seizing cattle and destroying crops.⁴⁷⁶ The government policy moved from decimating the Jacobite cause to ensuring the suppression of future uprisings. The government laws passed 1746 are as follows: The Act of Attainder (19 Geo. II, c. 26) which found certain Jacobites guilty of treason without trial; the Disarming Act (19 Geo. II, c. 39) which disarmed Scotland north of the River Forth; the Vesting Act (20 Geo. II, c. 41) which confiscated estates belonging to certain Jacobite leaders; and the Dress Act (19 Geo. 2. C. 39, s. 17) which outlawed the wearing of traditional Highland dress by men and boys. Following from 1747 to 1752 were the Heritable Jurisdictions (Scotland) Act (20 Geo. II, c. 13) which abolished the legal jurisdictions of Scottish heretors, and the Annexing Act (25 Geo. II, c. 41) which gave the confiscated estates to a public commission.⁴⁷⁷

The new positions in the post-1747 legal order were taken up by landed and middling Gaels and they generally did so with their own interests in mind, meaning that the local elites were strengthened through incorporation in legal institutions of state and

⁴⁷⁴ Dziennik (2021), ““Under ye Lash of ye Law”.” 609.

⁴⁷⁵ Dziennik (2021), ““Under ye Lash of ye Law”.” 612.

⁴⁷⁶ Way, Peter (2013), ““The Scum of Every County, the Refuse of Mankind” Recruiting the British Army in the Eighteenth Century” in Zürcher, Erik-Jan (ed.) *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative Study of Military Labour 1500-2000* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press). 291-329. 303.

⁴⁷⁷ Dziennik (2021), ““Under ye Lash of ye Law”.” 614.

⁴⁷⁷ Dziennik (2021), ““Under ye Lash of ye Law”.” 630.

formalization of the ways by which they exercised their power.⁴⁷⁸ While showing the power of the state, however, the post-Culloden legislation also illuminated the inherent weaknesses of the eighteenth-century state, exposing the fissures that existed within the political nation.⁴⁷⁹ For instance, enforcing the new parliamentary law was a challenge throughout the Gàidhealtachd and the government as too reliant on Gaels to enforce their own subordination.

The forced degradation of the Gàidhealtachd after Culloden was partially represented by the Dress Act of 1746 – an attempt at bringing the Highland clans further under British yoke. The Dress Act stated that from and after the first of August, no man or boy “within the part of Britain called Scotland” other than those “employed as Officers and Soldiers in His Majesty’s Forces” should ever wear the clothes commonly known as Highland clothes – “the Plaid, Philabeg, or little Kilt, Trowes, Shoulder-belts... tartan or party-coloured plaid.” For the first offence, the boy or man would be “imprisoned for 6 months” and for the second, “be transported to any of His Majesty’s plantations beyond the sea, there to remain for the space of seven years.”⁴⁸⁰ This careful decision to allow the wearing of Highland garb, but exclusively within military contexts, added to a growing Highland affinity with the British military as they found a sense of pride in their Gaeldom.

Although Iain mac Mhurchaidh shows loyalty to the British state in fighting against the Americans, he does imagine exacting revenge on the British government “beasts” for taking away Highland customs such as the Highland dress in *Tha mi sgìth ’n fhògar seo*, (I am tired of this banishment):

⁴⁷⁸ Dziennik, Matthew (2021), ““Under ye Lash of ye Law”.” 619.

⁴⁷⁹ Dziennik (2021), ““Under ye Lash of ye Law”.” 630.

⁴⁸⁰ *The statutes at large, from Magna Charta to 1869*, (Joseph Bentham). 526-7.

Ach nan tigeadh Cornwallis,
Sinn a ghluaisheadh gu sòlasach.
Gu sgrios a thoirt air bèistean,
Thug an t-èideadh 's an stòras uainn.⁴⁸¹

Yet, if Cornwallis would come,
We would march happily.
To bring devastation on the beasts,
Who took our clothing and our belongings from us.⁴⁸²

Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair also explains that the Act made Gaels “ravenous” for
“Saxon life-blood”:

Shaoil leis gun do mhaolaich seo
Faobhar nan Gàidheal tapaidh,
Ach 's ann a chuir gèir' orr'
Nas beurra na deud na h-ealtainn.

D'fhàg e iad làn mì-rùin,
Cho ciocrasach ri coin acrach;
Cha chaisg deoch an ìotadh,
Ge b' fhion e, ach fìor-fhuil Shagsuinn.⁴⁸³

(King George) thought that this (Act)
Blunted the blade of the brave Gaels;
But in fact it put an edge on them,
Sharper than a razor's bite.

He has left them full of malice,
As ravenous as starving dogs;
No drink can quench their thirst,
Even wine – only Saxon life-blood.⁴⁸⁴

In the short term, recruitment into the British Highland regiments – regiments
raised out of the Gaelic population, the first of which was the Black Watch – was

⁴⁸¹ Chaimbeul (ed.) (2020), *Iain mac Mhurchaidh*. 258.

⁴⁸² Chaimbeul (trans.) (2020), *Iain mac Mhurchaidh*. 259.

⁴⁸³ Campbell (1984), *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five*. 158.

⁴⁸⁴ Gillies, William (trans.) (1991), “Gaelic Songs of the 'Forty-Five,” *Scottish Studies* 30. 19-58. 47.

inseparable from the suppression of the Jacobite threat, quashed at Culloden in 1746.⁴⁸⁵ The army played a central role in subordinating the Gàidhealtachd. At first there was concern over the use of Highland troops, which could possibly contain Jacobite “traitors,” but this dissipated with the outbreak of hostilities with France, and William Pitt the Elder, First Earl of Chatham – a Whig statesman and later Prime Minister of Great Britain – decided to raise two new battalions of Highland troops in 1756 from clans that had supported the Stuarts.⁴⁸⁶ Another Highland battalion formed in 1758 with two more following in 1759. By the end of the war, ten new battalions of Highlanders had been raised, meaning that the Highlands was much more militarized than the Lowlands.⁴⁸⁷ As Peter Way explains: “England ghettoized the Highlands as “an imperial-military reservoir”.”⁴⁸⁸ Enlightenment thinking conceptualized society as being in various stages in progression, from savage primitivism with an emphasis on militarism through to feudalism with its commercial society. The Highlands were increasingly envisioned as remaining in the second, militaristic phase of development and the ’45 and the Jacobite cause, which were closely associated with the Highlands, were seen as proving this.⁴⁸⁹

Before and during the 1745-6 Jacobite uprising, Lowland Scots and English people saw the Highlands as a barbaric, alien, and anti-British nation. However, the involvement of the Gàidhealtachd thereafter in the British military in Highland regiments changed this

⁴⁸⁵ See: Dziennik, Matthew P. (2012), “Hierarchy, Authority and Jurisdiction in the mid Eighteenth-Century Recruitment of the Highland Regiments,” *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 85 (227). 89-104.

⁴⁸⁶ Way (2013), ““The Scum of Every County”.” 304.

⁴⁸⁷ Way (2013), ““The Scum of Every County”.” 304.

⁴⁸⁸ Way (2013), ““The Scum of Every County”.” 303.

⁴⁸⁹ Mackillop, Andrew (2000), *More Fruitful than the Soil: Army, Empire, and the Scottish Highlands, 1715-1815*, (Tuckwell). 216.

opinion and the Highlanders began to be seen, as Andrew Mackillop states, as “the morally untainted and exemplary defender of Britain, its constitution and empire.”⁴⁹⁰ The nature of Highland identification with Britishness after the Jacobite defeat in 1745 up until Waterloo in 1815 has been closely associated with the region’s military involvement. Military recruitment in the Gàidhealtachd was disproportionately high – in part because of economic necessity – and large-scale in the period after Culloden and has been seen as the clearest manifestation of the region’s increasingly British status.⁴⁹¹

The British government and military punished the Gàidhealtachd with a heavy hand and legislation was enacted and military might used to suppress any formation of a further uprising as the Gàidhealtachd was seen as the hotbed of the Jacobite cause in Great Britain. However, G. Murray Pittock argues in his book *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans: The Jacobite Army in 1745* (2nd edition; 2009) that this is misleading, and that the Jacobite uprising of 1745 was in fact a pan-Scottish one rather than a cause supported by the Gàidhealtachd alone. The myth alluded to in Pittock’s title is that the Jacobite cause was peripheral, based north and west of the Highland line, and mainly sustained by Gaels, who were often characterized as Catholic.⁴⁹² This myth, according to Pittock, is maintained by “historiographical exclusion; nostalgic sentimentalism; heroic primitivism; the equation of tartan uniforms with Gaelic culture; and the neglect of the northern army.”⁴⁹³ The Gael became, during the eighteenth century, “quite explicitly Scottish, not merely Gaelic” and

⁴⁹⁰ Mackillop (2000), *More Fruitful than the Soil*. 205.

⁴⁹¹ Mackillop (2000), *More Fruitful than the Soil*. 204.

⁴⁹² Pittock (2009), *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*. 7.

⁴⁹³ Pittock (2009), *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*. 15.

the symbol of the patriot Gael was doubtless recognized in Charles Edward's decision to dress his troops in the Highland dress.⁴⁹⁴

The tartan, just like the red coat, became synonymous with British militarism and both these traditions crafted unique military personas. This occurred as the failed Jacobite revolt provided the British fiscal-military state with the ability to open the Highlands to "improvement."⁴⁹⁵ Military recruitment, removing former rebels and uprooting the common people with the commercialization of the Highland economy, played a key role in this improvement. The lairds and recruits benefited from the capital generated by the military involvement and the army's need for recruits transformed the region. William Wildman, Lord Barrington, the member of Parliament for the border town Berwick-upon-Tweed, stated in the House of Commons in 1751 that: "I am for always having in our army as many Scottish soldiers as possible [...] not that I think them more brave than those of any other country we can recruit from, but because they are generally more hardy and less mutinous; and of all Scottish soldiers I should choose to have and keep in our army as many Highlanders as possible."⁴⁹⁶ Andrew MacKillop sees this as a reflection of Britain's "cannon-fodder policy" whereby Britain exploited Gaelic militarism for its overseas imperial interests.⁴⁹⁷

The following poetic excerpts show several different views around Jacobitism in the period during and following the 'Forty-Five. The opinions in these poems vary from

⁴⁹⁴ Pittock (1998), *Jacobitism*. 69.

⁴⁹⁵ Way (2013), "'The Scum of Every County'." 307.

⁴⁹⁶ Quoted in: Way (2013), "'The Scum of Every County'." 302.

⁴⁹⁷ See: MacKillop (2000), *More Fruitful than the Soil*.

continued, albeit weak, support of the Jacobite cause following Culloden, to shame in Jacobite ancestors and allegiance to the new Hanoverian dynasty.

Songs of the 'Forty-Five

To assess the opinions prevailing after Culloden, it is necessary to assess those that were present during the year of the uprising ('45) and of the battle itself (April 1746). This will provide contrast. Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair sings of his pride in the Highland “battle-dress” and “tartan kilt” in the following poem:

O hì ri rì, tha e tighinn,
O hì ri rì, 'n Rìgh tha uainn,
Gheibheamaid ar n-airm 's ar n-èideadh,
'S breacan an fhèilidh an cuaich.⁴⁹⁸

O hì ri rì, he is coming,
O hì ri rì, the king we desire,
Let us take our weapons and battle-dress
And the tartan kilt plaided up.⁴⁹⁹

Depictions of Bonnie Prince Charlie are not infrequently messianic in approach.⁵⁰⁰ He is often the “king we desire” as in Alasdair’s words. Calls to arms are also common in Jacobite poetry and Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair again calls for the “clans of the Gael” to “give service to Charles” in this poem:

A chlannaibh nan Gàidheal
Dh’am b’ àbhaist bhith rìoghail,
Hò-rò, togaibh an àird;
Is freasdailibh an dràsta
Do Theàrlach mar dhìlsean⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁸ MacDonald, Rev. Angus, and MacDonald, Rev. Archibald (eds.) (1924), *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald* (Inverness: Northern Counties Newspaper and Print). 68.

⁴⁹⁹ Gillies (trans.) (1991), “Gaelic Songs of the 'Forty-Five.” 25.

⁵⁰⁰ Gillies (trans.) (1991), “Gaelic Songs of the 'Forty-Five.” 24.

⁵⁰¹ Stewart, Alexander, and Stewart, Donald (eds.) (1804) *Cochruinneacha taoghta de shaothair nam bard gaèlach* (“*The Stewart’s Collection*”), (Edinburgh: Clodh-bhuailt le T. Stiuart.). 382.

Clans of the Gael,
Who have traditionally been loyal,
Hò-rò, give service now
To Charles as his loyal followers⁵⁰²

The following extract is ascribed by Rev. Thomas Sinton (1906) to “a Stewart Lady” and again talks of how they shall see the crown on “young Charles Stewart”:

'S a Theàrlaich òig Stiùbhairt,
Chì sinne an crùn ort,
'S bidh tu fhathasd a' sgiùrsadh nam bèisdean.⁵⁰³

And young Charles Stewart,
We shall see the crown on you,
And you will yet be scourging the (Hanoverian) brutes.⁵⁰⁴

Another prominent idea in poetry of the Jacobite period was the Wheel of Fortune turning or about to turn in favor of Jacobitism. Nighean Aonghais Oig, puts it thus:

Ged leig Dia greis air adhart
Do'n mhuic bhith cladach ad àite,
Nis o'n thionndaidh a' chuibhle
Thèid gach traoitear fo'r sàiltean.⁵⁰⁵

Although God allowed a period
Of advancement to the Pig, (to enable him) to root in your place,
Now that the Wheel has turned
Every traitor will go under our heels⁵⁰⁶

The sadness that John Roy Stewart feels because of the lack of “glad tidings” and his anxiety that Prince Charles will not return is expressed in the following poem:

Dh'fhalbh gach toileachadh uam,
Sheac le mulad mo ghruaidh,

⁵⁰² Gillies (trans.) (1991), “Gaelic Songs of the 'Forty-Five.” 26.

⁵⁰³ Sinton, Rev. Thomas (ed.) (1906), *The Poetry of Badenoch*, (Inverness). 209.

⁵⁰⁴ Gillies (trans.) (1991), “Gaelic Songs of the 'Forty-Five.” 36.

⁵⁰⁵ Campbell, John Lorne (ed.) (1984; 2nd edition), *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Texts Society 15). 22.

⁵⁰⁶ Gillies (trans.) (1991), “Gaelic Songs of the 'Forty-Five.” 27.

'S nach cluinn mi 'san uair sgeul èibhinn
Mu Phrionns' Teàrlach mo rùin⁵⁰⁷

All pleasure has departed me,
My cheek is frosted with sorrow,
Since at present I hear no glad tidings
About my beloved Prince Charles⁵⁰⁸

“All pleasure has departed” him and his “cheek is frosted with sorrow” because of the lack of tidings about Prince Charles.

Poetry post-Culloden

The state reaction to the Jacobite Uprising, as already mentioned, decimated the cause. All hope is not lost, however, for Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair – a staunch Jacobite.

Alasdair hopes for another uprising after Culloden, wishing for the clans to “bide their time” so that their “hard blades” may win them battle in *Oran a Rinneadh an 1746*, (A Song Made in 1746):

Na gabhaibh sìth o Dh[eòr]s';
Le 'r dòchas neartor firinneach
Creidibh dans sa' chòir,
Gun tig reliobh nas leòr;
Gur h-ann air rèir mar chuireas sibh
O, fuirichibh, a Chlann,
'S chì sibh ur n-uil' uireasan
Da bhuinnig le cruas lann.

...
O! 'n cullach sin R[ìgh] D[eòr]s',
Mac na cr[àì]n[e] Gearmailtich!
'S e' chàirdeas ruinn 's a dhàimh
Gaol fithich air a' chnàimh;
Gun d' fheann e sinn o 'r bèin;
Ghlac is chreach an cealgaire
'S gun marbh e sinn gu lèir;
Na daoine cha leis fèin,
'Sann uime sin gur coma leis

⁵⁰⁷ Campbell (ed.) (1984), *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five*. 176.

⁵⁰⁸ Gillies (trans.) (1991), “Gaelic Songs of the 'Forty-Five.” 44.

Ged phronnamaid a chèil'.⁵⁰⁹

Do not take peace from George;
With your hope that's strong and true
Trust firmly in the right,
Relief will come in full;
Let not your hope be faint;
According as you sow the seed
Your increase then will show;
Bide your time, O clans,
And you will see our every need
Being met by our hard blades.

...
That boar who's called King George,
Son of the German sow;
His friendship and his love
Is the raven's for the bone;
He pulled us from our pelt;
The traitor caught and plundered us
And then killed us outright.
We're not his people anyway
And so he doesn't care
If we beat each other up.

This poem is stoically anti-Hanoverian, stating that the friendship of the “boar” King George is the “raven's for the bone,” having “plundered” the Gàidhealtachd of its culture. Alasdair calls for unity as King George “doesn't care if [the Gaels] beat each other up” – a united force is needed to withstand the “son of the German sow.”

A weaker Jacobite sentiment is found in the next poem by Mairearad Ghriogarach (Margaret MacGregor; c.1750-1830). She is disappointed rather than hopeful and she bemoans the negative effects on the ordinary Gael after Culloden. According to her, they “lost wealth” if not “supported in France” and had lasting “injuries.” The poem is *Òran do Chòrnail Alastair Robastan Tighearna Shruthain*, (A song for Colonel Alasdair Robastan, Lord of Strewan):

⁵⁰⁹ Thomson, Derick S. (ed.) (1993), *Gaelic Poetry in the Eighteenth Century*, (Aberdeen: The Association for Scottish Literary Studies). 54-57.

'S e do là-sa Chuil-odair dh'fhàg dochann aig na Gàidheil,
'S liuthad Fhear ann [/ fear fearainn?]⁵¹⁰ chaill an earras san àiteach;
B' èiginn teicheadh air astar cian fada on càirdean,
'S iad gun mhanas gun aithridh, mur deanta taic anns an Fhràing dhaibh.⁵¹¹

It is your day, Culloden, that left an injury on the Gael,
There are many men [/ farmers?] who lost their wealth in the field;
It was necessary to flee far away from friends,
They have no home-stead, no worth, if they are not supported in France.

Ghriogarach, however, also shows allegiance to the “kingdom” and laments that, being female, she is unable to join the military alongside her brothers. She suggests that if she were a “valorous man” instead of having a “small body” she would be able to fight alongside them in the American Revolutionary War, fighting on the Royalist side. She composes this in *Òran do bhràithrean bha an cogadh America*, (A song to her brothers who were in the American war):

Struagh nach mis thachair,
Bhi m dhuine tapi treubhach.
S gu m feuchinn pairt na chaireachd,
Tha m falach ann m chreubhaig,
...
On thachair dhomh bhi m bhoireanneach,
Nach ura mi so dhianamh,
S fheudar dhomh tre bhanalas,
Bhi fanachd ann m righeachd.
Mo thealeach bhi toirt aire orra,...⁵¹²

It is a shame that I did not happen,
To be a strong valorous man,
And that I could try some of the cunning,
Hidden in my small body,
...
Since I happened to be a woman,
I cannot do this,
I am required through female behavior,

⁵¹⁰ This is an alternative manuscript reading suggested by the editor: Michael Byrne (see below footnote).

⁵¹¹ Byrne, M. (ed.) (2007), *Mairearad Ghriogarach: sùil thòiseachail air banabhàrd air dìochuimhne*, Scottish Gaelic Studies, 23. 85-122. 116.

⁵¹² Macintoisich (ed.) (1831), *Co-chruinneach dh'òrain thaghte Ghàeleach*. 12-15.

To stay in this kingdom,
To look after my family,...⁵¹³

Frustration at being female and thereby unable to fight or exact revenge is an established trope in women's Gaelic verse.⁵¹⁴

Maighread Chamshron was the first female poet to print her own work in Gaelic with clear attribution in 1785 with *Orain Nuadh Ghaidhealach* ("New Gaelic Songs") (this work is discussed at greater length in Chapter Three). Much of her poetry deals with Jacobitism through a negative lens. She describes Bonnie Prince Charlie's attempt to regain the throne as, Kate Mathis describes, "imprudent idealism, suggesting that his followers' dispossession and even execution was deserved."⁵¹⁵ This is seen in her poem, *Moladh do na Fìneachaibh Gaidheileach a fhuair an Oighreachdan, ann bliaghna 1784*, (Praise of the Highland Clans that Regained their Estates in 1784):

Chaill an sinnsir sud le 'n gòraich,
'S cha chion aithne bh' orr ' na folum,
'Mhain nach gèille iad le m Beò-shlaint,
Ach le Tearlach an aghaidh Dheòrsa.

Chaidh cuid do 'n Fhraing, 's cuid do 'n Òlaind,
Chaidh cuid san fhairge sìos le doilinn.
Chaidh cuid eile 'reuba beò dhiubh,
A leth a' Phrionnsa a dh' fhalbh air fògra.⁵¹⁶

Those ancestors lost with their foolishness,
And they weren't lacking in knowledge or education,
Merely that they wouldn't yield their livelihood,

⁵¹³ Maciver, Ruairidh (trans.) (2018), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience, 1756-1856*, (Glasgow: PhD). 253.

⁵¹⁴ Gillies, William (2005), "Traditional Women's Songs" in Fazzini, M. (ed.) *Alba Literaria: A History of Scottish Literature* (Venezia Mestre: Amos). 165-178. 174.

⁵¹⁵ Mathis, Kate Louise (2021), "Gaelic Women's Poetry" in Davis, Leith and Sorenson, Janet (eds.) *International Companion to Scottish Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century* (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International). 199-219. 207.

⁵¹⁶ Cham'ron, M. (1785), *Orain Nuadh Ghaidhealach*, (Edinburgh). 1-6.

But stood with Charles against George.

Some went to France and some went to Holland,
Some went down in the sea with dolor.
Some others were torn asunder,
Because of the Prince who left in exile.⁵¹⁷

Chamshron suggests that the deaths of her fellow-Gaels were due to “foolishness,” unaccompanied by solid thinking, and writes of the shame she feels even though her ancestors were “torn asunder.” A similar turning of the back against Jacobitism is found in John MacLean (Bàrd Thighearna Chola; 1787-1848)’s poem, *Do Thighearn’ Og Chola*, (To the Laird of Coll). Although he is not so vocal about the dangers of Jacobitism and their repercussions, he states that Clan Cameron, once hopeful for the return of King Charles, has changed allegiance to being “vengeful” on the Hanoverian side instead:

Clann Chamshroin bho Lochaidh,
Fir mhora neo-sgathach,
'Bha armailteach, eolach;
Ro-dhiolail do Dheorsa,
Ged a sheas iad thar ordaigh
Nuair a dh'fhogradh Rìgh Tearlach,⁵¹⁸

Clan Cameron from Lochy,
Great and brave men,
Who were trained in arms and skillful;
Exceedingly vengeful for George,
Though they stood against his order
When King Charles was banished.⁵¹⁹

A similar change in loyalties and abandonment of support of the exiled king James is found a poem by Iain mac Mhurchaidh (John MacRae; fl. 1774-80), *Ag èirigh air mo thaobh ri smaoineachdainn mòr*, (Rising on my side and pondering deeply). Iain mac

⁵¹⁷ Maciver (trans.) (2018), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience*. 247.

⁵¹⁸ Dunbar, Robert D. (ed.) (2006), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*, “Bàrd Thighearna Chola”, “Am Bàrd MacGilleain,” (Edinburgh: PhD) 477.

⁵¹⁹ Dunbar (ed.) (2006), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*. 477.

Mhurchaidh was an early immigrant to the Colony of North Carolina, where this poem was written; he arrived in 1774 and fought as a loyalist soldier during the American Revolution. Mac Mhurchaidh seems to have made a U-turn in his allegiances from being a “young man,” waiting for the Stuart Pretender to return to unwavering support of the British monarchy and fighting for the British cause in North America:

Smaoinich mi gum b' àraid dhomh tàmh is mi òg
 Gus an tigeadh Frangaich le campachadh slòigh;
 Rachainn leis an Rìgh sin a chobhair le mo dhìcheall,
 Sin nuair thig an t-sìth, 's math an tìm gu bhith pòst'.⁵²⁰

I felt it was strange for me as a young man to wait
 Till the French would come with an invading army;
 I would go with that King to aid him with my diligence,
 Then when peace came, it would be a good time to be married.⁵²¹

Another negative view of the British military – being duped into joining the army – is found in the poem *Òran an t-Saighdeir*, (The Soldier's Song) by Alasdair Mac Iain Bhàin (Alexander Grant; c.1772–c. 1812):

Ged nach 'eil mi ach òg,
 S' beag m' aire air ceòl;
 Rinn m' aighir 's mo phròis
 Mo thrèigsinn.
 Dol do 'n arm de m' cheart deòin,
 'S mi chaidh iomrall 's a' cheò;
 Sid am marg' nach do chord
 'Na dhéigh rium.⁵²²

Although I am but young,
 Little is my interest in music;
 Joy and pride
 Have left me.
 Joining the army willingly,
 I went astray in the fog;

⁵²⁰ Chaimbeul, Màiri Sine (ed.) (2020), *Iain mac Mhurchaidh: The Life and Work of John MacRae, Kintail and North Carolina*, (Glasgow: Scottish Texts Society). 244.

⁵²¹ Chaimbeul (trans.) (2020), *Iain mac Mhurchaidh*. 245.

⁵²² Macpherson, D. (ed.) (1868), *An Duanaire*, (Edinburgh). 284.

That was the shilling that
I did not come to enjoy.⁵²³

In classic Gaelic style, Alasdair shows his discontent through an inability to enjoy music and states that by joining the military he “went astray in the fog.”

The loss of the Highland Dress as a cultural marker in the Gàidhealtachd – prohibited (as discussed above) from 1746 in the Dress Act – is also lamented (as we read in the excerpts from Iain mac Mhuirich and Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair). The act was, however, repealed in 1782, but by that time, the damage had been done and kilts and tartans were no longer ordinary Highland regalia in the Gàidhealtachd. According to Murray Pittock, “as a controlled and nostalgic means of expressing Scottish difference, tartan ended its Jacobite career in the social ritual of clan gatherings, the interior décor of Balmoral and the retail trade of Edinburgh’s Royal Mile.”⁵²⁴ Famously, however, George IV paraded the Highland dress at the Highland pageant of 1822 and, leading up to this, aristocrats and private societies across Scotland began to wear what they considered to be an “ancient” dress as a means of promoting Scottish nationalism.⁵²⁵ Gladness at the reinstating of the Highland dress is mentioned in Maighread Chamshron’s *Moladh do na Fineachaibh Gaidheileach a fhuair an Oighreachdan, ann bliaghna 1784*, (Praise of the Highland Clans that Regained their Estates in 1784):

S gu ma slan do Dhuic Mhontròs,
A thug an t-ac’ amach o’n Bhord,
Do na Gaidheil air am breacain bhoidheach,
Cead dol do’n Chlachan leo Di-domhnuich.

⁵²³ Maciver (trans.) (2018), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience*. 137.

⁵²⁴ Pittock, Murray (1998), *Jacobitism*, (Macmillan). 74.

⁵²⁵ For more on the use of tartan, see: Brown, Ian (2020), “Tartan Enactments and Performing Hybridity,” in *Performing Scottishness: Enactment and National Identities*, (Switzerland: Springer Int. Publishing AG). 141-166.

Bha cridh' nan Gaidheal air an smùradh,
Le'n Còtaiche mor, 's le brigsean chluitnich,
Nach direadh mona, beinn, na stuic leo;
Gu 's an d' fhuair iad na breacain ùra.⁵²⁶

And good health to the Duke of Montrose,
Who took the act out from the Board,
Permission for the Gaels to go to the church
In the beautiful tartan on Sunday.

The hearts of the Gaels were smeared,
With the long coats, and the woolen trousers,
In which they could not climb a mountain, a hill, or the rocks,
Until they got the new plaids.⁵²⁷

She thanks James Graham, Third Duke of Montrose (1755–1826), who persuaded parliament to repeal the Dress Act in 1782, for giving the Gaels permission to wear the tartan. She regrets that they were previously “smeared” with the long-coated, woolen-trouser-attire of the Lowlanders. James Graham, Third Duke of Montrose was a descendant of James Graham, First Marquess of Montrose (1612-1650), leader of the Royalist forces at the Battle of Inverlochy.

These poetic excerpts post-Culloden have shown a range of views. They vary from continued support of the Jacobite cause and hope of a new uprising, weak support of the Jacobite cause and lamentation at the current standing of the Gaels, shame in Jacobite ancestors, disappointment at being duped into George III's army, and anger at the Dress Act of 1746 with gladness at its repeal in 1782. There is also support of George III, and pride in serving in George III's army. It is clear that there was not a uniform standpoint. In general, however, the association the Gaelic poets had with the British military was one of growing pride.

⁵²⁶ Cham'ron (1785), *Orain Nuadh Ghaidhealach*. 1-6.

⁵²⁷ Maciver (trans.) (2018), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience*. 247.

The King and Crown

As we have seen in the section on Jacobite poetry, views of the Crown can vary in Gaelic poetry but there is a general turning towards the British military. It is pertinent to read Welsh poetry alongside this Gaelic poetry to assess the way British identity is presented in both regions and see how deeply identification with the British military and monarchy runs. Of course, in Wales's case, Jacobitism was not such a deciding factor but Jacobitism is inextricable from Gaelic poetry of the time and so the poetry in the following section will separate poetry from the Gàidhealtachd and Wales with Welsh and Gaelic poetry reacting to the French Revolution being read together at the end of the Welsh section.

Gaelic Poetry

Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir (Duncan Bàn MacIntyre; 1724-1812), a Hanoverian supporter from the beginning rather than a reformed Jacobite, had several occupations, including forester, constable in the Edinburgh City Guard, and soldier in the Argyll Regiment of Militia. As a soldier, he fought for the Hanoverians during the Jacobite rising of 1745-1746. His allegiance to the established order is, as Liesbeth van Hulle reports, “incontrovertible” and he praises his comrades for their bravery against the Jacobite forces, laments the assassination of Colin Campbell of Glenure in the Appin Murder, and eulogizes King George and the British Empire.⁵²⁸ As van Hulle again remarks, “he [Mac an t-Saoir] spent his entire adult career in arms and embodied the quintessential warrior masculinity the Highland was renowned for.”⁵²⁹

⁵²⁸ Stiùbhart, Domhnall Uilleam (2021), “Gaelic Enlightenment to Global Gaelosphere: Gaelic Literature, 1750-1800”, in Davis, Leith and Sorensen, Janet (eds.) *International Companion to Scottish Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century*, (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International). 155.

⁵²⁹ Van Hulle (2022), “Anns Gach Gnìomh.” 21.

In the following two excerpts we see Mac an t-Saoir's unerring allegiance to King George III and his gladness to serve in the Hanoverian military. Firstly, we have *Oran do Iarla Bhràghaid-Albann*, (Song to the Earl of Breadalbane):

'S e 'n togail inntinn
Cho grinn 's a b' aithne dhomh
Bhith 'n cùirt an rìgh,
Gun bhith strìth ri sgagalagachd;
Cha dean sinn feòraich
Air tuille stòrais,
'S cha teirig lòn dhuinn
R' ar beò air gearasdan.⁵³⁰

'Tis exhilaration
As fine as I know of,
To be in the king's retinue,
And not strive with drudgery;
We do not ask for
Increase of riches,
Food will not fail us
While we live in garrison.⁵³¹

The "exhilaration" Mac an t-Saoir feels when serving King George is mirrored in the following poem in which he rejoices at the "happiness in the kingdom" now that the king has "obtained hereditary right":

'S mòr an sonas th' anns an Rìoghachd
On a chàidh an Rìgh seo chrùnadh
Anns an àit a bh'aig a shìnnseachd,
An d'fhuair a shìnnseanair còir dhùthchais.⁵³²

Great is the happiness prevailing in the Kingdom
Since this king was crowned
In the place held by his forebearers
Where his great-grandfather obtained hereditary right.⁵³³

⁵³⁰ MacLeod (ed.) (1978), *Òrain Dhonnchaidh Bhàin*. 366.

⁵³¹ Quoted in: Maciver (2018), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience*. 110.

⁵³² MacLeod, Angus (1952), *The Songs of Duncan Ban Macintyre*, (Edinburgh). 32.

⁵³³ Gillies (trans.) (1991), "Gaelic Songs of the 'Forty-Five." 51.

Mac an t-Saoir again expresses his “gladsome” support of King George while he is “stoutly defending the kingdom” fighting in the French Revolution in *Òran na Gasaid*, (“Song of the Gazette”):

'S aighearach bhith 'n camp an rìgh
A' seasamh na rìoghachd gu làidir;

Cumail eagail air na Frangaich,
Fhad 's a bhios ceann air a phràbar.⁵³⁴

'Tis gladsome to be in the king's camp,
Stoutly defending the kingdom.

And keeping the Frenchmen in terror,
While the mob has a leader.⁵³⁵

However, Mac an t-Saoir also recognized that the Jacobite uprising had left the Gaels under suspicion, “as if they were alien to the nation”:

'S bhathas greis 'gan cur an duileachd
Mar nach buineadh iad do 'n phàirtidh;
Ach 'n uair fhuair iad mios is creideas
'S a chreideadh nach dèanadh iad fàilinn,
'S iad bu sheasmhaich' air an onoir
A thug lann sholais a sgàbard.
Bha iad bras a h-uile latha
Ri am catha dol 'sna blàraibh;
Chaidh gach duine dhuibh air chruadal,
'S ann orra bha buaidh gach làrach;
Bha commission aig gach òigear
'S e toir òrdugh d' a bhatailleann,
'S iad cho dìleas do Rìgh Deòrs'
'S a bhiodh na leòmhainn dh' an cuid àlaich.⁵³⁶

Yet for a time they were held suspect,
as if they were alien to the nation;
but once they won esteem and trust,
and 'twas believed they would not fail,
they were the truest in their honor,
that ever drew bright brand from sheath.

⁵³⁴ Mackillop (ed.) (2000), *More Fruitful than the Soil*. 379.

⁵³⁵ Mackillop (ed.) (2000), *More Fruitful than the Soil*. 380.

⁵³⁶ MacLeod (1978), *Orain Dhonnchaidh Bhàin*. 28-29.

On all occasions in the time of fighting,
ardent were they, going into battles;
every man of them braved peril,
and on every field theirs was the victory;
each young gallant was commissioned,
and gave commands to his battalion,
and they were devoted to King George,
as lions would be to their whelps.⁵³⁷

On the other hand, as Mac an t-Saoir states, the “esteem and trust” that the Gaels won through serving in the British army post-Culloden redeemed Gaelic society as “on all occasions” they were “ardent” and now “devoted to King George.” Nevertheless, Mac an t-Saoir also shows his disappointment in the Dress Act in *Oran do ’n Bhriograis*, (A Song to the Breeches). A harsh and bitter critic of the ban on Highland dress, he declared:

’S ar leam gur h-olc an duais
Do na daoine chaidh ‘sa’ chruadal
An aosaichean thoirt uapa,
Ged a bhuannaich Dìus Uilleam leo.⁵³⁸

Methinks it is an ill reward,
for the men who went campaigning,
to deprive them of their raiment,
though by their help Duke William won.⁵³⁹

After fighting in the Hanoverian camp for the ’45, there is no doubt that Mac an t-Saoir felt dishonored by this.

Maighread Chamshron, previously mentioned in this chapter for her shame in her Jacobite heritage, shows pride in the fact that Gaels are joining and serving in George III’s military in *Moladh do na Fineachaibh Gaidheileach a fhuair an Oighreachdan, ann bliaghna 1784*, (Praise of the Highland Clans that Regained their Estates in 1784):

’S ann a nìse a chi Rìgh Deorsa,

⁵³⁷ Van Hulle (trans.) (2022), “Anns Gach Gnìomh.” 42.

⁵³⁸ MacLeod (1978), *Orain Dhonnchaidh Bhàin*. 10-11.

⁵³⁹ Van Hulle (trans.) (2022), “Anns Gach Gnìomh.” 28.

Na fiurain ghasta 'thig ga chomhnadh,
Gach oighre fearrain fhuair a choir uaidh',
Gu 'n d'thig le dhaoine cruinn na chomh'ail.⁵⁴⁰

It is now that King George will see,
The great warriors that will come to his aid,
Each heir to an estate that received his right from him,
Will come with his people gathered in his assembly.⁵⁴¹

Chamshron is glad that the “great warriors” of the Gàidhealtachd are coming to King George III's aid.

These Gaelic displays of patriotism to the British state seem weak. Of course, Mac an t-Saoir's support of the cause is undisputed and so is Maghread Chamshron's but the reason they seem weak is that the references are purely to military service rather than the British state as a whole. Along with the findings in Chapter One that the Gaels only implicitly identify with a British identity, it seems that outside of the Ossianic debate, the Gàidhealtachd does not operate within a Celto-British framework.

Welsh Poetry and the Welsh and Gaelic Reactions to the French Revolution

The eighteenth-century pride in the Hanoverian dynasty was expressed in “God Save the King,” first published in a form that resembles the modern one in 1744 for King George II, with no title but the heading “for two voices” in an anthology originally called *Harmonia Britannia* and later changed to *Thesaurus Musicus*. The song spread in popularity during and after the 1745 Jacobite uprising among those loyal to King George II, but between 1745 and 1781 “God Save the King” only received ten formal performances in London theaters. With the advent of unsettlement in France and the French Revolution in 1789-1799, however, popularity of the song grew exponentially and between 1786 and 1800

⁵⁴⁰ Cham'ron (1785), *Orain Nuadh Ghaidhealach*. 1-6.

⁵⁴¹ Maciver (trans.) (2018), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience*. 245-6.

over ninety performances are recorded. Again, in the following two decades the song supplanted “Rule Britannia” (discussed in Chapter One) to become the recognized national anthem of the United Kingdom.⁵⁴² The two following Welsh poems refer to the song, this time singing for George III, signifying support of the Hanoverian regime and pride in the king and crown. The Welsh poets I have examined are generally more receptive than the Gaelic one to a British Crown identity and allegiance to the King is easier to recognize. This is unsurprising considering that the Wales-England Union occurred at a much earlier time than the Scotland-England Union and there was nothing like the Jacobite disruption in Wales (the Jacobite reaction in Wales is discussed in Chapter One). The first poem is by David Thomas (Dafydd Ddu Eryri; 1759-1822), *Cân Twm Paen*, (The Song of Tom Paine):

Nyni oll yn awr, yn lluoedd uwch llawr,
A ganwn yn ddifland, hoff rad yn gyffredin,
“Duw gadwo Siôr frenin, a’i fyddin sydd fawr”⁵⁴³

Together (earthly hosts) we all
Tirelessly sing (a common blessing)
“God save King George and his great army”⁵⁴⁴

This excerpt is formulaic, referring directly to the anthem.

The second poem is one by Jonathan Hughes, Llangollen (Bardd Pengwern; 1721-1805), *Cerdd o anogaeth i lanciau chwe sir Gwynedd, am godi yn glau ym mhlaidd Britannia, pan oedd y deyrnas mewn perygl o gael ei gorthrechu gan y gelynion*, (A poem of encouragement to the lads of Gwynedd’s six counties for rising quickly in the cause of Britannia when the kingdom was in danger of being overcome by the enemies). Written

⁵⁴² Colley, Linda (1984), “The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820,” *Past & Present* 102. 94-129. 102-104.

⁵⁴³ Charnell-White, Cathryn A. (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution, 1789-1805*, (Cardiff: UWP). 252-261.

⁵⁴⁴ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 252-261.

during a time when military forces were being raised in Gwynedd, this poem beseeches God to look favorably on King George III and his “worthy and excellent” family – the subjects of divine right:

Duw, cadw'r brenin heb ddim brad,
Mewn cariad cu,
A'i fanon gain, un fwyn ei gwedd
A llariaidd 'mhob llu;
A'r teulu breiniol gweddol gwyh,
Rhag nych yn awr,
Mae ocraeth blaidd neu gecraeth blin,
A'i erwin fyddin fawr.⁵⁴⁵

God, without treachery, save the king
in dear love,
and save his fine queen, fair of countenance
and resplendent in every host;
and save the royal family, worthy and excellent,
from injury now,
for there is a wolf-like usury and angry contention,
and God save the king's fearsome great army.⁵⁴⁶

The French Other is listed as a “wolf-like usury and angry contention.”

The support of King George III in these two excerpts is unwavering. Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain; 1761-1849), likewise praising King George III, disparages the French Revolution and its lack of monarchy and writes from an imagined French viewpoint in *Arwyrain Rhyddid* (Praise to Liberty), in which he posits that the French want to become like “the happy Island of Britain” where all “are free,” leading the “kingdoms of the world”:

Ni wnawn i'r pab adnabod
Ein bwriad fyth, mae'n bryd fod
I'n llygaid ddiball agor,
I ganfod sail gwynfyd Siôr;
Siôr enwog s yar ynys
Brydain hoyw, yn ei loyw lys.
Bwriadwn fod fel Brydain,
A'i dynion, rhyddion yw rhain:

⁵⁴⁵ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 100.

⁵⁴⁶ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 101.

Ei meibion oll o'u mebyd
Sydd ben ar deyrnasoedd byd;
Morwyr, masnachwyr mawredd,
Dewr iawn eu clod am drin cledd.⁵⁴⁷

We will make the pope recognize
Our intent forever; it is time for
Our eyes to open wide,
To behold the foundation of George's paradise;
Famous George who is in his resplendent court
On the happy island of Britain.
We intend to be like Britain,
And her people, for they are free:
All her sons from birth
Lead the kingdoms of the world;
Sailors, merchants of greatness,
Celebrated for their great bravery with the sword.⁵⁴⁸

Again, like Jonathon Hughes, Davies praises the “resplendent court” of King George III, stating that it is “paradise.”

David Thomas's poem *Cân Twm Paen*, (The Song of Tom Paine) previously examined in Chapter One, makes reference to Tom Paine, a radical philosopher and popular writer supportive of the American and French revolutions. Thomas's poem begins with the warning: “Anogaeth i ufuddhau i'r llywodraeth; cynghorion i ymfoddloni; rhybuddion yn erbyn llochesu egwyddorion gau a meddyliau aflywodraethus; gocheliadau rhag gweithredoedd terfysgus ac afreolaidd” (an exhortation to obey the government; advice to content oneself; warnings against harboring false principals and anarchic thoughts; caution against violent and unruly acts).⁵⁴⁹ Paine published his pamphlet *Rights of Man* in 1791-92, positing that popular political revolution is permissible when the government does

⁵⁴⁷ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 294-297.

⁵⁴⁸ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 294-297.

⁵⁴⁹ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 252-253.

not respect the “natural rights” of its populace.⁵⁵⁰ Thomas was not a supporter of Paine. Edward Williams is known for his radical positions on politics, religion, Celticity, and monarchy and, unlike David Thomas, he was an avid supporter and reader of Paine’s work. In the following poem Williams muses on how the rights of man are not safeguarded in Britain, the crown being to blame: *Breiniau Dyn* (“*Newgate Stanzas*”), (Rights of Man [“Newgate Stanzas”]):

Os dyrcha neb ei lais
Yn erbyn coron trais,
Caiff daliad prŷn;
Caiff garchar mwll di-freg,
Neu gordyn am ei geg
Am gynnig chwarae teg
I freiniau dyn.⁵⁵¹

If anyone raises their voice
Against the crown of violence,
He will pay dearly for it;
He will be put in a stinking impregnable prison,
Or he will have a cord around his mouth
For offering fair play
To the rights of man.⁵⁵²

According to Williams, the “crown of violence” will unfairly punish those who offer “fair play to the rights of man,” directly referencing Paine’s written work.

Williams continues his wrath against monarchy in the next poem, *Cywydd gorymbil ar heddwch* (A cywydd invoking peace):

Gorchest cethin brenhinoedd
Yw’r cyfan i’w gân ar goedd:
Eu balchder, dyfnder eu dig,
A’u hathrylith gythreulig.
Gwroli’n ei wŷn greulon
Mae’r coronog, difog dôn,

⁵⁵⁰ Paine, Thomas (1791), *The Rights of Man*, (Bennington: Anthony Haswell).

⁵⁵¹ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 166-173.

⁵⁵² Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 166-173.

A'i ddefawd iddo'n ddifyr,
 Bod dros ei draed mewn gwaed gwŷr;
 Lladd oll fo'n lluddio'i 'wyllys
 Y cais ef, i'w lef o'i lys;
 Hyll olwg! A'i holl elwch
 Yw griddfan y truan trwch.⁵⁵³

The savage exploits of kings
 Is all war proclaims:
 Their pride, the depth of their wrath,
 And their demonic genius.
 The crowned one, vicious melody,
 Takes heart from war's cruel passion,
 And its custom is his amusement,
 That his feet are covered in men's blood;
 He attempts to kill all who hinder his will
 By his cry from his court
 (ugly vision!) and derives all his merriment
 From the moaning of the pitiful wretch.⁵⁵⁴

In direct contrast to David Thomas's, Jonathon Hughes's, Maighread Chamshron's, and Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir's unwavering support of the monarchy, Williams writes of the "demonic genius" of King George III and his passion for killing all those "who hinder his will," with his "feet covered in men's blood." The contrast could not be clearer, but it seems that Williams was mostly alone in his vehement feelings, not finding much support in his ideas with other Welsh or Gaelic poets of the time.

In Welsh, although "Y Chwyldro Ffrengig" is the current accepted term for the French Revolution, in the early 1790s there was no stable phrasal expression for the revolution itself and Welsh poets employed different terms for the same event. This, according to Cathryn Charnell-White, is because the bardic frame, discussed in Chapter Two, allowed for a "greater latitude of Welsh responses" to the French Revolution than one

⁵⁵³ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 184-99.

⁵⁵⁴ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 184-99.

might expect.⁵⁵⁵ Importantly, however, as Charnell-White writes in *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution, 1789-1805*, the revolution “did not bring about an abrupt political awakening” for Welsh writers and poets, which is what we see in most of the Welsh excerpts here aside from Edward Williams’s work⁵⁵⁶ In *Breiniau Dyn*, (Rights of Man), already discussed, Williams believes that the French are reinstating the natural order and “giving the throne to the rights of man” – the rights of Thomas Paine’s imagining:

O! pam, frenhinoedd byd,
Ymelwch cwyn cyd
Mewn poethder gwŷn?
Clwych orfoleddus gainc!
Mae’r gwledydd oll fal Ffrainc
Yn rhoddi’r orsedd fainc
I freiniau dyn.⁵⁵⁷

Oh! Why, kings of earth,
Are you in the heat of passion
So concerned with grief?
Hear the joyful song!
All the countries are like France
Giving the throne
To the rights of man.⁵⁵⁸

On the other hand, David Thomas belittles the “Frenchy” and Tom Paine and praises King George III’s army in *Awdl ar Ryddid*, (An Awdl on Liberty) (earlier discussed also):

Mae’n ddiau daw terfyn ar Ffrencyn a’i ffrwst,
Er cymaint dros amser ei drawster a’i drwst;
Ni chaiff y gŵr ysgafn mo’r esgus di-syn
I ganu “Ça Ira”, bydd soriant am hyn;
Nyni oll yn awr, yn lluoedd uwch llawr,
A ganwn yn ddiflin, hoff rad yn gyffredin,

⁵⁵⁵ Charnell-White (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 6.

⁵⁵⁶ Charnell-White (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 7.

⁵⁵⁷ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 160-161.

⁵⁵⁸ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution, 1789-1805*. 160-161.

“Duw gadwo Siôr frenin, a’i fyddin sydd fawr.”
Symuder pob maen sy’n dramgwydd o’n blaen;
Dibrisiwn yn wresog ddull Ffrencyn gwallbwyllog,
Heb garu’r gwageiriog a’r pigog Dwm Paen.⁵⁵⁹

It is certain that an end will come to Frenchy and his clamor,
Despite the extent of his recent violence and tumult;
The thoughtless man shall not have a senseless excuse
To sing “Ça Ira,” it will cause anger;
Together (earthly hosts) we all
Tirelessly sing (a common blessing)
“God save King George and his great army.”
Let us move every stone which impedes our progress;
We heartily disparage the ways of the raving mad Frenchy,
Without love for the idle-talking and prickly Tom Paine.⁵⁶⁰

“Ça Ira” (It’ll be fine) was a popular song by the street singer Ladre, first heard in 1790, becoming emblematic of the French Revolution. It was sung in many versions and in one version of the song, the thought of putting priests and aristocrats to death through hanging on lamps is relished.⁵⁶¹ Thomas disparages the song and suggests that singing “God save the king” is much more suitable, discrediting “the raving mad Frenchy” and the “prickly Tom Paine.”

In comparison to the Welsh poetry, I have found very little commentary on the French Revolution in Gaelic poetry. One reason for this is that modern historians have argued that the impact of the French Revolution on Scottish politics and society was limited in comparison to its repercussions in other parts of the North Atlantic Archipelago. According to Bob Harris in his book *The Scottish People and the French Revolution* (2008), unity at the top of society in opposition to radicalism – in defense of the political and social “status quo” – is just one of the reasons why radical societies struggled to survive after their

⁵⁵⁹ Charnell-White (ed.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 252-253.

⁵⁶⁰ Charnell-White (trans.) (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 252-253.

⁵⁶¹ Charnell-White (2012), *Welsh Poetry of the French Revolution*. 428-429.

inception.⁵⁶² Of all the poets I have chosen for this study – Gaelic and Welsh – none express radical views about the Revolution aside from Edward Williams, showing that they are mostly comfortable with the established order of King George III. Alasdair MacFhionghain (Alexander MacKinnon; 1770-1814), in *Blàr na h-Òlaint / Air Mios Deireannach an Fhoghair*, (The Battle of Holland / In the Last Month of Autumn), a soldier in the British military recounts events from a battle during the French Revolution:

Air mios deireannach an fhoghair,
An dara latha, 's math mo chuimhne,
Ghluais na Breatunnaich bho'n fhaiche,
Dh'ionnsuidh tachairt ris na naimhdean;
Thug Abercrombaidh taobh na mara
Dhiu le'n canain, 's mi ga 'n cluintinn;
Bha fóirneadh aig Múr gu daingeann,
Cumail aingil ris na Frángaich.⁵⁶³

In the last month of Autumn,
The second day, well I remember,
The British marched from parade
To engage the enemy.
Abercromby took the coast from them
With his cannon in my hearing.
Moore had troops concentrating
Close fire on the French.⁵⁶⁴

MacFhionghain takes pride in “concentrating close fire on the French” and fighting for the British state. Similarly, John MacLean (Bàrd Thighearna Chola; 1787-1848), writes of putting the French on “the back foot,” keeping the “peace for the crown,” and bringing “honor, fame, and friendship” in *Oran Molaidh do dh'Alastair Mac Dhomhnaill, Tighearna Ghlinne Garaidh*, (A Song of Praise for Alasdair Mac Dhomhnaill, Lord of Glengarry):

'S ann a chomhdaich iad cuis
Ann am blar Waterloo,

⁵⁶² Harris, Bob (2008), *The Scottish People and the French Revolution*, (Pickering). 2.

⁵⁶³ MacKenzie, J. (ed.) (1882), *Sar-Obair nam Bard Gaelach*, (Edinburgh). 344.

⁵⁶⁴ Maciver (trans.) (2012), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience*. 121.

Nuair a dh'ainmich an Diuc
Gu' robh earbsa 'nan turn;
Chuir iad Frangaich 'an cuil,
Ghleidh iad slochaint don Chrun,
Thug sin onair is cliu's cairdeas dhaibh.⁵⁶⁵

They certainly proved a case
At the battle of Waterloo,
When the Duke reported
That he trusted in their feats;
They put the French on their back foot,
Kept the peace for the Crown,
That brought honor, fame and friendship to them.⁵⁶⁶

The references I have found that mention the French Revolution in Gaelic poetry are different from the Welsh ones in that they are from soldiers recounting events and battles. They praise their own militaristic actions against the French, but do not comment about their opinions of the war.

Conclusion

Against the view that all Gaels participated in Jacobite rhetoric and supported the uprisings, lamenting the involvement of the British military in the Gàidhealtachd, the poetic excerpts discussed in this chapter show a much greater variety of reaction. If not already on the Hanoverian side, like Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir, they show, for a start, a turning away from Jacobitism and a turn towards the stable institutions of the British monarchy and its armies. There is a sense of pride that what was considered a warlike micro-nation (see Chapter One for a detailed discussion of this term) could be recognized officially within a wider British context and many poets advocate for the Gael's involvement in the army. This is not to say that there was a unanimous support for the government and,

⁵⁶⁵ Dunbar (ed.) (2006), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*. 535-538.

⁵⁶⁶ Dunbar (trans.) (2006), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean*. 535-538.

as we have seen, even – or especially – Hanoverian supporters, display their outrage at the Dress Act of 1746. Of course, the documentation I am looking at is purely poetic and cannot be totally conclusive, but it does show that the only facet of Britishness the Gaelic poets I have studied could support was the military and the monarchy and not the state at large. This is also what Ruairidh Iain Maciver finds in the conclusion to his PhD dissertation, *The Gaelic Poet and the British military experience, 1756-1856* (2018): “identification with the outer circles [of Smout’s concentric loyalties paradigm] – nation, state, empire – though sometimes evident, seems more distant and superficial.”⁵⁶⁷ Maciver goes on to say “poets often recognised Britain, but identified with Gaeldom.”⁵⁶⁸

The Welsh poets I have examined too show their support for the military project but the relationship is much more convincing than with the poetic excerpts from the Gaidhealtachd. This is because Wales had a much longer and more intimate relationship with the government and monarchy in England. Aside from the maverick Edward Williams – radical in many ways – there is unified support for the British armies and a general allegiance to the monarchy. This correlates with the Welsh identification with the patriotic figure of Britannia as seen in Chapter One. The reactions of the Welsh and the Gaels when it comes to identifying with the British state are not particularly comparable, leading us again to conclude that a Celto-British identity was an identity created out of literary endeavor rather than a personal identity.

⁵⁶⁷ Maciver, Ruairidh (2018), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience, 1756-1856*, (Glasgow: PhD). 269.

⁵⁶⁸ Maciver (2018), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience*. 269.

CONCLUSION

THE CELTO-BRITON

Celto-British identity was very much a product of the first Celtic Revival which occurred in the mid-eighteenth century. It was born out of Paul-Yves Pezron's *The antiquities of nations* (1706) and Edward Lhuyd's *Archaeologia Britannica* (1707) which boasted of a Celtic race, the progenitors of which were the druids. After these works, the Celtic languages got their name as Lhuyd worked to prove the linguistic connections between them and a definitional conundrum arose. Celticity gained ground exponentially. This dissertation has shown that a Celto-British identity – the identity which arose out of a shared sense of Celticity in the face of the rapidly expanding Anglocentric state – was present in Welsh-language poetry of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Chapter Two). Celto-British identity in the Gàidhealtachd, however, is less clear and relied on interaction with Anglophone literature. James Macpherson's *Ossian* (1760–1765), for instance, is an example of Celto-British literature as are some of the works that followed in its wake such as John Smith's *Galic antiquities* (1780), but, in general, Gaelic literature followed in its own traditions without interfacing with the first Celtic Revival (see Chapter Three).

In the poetry I have examined from eighteen poets (nine from Wales and nine from the Gàidhealtachd) between 1746 and 1826, there are no instances of either Welsh or Gaelic poets explicitly calling themselves “British.” In Chapter One (Concentric Loyalties), however, I showed that there are plenty of implicit expressions of Britishness. These range from the consideration of the British state as a place of liberty and paradise (usually in contrast to France during the French Revolution), and an identification – on the part of Welsh poets – with the patriotic figure of Britannia. The Welsh use the term “Britons” to

conjure identification with the Ancient Britons and simply refer to themselves as “Welsh” rather than “Britons” of the eighteenth-century state. Concentric loyalties are definitely at play in Wales as poets identify with both the state at large and their Welsh nation but their personal identity is far more connected to Wales alone. That is not to say, however, that the Welsh do not conflate the nation of England with the state of Britain, and, in fact, this seems paradoxical with the resentment they display toward England. The Welsh poets I have examined show, at once, a hatred towards England as a corruptive force and a love for greater Britain. For instance, they adopt the figure of Britannia with gusto.

There are no instances of Wales recognizing the Gàidhealtachd or vice versa suggesting that Celto-Britishness was not present at the ground level outside of literary circles. This is due to geographical and cultural distance. Where the two (micro-)nations do intersect is with the Celto-British literature of *Ossian*. The Gàidhealtachd, similarly to Wales with England, is resentful of the Lowlands, and shows its first loyalty to its own micro-nation with subsequent loyalties to the macro-nation, Scotland, and the state of Britain. However, unlike in the Welsh poetry, a love for greater Britain is not present. This is due to the more recent incorporation of the Gaelic micro-nation into the British state which, for all intents and purposes, occurred after Culloden in 1746. In Chapter Four, however, I have shown that the Gàidhealtachd can identify with the British military project and takes pride in its involvement (see Chapter Four).

Not all Gaels participated in the Jacobite rhetoric or supported the uprisings, and this is shown in Murray Pittock’s *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans* (2nd edition; 2009). The poetry post-Culloden shows a range of reactions to the suppression of the Jacobite cause, ranging from provocation for a subsequent uprising, shame in Jacobite ancestors, and allegiance to the Hanoverian dynasty. There was generally a turn from Jacobitism to the stable institutions of the monarchy and a sense of pride that the Gàidhealtachd could prove

its valor in the military. Many poets advocate for the involvement of the Gaels in the military. This is not to say, however, that they approved of the British government. Disappointment is shown, particularly, in reactions to the Dress Act of 1746. It seems that, as the Gàidhealtachd was relatively new to the British state post-Culloden, the only facet of Britishness that it could support was the military.

The Welsh poets I have examined also show support for the military project particularly in reactions to the French Revolution. The support is much more convincing than that of the Gàidhealtachd and this is because Wales was fully incorporated into the English realm at a much earlier date of 1536. Allegiance to the Hanoverian dynasty is generally strong in Welsh poetry as they have a much longer history of identification with the monarchy. This correlates with the Welsh identification with the patriotic figure of Britannia discussed in Chapter One.

The figure of Britannia first appeared in Roman times as did references to the druids. Druidic poetic succession was an obsession with the Welsh poets in the eighteenth century and went hand in hand with the first Celtic Revival which included Thomas Gray's *The Bard* (1757), Edward William's English-facing work, and the rapidly growing anthology tradition in Wales and the Gàidhealtachd. This literature is Celto-British, supported by the notion of modern British druidic lineage. The Celtic poets of the eighteenth-century imagination were primitive and uncorrupted, bearded, robed, and harp-wielding, and could sense nature in a way that no subsequent culture could. Accordingly, the Welsh poets considered themselves to be the inheritors of this poetic gift, bestowed by the *awen*. This is also present in Scottish works such as *Ossian* but not present in the bulk of the Gaelic poetry I have discussed. The whirlwind surrounding Ossian considered the druids to be the progenitors of the "Caledonian" race whereas the Welsh saw the druids as their own ancestors.

The native Welsh-language version of bardic identity shared much with the Celto-British one. Several features, however, make it more nuanced and intricate. The Welsh considered their claim to ancestral ownership of Britain to be undisputed as it had Biblical origins. The idea put forward by Pezron was that the Celts, and therefore the Welsh, descended from Gomer, son of Japhet and grandson of Noah. The adherence to the Babelian myth of language purity also strengthened this claim (see Chapter Two).

The version of bardic identity that existed in eighteenth-century Wales was based on druidic succession. Strict-meter poetry was the main way by which poets connected themselves to their long and illustrious literary past. This is in addition to allusions to medieval poetry and history as well as the notion of the God-given *awen* that bestowed poetic gift upon poets. The *awen* became personified in the eighteenth century due to Augustan and Neo-Classical tastes. There was interest in the Bardic Order as it was seen as the direct link to the druids and several poets mourn its demise. Edward Williams, however, professes to be one of the last remaining bards himself.

Poetry of this period in Welsh was overwhelmingly male-dominated and we have very little that survives of female authorship. Marged Dafydd's work seems to be an exception to the findings that women did not identify with bardic identity in Wales, and she attaches herself to bardic identity in a distinctly feminine way. She does this by tracing the women's canon, composing in strict meters and working within a defined poetic sphere. Poetry in the Gàidhealtachd was much more receptive to female involvement and two of the poets I have examined are female (Mairearad Ghriogarach and Maighread Chamshron). Female poets, although viewed with suspicion, seem to compose in the same way as male poets in the eighteenth century, following the long tradition of panegyric.

Unlike in Welsh poetry of the eighteenth century, there does not seem to be criteria to be a bard in the Gàidhealtachd. There is no obsession with poetic lineage as there is in

Welsh and composition in a range of meters is acceptable. Of course, many of the Welsh poets composed also in free meters but they connected themselves explicitly to druidic succession with the strict meters. One might expect a preoccupation with Classical, or bardic Gaelic verse but we do not see this. Perhaps this is because a vernacular tradition existed alongside the Classical Gaelic one from the Middle Ages. Panegyric in Gaelic transcended classical and vernacular verse from its beginning and panegyric continued into the eighteenth century, adapting to fit the changes in society. Allusions to Gaelic heroes such as Fionn and Oisean from the Fenian Cycle were common but follow in the footsteps of a long tradition rather than being an eighteenth-century innovation. Celto-British identity does not appear to be present in Gaelic poetry that does not interface with Anglophone tastes as they are not obsessed with druidic succession or a set sense of bardic identity as the Welsh poets were.

James Macpherson certainly had a great impact on the Gàidhealtachd but Celto-Britishness seems to be confined to English-language literature or Gaelic literature that interacted with Anglophone tastes. Macpherson's work encouraged antiquarian interest in collecting Gaelic poetry, but he was already following an antiquarian tradition. The collections that preceded him, however, all have a Celtic flavor that was directly influenced by *Ossian*. On the other hand, the consensus is that Gaelic poets composing in Gaelic were doing so for Gaelic audiences, following in the footsteps of their own tradition. The first Celtic Revival does not seem to have influenced Gaelic-language literary output to a great extent.

Celto-British identity was confined to literature that professed belief in the druidic. A Celto-British identity was not present on the "ground," rather being confined to literary activity. For instance, the Welsh and the Gaels do not acknowledge one another or explicitly call themselves "British." The Gaels also do not seem to strongly identify with Britain until

after Culloden when they start to become heavily involved in the military. A love for Britain is present in Welsh poetry of the period but seems to be a secondary allegiance. Concentric loyalties are present in both Welsh and Gaelic poetry, but Welsh poets show a greater sense of pride in the British state, attaching themselves more firmly.

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APPENDIX

POET BIOGRAPHIES

These biographies are alphabetized by first name, as the surname/bardic name is often unstable, and poets/scholars switch between using different versions of the names.

Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair (Alexander MacDonald; c. 1698–c. 1770)¹

Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair is, according to Ronald Black, “the greatest Gaelic poet of the eighteenth century, and arguably of all time.”² Despite this, it is difficult, however much his fame, to pin down the details of his life. His birth date is unknown but is calculated to be around 1698 based on his father’s lifespan and those of his siblings. It seems as though Alasdair was isolated from his family at his time of death in around 1770. Alasdair was the son of a clergyman from Dalilea (Gaelic: *Dàil Eileadh*) in Moidart (Gaelic: *Mùideart*), a remote part of Scotland west of Fort William. Alasdair was born an episcopalian. Shortly after the 1707 Scotland-England Union, Alasdair attended Glasgow University. It seems that he was literate in Gaelic, English, and Scots and knowledgeable of the Classics. There is a strong possibility that Alasdair took part in the 1715 Jacobite Uprising but, again, no certainty. Trained in the law, Alasdair spent the years around 1720 traveling between Uist, Moidart, Edinburgh and (probably) London in the service of Lady Penelope MacDonald (widow of Ailean Dearg of Clanranald), trying to reclaim his forfeited estate.

¹ Information taken from: Black, Ronald (2001), *An Lasair* (Edinburgh: Birlinn). 425-427; and 469-475; and Thomson, Derick S. (1996), *Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair: Selected Poems*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society). 1-17.

² Black (2001), *An Lasair*. 425.

In 1727 Alasdair settled in Ardamurchan (Gaelic: *Àird nam Murchan*) as a schoolmaster for the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) and it seems that shortly after, he married Jane MacDonald of Dalness – there is no documentary evidence for this to but no reason to doubt it either. The period for which we have the most definite evidence of Alasdair’s life is between 1729 and 1745, when he was working as a teacher and a catechist. It was during his time at the SSPCK school that he compiled the first secular Gaelic book to be printed in 1741: *Leabhar a Theagasc Ainminnin* – a Gaelic-English glossary. During this time, Alasdair became increasingly drawn to Jacobitism and in May 1745, after leaving his school, he was one of the Clanranald gentry who greeted Prince Charles on the deck of *La Doutelle* in Loch nan Uamh. Just before the Uprising of 1745, Alasdair converted to Catholicism and apparently did so to identify with his clan and allies and it seems as though he was present in the Uprising as a captain in the Clanranald regiment. By 1751, Alasdair was factor of Clanranald’s island of Canna and in 1751 he published the first book of Scottish Gaelic secular verse: *Aiseirighdhe na Sean Chánoin Albannaic* (The Resurrection of the Old Scottish Language). After 1751, however, there seems to be little or no documentary evidence of his life. There is no reference to his wife in the final twenty years of his life and it is not known when she died.

Alsdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair’s poetry is full of innovation: he was the first to publish his own work (1751); first put the ground and variations of the piobaireachd meter into verse; first to use the smeòrach (thrush) to sing praise; first to compose songs about the seasons; and first to create an epic (*Birlinn Chlann Raghnail* “The Galley of Ranald”). He also compiled his Gaelic vocabulary, started work on the first Gaelic anthology, mastered the old Gaelic script, collected at least one tale, and wrote English prose. His son, Ronald MacDonald (Raonuill Dubh MacDhòmhnuill; c. 1715–c. 1805) also became a famous poet

and collector, publishing *Comh-chruinneachidh Orannaigh Gaidhealach*, or “the Eigg Collection” in 1776.

Alasdair mac Iain Bhàin (Alexander Grant; c. 1772–c. 1812)³

Alasdair mac Iain Bhàin, the youngest son of John Grant (Iain Bàn na Pluic), a farmer from Achnagoneran, was born around 1772 in Glenmoristan (Gaelic: *Gleann Moireasdan*).

Wounded at war, he was traveling home from fighting in Spain to his father's house in Achnagoneran, when he died. Alasdair joined the army young and served in the West Indies, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, and France. It is unknown in which regiment he served as he named neither the regiment nor any officer or figure associated with it. His earlier poems suggest that he was in the West Indies during the attempted crossings of Admiral Hugh Cloberry Christian's fleet in late 1795 and early 1796. Alasdair names Portugal and Spain in a poem written during the Peninsular War (1807–1814), meaning that he was at least in his thirties when he composed the piece. In another poem, we find out that Alasdair possibly suffered from the visual illness ophthalmia, an illness common among soldiers at the time as he refers to losing part of his sight. Upon reading his poems, Alasdair appears to be a reluctant soldier, yearning for life back in the Gàidhealtachd, refusing to praise the soldier's life, and avoiding military panegyric.

³ Information taken from: Maciver, Ruairidh (2018), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience, 1756-1856*, (Glasgow: PhD). 134-145.

Alasdair MacFhionghain (Alexander MacKinnon; 1770–1814)⁴

Corporal Alasdair MacFhionghain, enlisted in the 92nd Regiment (the Gordon Highlanders) raised in 1794, was born in 1770 in Morar (Gaelic: *Mòrar*). The first commander of this regiment was George, Marquis of Huntly (Gaelic: *Hunndaidh*). MacFhionghain died in 1814 at Fort William and was interred with military honors at the Craigs cemetery in Fort William. As part of an expedition against the French in Holland, MacFhionghain's regiment embarked at Ramsgate for the Helder on the 11th of August 1799 and he was present at the battle of Egmont (1799). He appears to have survived unscathed. Two years later in 1801, however, MacFhionghain was badly wounded in the battle of Alexandria and his lifeless body was almost thrown into a mass grave. It is only because his friend, Sergeant MacLean, discovered he was still breathing that he was taken to a hospital ship. When he arrived back in England he was discharged with a pension. As soon as he was able, however, he joined the 6th Royal Veteran Battalion, married after a few years, and served in this regiment for the rest of his life.

MacFhionghain was born into a family that was quite advantaged in the social spectrum. He received a fair amount of education and was literate in both Gaelic and English. MacFhionghain was well-admired by his peers and one of his champions was John MacLean (Bàrd Thighearna Chola; 1787–1848). MacLean published seven of MacFhionghain's poems, having copied them from manuscript, in his collection, *Orain Nuadh Ghaelach* (New Gaelic Songs), of 1818. MacFhionghain is a traditional poet, owing much to the clan poets of the seventeenth and earlier eighteenth centuries and describing

⁴ Information taken from: Black, Ronald (2001), *An Lasair*, (Edinburgh: Birlinn). 521-525; Maciver, Ruairaidh Iain (2018), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience, 1756-1856*, (Glasgow: PhD). 113-125.

military service as a heroic endeavor. Most of MacFhionghain's poetic output is based on his experiences of active warfare.

David Thomas (Dafydd Ddu Eryri; 1759–1822)⁵

David Thomas was born in April 1759 to Thomas and Mary Griffith of Pen-y-bont, Waun-fawr. In 1822 he was found drowned after slipping while crossing the river Cegin, near Bach Riffri, and is buried in Llanfihangel (Llan-rug) churchyard. Thomas's father was a weaver at the Glynllifon fulling-mill and also a Calvinistic Methodist exhorter. While receiving eight months of schooling from John Morgan, curate of Llanberis, Thomas met Abraham Williams of Cwmglas, who was responsible for acquainting him with Welsh poetry. With his interest piqued, Thomas began to collect *cywyddau* and *englynion* from manuscripts, writing them up in a notebook. After finishing at school, he became a weaver and regularly visited Robert Hughes (Robin Ddu yr Ail o Fôn) who told him about the meetings of the bards in London pubs. Inviting poets with a poem, Thomas set up his own meeting in Caernarvonshire. In 1787, Thomas gave up weaving and started to keep a school at Llanddeiniolen where he had originally gone to see Thomas Edwards (Twm o'r Nant) acting in an interlude. He proceeded to keep schools thereafter in Llanddeiniolen, Betws Garmon, Llanystumdwy, Pentraeth, Waun-fawr, Llan-rug, Llanberis, and Dolydd Byrion, Llandwrog.

David Thomas was a corresponding member of the Gwyneddigion Society and for a while he acted for the society in North Wales. In this position, he oversaw the society's publications and was asked to collect material for *the Myvyrian Archaeology of Wales*. Upon winning medals for the *awdl* in St. Asaph and Llanrwst, the Gwyneddigion asked Thomas to take on the arrangements for their *eisteddfodau*. He also adjudicated poetry in this capacity. Thomas was an authority on the rules of classical meters and Sir John Morris-

⁵ Information taken from: Roberts, G. T., (1959). THOMAS, DAVID (Dafydd Ddu Eryri; 1759-1822), man of letters and poet. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. <https://biography.wales/article/s-THOM-DAV-1759>. [accessed 5/5/2024].

Jones declared that his system was the basis of all that was written on *cynganedd* in the nineteenth century. Thomas did not approve of the views that some Londoners had in regard of the French Revolution.

Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir (Duncan Bàn Macintyre; 1724–1812)⁶

Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir was born in Glen Orchy (Gaelic: *Gleann Urchaidh*) in Argyll in 1724 and he was buried in 1812 in Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh. Mac an t-Saoir – his loyalty to Glen Orchy Campbells – at the age of twenty-one, served as a substitute on the Hanoverian side with the Argyll militia in the 1746 Battle of Falkirk. He worked thereafter as a stalker in the deer-forests of Coire Cheathaich, Ben Dorain (Gaelic: *Beinn Dobhrain*) and Glen Etive (Gaelic: *Gleann Èite*) until 1766. These mountains were near to his now-abandoned house of birth in Druimliart. Much to his displeasure, he had to leave the Gàidhealtachd when the mountains were let out as sheep-farms and subsequently he served as a militiaman, starting at the age of sixty-nine, in the Breadalbane Fencibles from 1794 to 1799 and a member of the Edinburgh City Guard until around 1800. Mac an t-Saoir paid his last visit to Ben Dorain on the 19th of September 1802.

Mac an t-Saoir was – by today’s standards – non-literate and much of his poetry was dictated to Rev. Donald McNicol (Domhnall MacNeacail, 1735-1802) who transcribed over 6,000 lines of the poet’s work. The total of Mac an t-Saoir’s body of work that is extant today is sixty-four poems, songs, verses, and laments and, according to Liesbeth van Hulle, “one theme runs like a leitmotif through his work: the warrior masculinity of his fellow Highlanders.”⁷

⁶ Information taken from: Black (2001), *An Lasair*. 477-478; Maciver (2018), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience*. 107-113; Van Hulle, Liesbeth (2022), “Anns Gach Gnìomh a Nì Duine’s Mòr Urram nan Gàidheal: Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir as the Voice of the Gael’s Military Masculinity in the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 42. 20-54; Meek, Donald E. (2019), *Caran an t-Saoghail*, (Edinburgh: Birlinn). 395.

⁷ Van Hulle (2022), “Anns Gach Gnìomh.” 21.

Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg: 1747–1826)⁸

Edward Williams was born in March 1747 in Pennon, parish of Llancarfan, Glamorganshire. Dying in December 1726 in Trefflemin, he was succeeded by four sons – one of whom, Taliesin Williams, became a prominent figure in his own, later, literary circles. Taliesin, after his father's death, bound Edward's papers into volumes and these are now in the National Library. According to Edward Williams himself, Edward did not attend school and instead learned how to read from watching his father – a stonemason – inscribing gravestones (Willimas later became, like his father, a stonemason). His mother, however, can be presumed to have taught him in his early youth. Coming into touch with several bards of upper Glamorgan while a young man (Lewis Hopkin, Siôn Bradford, Rhys Morgan, Thomas Richards, Coychurch, and John Walters, Llandough), and having opportunity to read from Welsh manuscripts accounts for his burgeoning interest in Welsh vocabulary and literature.

Journeying to North Wales in *c.* 1771–1772 and London in 1773, Williams met Owain Myfyr and other members of the Society of Gwyneddigion, attending meetings and reading manuscripts from the Anglesey Morris brothers. Marrying in 1781, he settled in Llandaff in 1783. His movements until 1791 when he went to live in London are unsure, but it is known that he spent some time in Cardiff prison in 1787. While in London, Williams began expounding the doctrines of bardism and he held the first druidical *Gorseddau* on Primrose Hill. In London he also came into contact with other sympathizers to the French Revolution and Unitarian leaders. One of Williams's principal concerns was the abolition of chattel slavery – his first abolitionist poem is dated *c.* 1789. Also, in 1789,

⁸ Information taken from: Williams, G. J., (1959), WILLIAMS, EDWARD (Iolo Morganwg, 1747 - 1826), poet and antiquary. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. <https://biography.wales/article/s-WILL-EDW-1747>. [accessed: 5/5/2024].

he published his editions of Dafydd ap Gwilym's poetry in *Barddoniaeth Dafydd ap Gwilym* (The Poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym). Several of these poems were found to have been forged by Williams's hand. Williams did not only write in Welsh and in fact published two volumes of English-language poetry, *Poems and Lyrics Pastoral*, in 1794.

Returning to Llandaff in 1795, Williams assisted Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain; 1761–1849) when Davies was preparing a report on the state of agriculture in Wales. Later, Williams was appointed one of the editors of the *Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* and journeyed again to North Wales to collect materials in 1799. The first volume of the *Myvyrian Archaiology* was published in 1801. By this time, Williams had become a Unitarian and was a leading figure in the formation of the Unitarian Association in South Wales in 1802. Following this, the second volume of the *Myvyrian Archaiology* was published in 1807. There was also a proposed third volume that never saw light. Later, in 1819, Williams succeeded in making his druidic *Gorsedd* an essential part of the *Eisteddfod* held at Carmarthen, and he was urged to publish the manuscripts he claimed to have discovered in Glamorgan. As he died, he was preparing to publish *Cyfrinach Beirdd Ynys Prydain* (The Secrets of the Bards of the Isle of Britain).

Evan Evans (Ieuan Fardd, Ieuan Brydydd Hir; 1731–1788)⁹

Evan Evans was born on the twentieth of May 1731, to Jenkin and Catherine Evans, at Cyn-hawdref Farm in the parish of Lledrod, Cardiganshire. He died also at Cyn-hawdref on the the fourth of August 1788. The dates of his early schooling are not known, but he did study under Edward Richard at Ystrad Meurig School. Before entering Merton College, Oxford on the eighth of December 1750, Evan made acquaintance with Lewis Morris who instructed him in poetry and introduced him to Richard and William Morris, William Wynn of Llangynhafal, and Goronwy Owen. There is no definitive evidence of the length of his stay at Oxford and he left without graduating. In 1754 and 1755 respectively, Evans was ordained deacon and then priest at St Asaph's and was appointed curate of Manafon, Montgomeryshire. Sometime in 1756 he left and joined the clergy at Lyminge, Kent to then spend three months in Oxford copying poetry from the Red Book of Hergest.

After his return to Wales in 1757, he spent ten months as assistant to Samuel Griffiths, vicar of Llanafan-fawr, Brecknock, before settling in North Wales from 1758 to 1766 where he officiated as curate of Llanllechid for one year, Trefriw and Llanrhychwyn for two years, and Llanfair Talhaearn for five years. During his time in North Wales, Evans was actively involved in collecting and copying manuscripts and came in touch with several men who were interested in the same matters, namely: David Jones of Trefriw, John Thomas, Rhys Jones of Blanau, Richard Roberts, Robert Thomas, and John Powel. His interaction and correspondence with English antiquaries such as Daines Barrington, Thomas Gray, and Thomas Percy, encouraged him to publish *Some Specimens of the Poetry*

⁹ Information taken from: Lewis, A., (1959), EVANS, EVAN (Ieuan Fardd or Ieuan Brydydd Hir 1731 - 1788), scholar, poet, and cleric. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. <https://biography.wales/article/s-EVAN-EVA-1731>. [accessed: 5/5/2024].

of the Antient Welsh Bards in 1764. This volume interpreted the work of the Poets of the Princes and provided a history of Welsh poetry from the sixth to the sixteenth century.

In October 1766, Evan left Llanfair Talhaearn and was appointed curate in churches near his home – Lledrod, Llanwnnws, and Capel Ieuan (Ystrad Meurig) until, in 1767, he left Wales for England and officiated in Appledore, Kent, for a month, and at Newick, Sussex until 1768. In April 1768, Evans enlisted but the military authorities discharged him on grounds of mental instability after realizing his position as clergy. Returning to Wales for a second time, Evans took a position as curate of Llanvihangel Cruorney near Abergavenny, remaining there until 1769 whereupon he took positions in various places across North Wales (Llanystumdwy, Llandecwyn, Llanfihangel-y-traethau, Llanberis, and Towyn, Meirionnydd) until 1777. From 1771 to 1778, Sir Watkin Williams Wynn II paid Evans a pension and gave him use of the library at Wynnstay and thanks to this relationship and his proximity to Hengwrt and Peniarth, Evans copied and studied a vast number of manuscripts. During this time, Evans published a few collections of sermons translated into Welsh but opting to learn Hebrew and Arabic from a tutor at the Presbyterian Academy, Carmarthen in 1777–1778, instead of publishing his scholarship, an angered Sir Watkin stopped his pension.

The last ten years of Evan Evans' life were spent, for the most part, at Cyn-hawdref, where his mother still lived. These years were disorganized and quite desperate as Evans made constant appeals to the Welsh gentry and learned societies for funds which he hoped would enable him to publish the contents of some of the manuscripts he had copied. His pleas went unrecognized, and Evans drank heavily, becoming embittered towards the Anglican church authorities who did not regard Welsh learning with much favor. Paul Panton and Thomas Pennant showed kindness to Evans in his final years of poverty and arranged for annual subscriptions to be raised in North Wales for his support but realizing,

in 1787, that his health was failing, Evans sold his manuscripts to Paul Panton which were later incorporated into The *Myrvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, 1801–1807.

Goronwy Owen (1723–1769)¹⁰

Goronwy Owen was born on New Year's Day, 1723, to a poor family in Rhos-fawr, parish of Llanfair-mathafarn-eithaf, Anglesey. He died in July, 1769, on his tobacco and cotton plantation in St. Andrews, Brunswick County, Virginia where he is buried. Goronwy's grandfather, also Goronwy Owen, a tinker, and his father, Owen Gronw, were rhymers and genealogists and his mother, Siân Parry, was a maid at Pentre-eiriannell, the home of the famous Morris family. His father was able, to some extent, to compose *cynganedd*. On and after ten years of age, Goronwy attended school in Llanallgo, the free school at Pwllheli, and Friars School, Bangor. At this last school, he became a Classical scholar, learning Latin and Greek to a high standard. In 1741, after appealing to Owen Meyrick of Bodorgon, one of the trustees of the Lewis charity, he was accepted on scholarship to Jesus College, Oxford but did not take up residence there. Between 1742 and 1744, Goronwy was an usher at the free school in Pwllheli and between 1744/5 and 1745 he occupied the same position at a school in Denbigh where, in both places, it is probable that he came into contact with local poets.

In 1746, he was ordained deacon and took up position as curate of Llanfair-mathafarn-eithaf where he interacted with Anglesey poets and antiquaries, leaving shortly after to become curate and school master in Oswestry for three years. In Oswestry he married Elin, daughter of tradespeople Owen and Margaret Hughes and later became curate of Uppington in Shropshire and master of Donnington School, escaping debt collectors in Oswestry. During his time at Donnington, Goronwy wrote some of his most important *cywyddau*, “Cywydd y Farn Fawr” being one of the most well-known.

¹⁰ Information taken from: Jones, D. G., (1959), OWEN, GORONWY (1723 - 1769), cleric and poet. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. <https://biography.wales/article/s-OWEN-GOR-1723>. [accessed: 5/5/2024].

In 1753, Goronwy began a curacy in Walton, near Liverpool, aided in application by William Morris, but in 1755 he gave up his appointment and moved to London, hoping that the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion would employ him as paid secretary and translator and Welsh-speaking minister. The Society did not employ Goronwy but did help him in getting a curacy in Northolt, Middlesex, where he wrote more *cywyddau*, including “Cywydd yn ateb Huw’r Bardd Coch o Fôn, yr hwn a roddasai glod i Oronwy”. During this time, Goronwy’s lifestyle became more and more profligate and Lewis Morris worried that he would lose his curacy. Despite this, his vicar at Northolt, Dr. Samuel Nicholls, secured a position for Goronwy as headmaster of the grammar school attached to the William and Mary College, Williamsburg, Virginia, and he began that position in 1758. He was probably professor of Humanity at the same college. His first wife and one child died on the journey to America. He married a new wife, Mrs. Clayton, sister of the college president, before the end of his first summer there but she died later that year. In 1760, Goronwy lost his job due to excessive drinking and he lived the rest of his life in St. Andrews and married his third wife, Joan Simmonds, in 1763.

Goronwy’s poetic ambitions were high – he attempted to revive Welsh poetry from its decline following the Anglicization of the native Welsh gentry who were its traditional patrons. He believed he could re-interpret traditional strict-meter poetry for his own, Augustan, age. To some extent he revolutionized the *cywydd*, writing of non-traditional subjects such as longing and contemplations on Christian life. However, as a result of alcoholism, Goronwy’s dreams were never truly realized.

Iain mac Mhurchaidh (John Macrae; fl. 1774–1780)¹¹

It is not known when Iain mac Mhurchaidh was born but Màiri Sìne Chaimbeul has calculated that the date of his marriage (to whom, there is confusion) was around 1762, suggesting that he was born early in the 1730s.¹² His father was hanged in 1746 as a Jacobite spy at the Old Market Cross in Inverness, not long after Culloden. All traditional accounts talk of his innocence. There are various oral accounts from Kintail of his death, but these are much more elaborate than his true cause of death which was from poor health – impacted by harsh imprisonment – in September 1780 in Camden, North Carolina. Iain mac Mhurchaidh, related to the chief, was a member of the tacksman class of Clan MacRae; his family was highly educated and closely connected to the nobility. They were also sympathetic to the Jacobite cause and the Episcopal Church.

While still young, Iain was chosen by the Earl of Seaforth to be his gamekeeper, stalker, and forester. Most of the details we can glean about Iain's life in Kintail come from oral accounts in Kintail and Strathglass. Apparently, he was well-liked and his poetic compositions, often impromptu, were appreciated along with his knack for solving disputes. It seems that before his emigration to North Carolina, Iain led a privileged and carefree life. This was soon to change, however. Iain was disillusioned with the changes taking place in the Gàidhealtachd in the 1770s which included the loss of his cattle, high rents, and social change. Emigration was becoming increasingly common, and Iain decided to take the leap across to the New World in around 1774. It is not clear on which day or ship Iain sailed but local tradition affirms 1774, although other sources suggest 1772. It is likely that Iain arrived at Wilmington port, along with his family, in the fall of 1774.

¹¹ Information taken from: Chaimbeul, Màiri Sìne (2020), *Iain mac Mhurchaidh: The Life and Work of John MacRae, Kintail and North Carolina*, (Glasgow: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society). 1-90.

¹² Chaimbeul (2020), *Iain mac Mhurchaidh*. 27.

While first in America, Iain seems to have led a comfortable life but (possibly, if we assume arrival in 1772) three years after arrival, he was impacted by the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783). Iain mac Mhurchaidh's name as lieutenant appears on the payroll from February 1776, indicating that he enlisted early in the British Army. The British government had strong support in the place where the Kintail Gaels had settled – the west side of Cape Fear River. Unfortunately, after a battle at Cross Creek, Iain was listed as one of eight hundred and fifty men to have been captured by rebel forces and was sent to prison in Halifax, North Carolina. After some time, they were marched to Philadelphia. The prisoners remained in custody for two and a half years. Eventually exchanged, Iain's name appears on a payroll in New York – again as lieutenant – and from there he joined the Army heading south to Savannah, Georgia. Once again, he was taken prisoner and marched to Boston in irons. For a second time, he was exchanged and was present at the Siege of Charleston, in 1780. On the 11th of September 1780, Iain mac Mhurchaidh received a Captain's commission from Earl Cornwallis.

John MacLean (Bàrd Thighearna Chola; 1787–1848)¹³

John MacLean was born in Cnoc Mhic Dhùghaill, behind Urvaig, Caolas, Tìree (Gaelic: *Tìriodh*) on the 8th of January 1787. He died on the 26th of January 1848 and is buried in Glenbard Cemetery, Glenbard, Antigonish County, Nova Scotia. John MacLean has several names. Most commonly in Scotland referred to as “Bàrd Thighearna Chola” (The Poet to the Laird of Coll) or also “Iain mac Ailein” in his native Tìree, the poet is also known – to this day – as “Bàrd Abhainn Bhàirnidh” (The Bard of Barney’s River) in Nova Scotia after the name of his first homestead. On his tombstone he is simply recognized as “Am Bàrd MacGilleain” (The Bard MacLean).

By descent, he was a member of the Clan MacLean aristocracy and was one of the last “family” bards in the Gàidhealtachd. MacLean began composing poetry in the 1810s and a great deal of it was panegyric to his patron, the Laird of Coll. The poet grew up in an area and environment where Gaelic oral culture was particularly strong, and it is assumed that MacLean was well-versed in his culture. He was literate and had read most of the early published collections of Gaelic poetry and apparently knew both Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair’s *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill* and Donnchadh Bàn mac an t-Saoir’s *Moladh Beinn Dobhrain* by heart. The poet was also literate in English. It is likely that MacLean attended one of the two schools founded by the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) in Tìree.

John MacLean had many different jobs in Scotland before he emigrated but was not successful in any of them. He was married on the 19th of July 1808 in Glasgow to Isabella Black. In 1810 to 1811, MacLean was briefly drafted into Colonel Lord John Campbell’s

¹³ Information taken from: Dunbar, R. D. (ed.) (2006), *The Secular Poetry of John MacLean, “Bàrd Thighearna Chola”, “Am Bàrd MacGilleain”* (The University of Edinburgh: PhD). 1-96.

Argyllshire Regiment of the British Militia. MacLean emigrated to Pictou County, Nova Scotia in 1819. Between his discharge from the military and his emigration, he produced a considerable amount of poetry and most of MacLean's "Old World" poems were produced in this period. As well as composing poetry, John MacLean was a collector, transcriber, and publisher, not only of his own poems but also of others and in around 1816 he went on a trip to neighboring islands to write down songs and poetry. The precise reasons for MacLean's emigration are unclear and he does not appear to have composed any poems on the topic. The first few years after their emigration, the family struggled and lived in poor circumstances. Luckily, MacLean's final years in Nova Scotia were happy but simple ones and the remaining years of his life passed uneventfully.

Jonathan Hughes, Llangollen (Bardd Pengwern; 1721–1805)¹⁴

Jonathan Hughes, Llangollen was born in March 1721 at Pengwern, near Llangollen. He died of old age in November 1805. Starting early, Hughes began composing poetry at the age of fifteen and throughout his life he produced many poems. Most of these were in the common style of the eighteenth century, including plenty of *cynghanedd*, and set to popular melodies of the time. He was skilled in the “carol” kind of poetry. From 1755 onwards, his free meter poems regularly featured in almanacs published by Cain Jones, Philomath, and others. As well as composing in free meters, Hughes also had a command of the strict meters and wrote an awdl for Richard Morris’s death in 1780. He published a collection of poetry, *Bardd a Byrddau* (A Poet and Hospitality), and earlier, in 1744, he wrote an interlude called *Y Dywysoges Genefetha* (The Genevan Princess).

Hughes was an avid supporter of the *eisteddfod* during the eighteenth century and there is mention of him being at the *eisteddfod* in Selattyn in 1748 and the *eisteddfod* at Llangollen in January 1789. In May of the same year, Hughes made it to the final three for the poetry prize along with Thomas Edwards (Twm o’r Nant; 1739–1810) and Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain; 1761–1849). The judges failed to decide and sent the compositions to London to be judged by the Gwyneddigion Society who then decided on Davies. Hughes was present at the Bala *eisteddfod* in September 1789. Unfortunately, Hughes’s efforts in *eisteddfodau* were not very successful.

¹⁴ Information taken from: Parry, T., (1959), HUGHES, JONATHAN (1721 - 1805), poet. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 5 May 2024. <https://biography.wales/article/s-HUGH-JON-1721>. [accessed 5/5/24].

Lewis Morris (Llewelyn Ddu o Fôn; 1701–1765)¹⁵

Lewis Morris, brother to Richard, William, and John Morris, (Morrisiad Môn; “the Morrises of Anglesey”) was born in 1701 in the parish of Llanfihangel Tre’r Beirdd, Anglesey. He died in 1765 and is buried within the parish church of Llanbadarn-Fawr. Lewis, by his own account, had little formal education but in his twenties, living with his parents at Pentreirianell, he had a practice as land-surveyor, and was employed by the Meyrick family of Bodorgan. He retained this private practice as he began an appointment in 1729 as “searcher” to the Customs at Beaumaris and Holyhead. This appointment lasted until 1743. In the same year (1729), Lewis married Elizabeth Griffiths of Ty-wriddyn, Rhoscolyn, who died before 1741. Lewis Morris was employed to make a survey of some of the Welsh ports and in 1748 his *Plans of Harbours, Bays, and Roads in St. George’s and the Bristol Channels* was published. As the Crown’s local representative, Lewis experienced the anger of the squires of Cardiganshire as they challenged the Crown’s rights to mine for lead. On one occasion in 1753, they even got him imprisoned for a short spell in Cardigan goal. Getting little support from his headquarters, the authorities claimed that Lewis in fact owed them quite a lot of money. The financial pressure from this never abated and plagued Lewis and his family throughout his life despite his four visits to London to appeal, and his marriage to the relatively moneyed Anne Lloyd, heiress to the small estate of Penbryn (Goginan). The matter resolved itself in 1760 and in his own words, he died “neither in want or in great plenty” but this is a stark contrast to the days when, by his brother, Richard’s words, he was “rolling in money, bags full of thousands.”

¹⁵ Information taken from: Jenkins, R. T., (1959), MORRIS, LEWIS (Llewelyn Ddu o Fôn; 1701 - 1765), poet and scholar. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. <https://biography.wales/article/s-MORR-LEW-1701>. [accessed: 5/5/2024].

Lewis Morris was an exceptionally patriotic Welshman and, despite his vitriolic words about Goronwy Owen, he gave vigorously and untiringly to Welsh literati. His letters are evidence of his advising them and editing their work. He was somewhat ahead of his age in appreciating *penillion* (“harp-verse”), poetry that he and his brothers ranked below verse written in the strict meters, and he is best remembered for his *penillion* in praise of Merioneth. He considered *cynganedd* to be the most elevated art form and did much to revive poetry in strict meters. Along with this interest in older literary forms came an interest in the Welsh language itself and in Welsh antiquities. It is certain that Lewis was the highest authority on the Welsh language by the mid-eighteenth century and he planned to publish an enlargement of John Davies of Mallwyd’s *Dictionarium*. This never came to fruition. Neither did another of his ambitious projects – a dictionary of placenames, *Celtic Remains*, which received no funding from the Cymmrodorion Society despite it being finished in 1757. The first part was later published in 1878 and the second remains in manuscript. During his lifetime the only literary work of Lewis Morris that was published are the poems that are included in *Diddanwch Teuluaid*, published in 1763 by Huw Jones of Llangwm.

Maighread Chamshron (Margaret Cameron; fl. 1785)¹⁶

Maighread Chamshron's birth date is unknown, but it is known that she was born in Glen Orchy (Gaelic: *Gleann Urchaidh*). Her death date is neither known. Firstly, she married Angus Macintyre of Lochaber and later Mr. Cameron of Fort William. Chamshron was the first female to publish a book of poetry with clear attribution in 1785 with *Orain Nuadh Ghaidhealach* (New Gaelic Songs). The volume was republished in 1805. Most of her poetry is male-focused, consisting of panegyric for the aristocracy and lesser gentry of Lochaber.

¹⁶ Information taken from: Maciver (2018), *The Gaelic Poet and the British Military Experience*. 237-239.

Mairearad Ghriogarach; (c. 1750–1830)¹⁷

Mairearad Ghriogarach's date of birth is unknown and only a skeleton biography can be gleaned from her poems themselves. She died in 1830. Ghriogarach is the poet's maiden name. Ghriogarach's father died when she was young, and her mother married another MacGregor. Ghriogarach herself left Rannoch (Gaelic: *Raineach* or *Raithneach*) as a young woman and worked in service of a MacGregor family in Perth after attending school there. Two of her brothers (Iain and Dòmhnall Dubh) and an uncle (Donnchadh) emigrated to North America, while two other brothers (Donnchadh Bròcair and Alasdair) remained in the Gàidhealtachd. Iain set up in New York province and was instated a captain in the Revolutionary War for the Royalist side. After this, he resettled in Nova Scotia.

Ghriogarach bore children by her husband Dòmhnall Gobha, whom she married in Atholl (Gaelic: *Athall*), but at least two of them died young. The wedding day is recorded as being on the 18th of July 1775. Dòmhnall and his son (Mairearad's stepson) Pàdraig often went to work in the Lowlands, in Edinburgh as sedan chair carriers, for example, as cattle prices fell in the Gàidhealtachd. Mairearad Ghriogarach's work appears in a book of two hundred and fourteen pages – *Co-chruinneach dh'Òrain Thaghte Ghaelach, nach robh Riamh Roimh ann an Clo-buala* (A Collect of Choice Highland Songs, Never Before in Print) – printed in 1831 by John Elder in Edinburgh. The volume contains thirty-four of Ghriogarach's poems – the highest number of female-authored printed poems until the work of Mhàiri Mhòr printed in 1891.

¹⁷ Information taken from: Byrne, Michael (2010), "A Window on the Late Eighteenth-Century Scottish Highlands: The Songs of Mairearad Ghriogarach," *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 30. 39-60.

Marged Dafydd (Margaret Davies; c. 1700–1785?)¹⁸

Marged Dafydd, born *circa* 1700 and died possibly in 1785, was daughter to Dafydd Evan (d. 1729), Coedgae-du, Trawsfynydd, and his wife Ann Dafydd (d. 1726). Her home was in Coedgae-du and she spent periods visiting relatives in y Brithdir, Llanelltyd and Dolgellau, where she had the opportunity to collect and copy poems. Marged was unmarried and free to travel as she pleased, being untethered to home and family and she was also the executor of her father's will, who died in 1729. A remarkable amount of her poetry survives (25 poems), and the majority of these are in strict meters. According to G. J. Williams in his entry on Marged in the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, however, “they do not display much merit.”¹⁹ Literary expressions of Welsh culture were important to Marged and, as such, she subscribed to the literary anthologies *Dewisol Ganiadau yr Oes hon* (“Selected Songs of this Age”) (1759), *Y Nefawl Ganllaw* (“The Nefawl Guide”) (1740) and *Diddanwch Teuluaid* (“A Seemly Diversion”) (1763). In letters to Dafydd Jones of Trefriw and Michael Prichard, she complained about the ignorance in her area regarding the poetic tradition. Because of her varied activity – composing, copying, collecting, and transcribing – it can be said that she partook in the literary renaissance of the eighteenth century.

It is suggested in the *marwnad* (“elegy”) to Marged's mother, that it was from her that she learned the basics of *Cerdd Dant* (“String Music”: the art of improvising the melody to a poetic text over harp music) and *Cerdd Dafod* (“Tongue craft”: poetic meters requiring strict observance of the rules of *cynghanedd*). It is also certain that she had some

¹⁸ Information taken from: Cathryn A. Charnell-White (2005), *Beirdd Ceridwen: Blodeugerdd Barddas o Ganu Menywod hyd tua 1800* (Llandybïe: Cyhoeddiadau Barddas), 389-392.

¹⁹ Williams, G. J., (1959), DAVIES, MARGARET (c. 1700-1785?), transcriber of many of the manuscripts preserved in our public collections. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. <https://biography.wales/article/s-DAVI-MAR-1700>. [accessed: 5/5/2024].

instruction from her aunt, Margaret Rowland and John Davies, Bronwion. By 1728, Marged Dafydd was corresponding with Michael Prichard (1709-33) and instructing him in *cynganedd* and the strict meters. *Cynganedd* is an incredibly important and complex skill of internal rhyme, consonance and assonance and is essential to the eighteenth-century idea of a trained poet – the poets of “old” composed in *cynganedd*. It is unsurprisingly a skill that takes years of learning and practicing and was a skill not often passed to women. Michael Prichard took pride in this instruction, and in a letter to Marged Dafydd that was published in *Cymru* xxv (1903), 93-8, he differentiated between “poets” who knew *cynganedd* and “clumsy poets”: oral poets who did not practice *cynganedd* like his own father, William Prichard, sexton of Llanllyfni. Clearly, poetic networks were important to Marged Dafydd and poetic relationships grew with several significant figures around her locality and beyond: Dafydd Jones from Trefriw, Rhys Jones from y Blaenau and the copyist Dafydd Ellis from Cricieth. We cannot prove J. H. Davies’ assertion that Marged Dafydd and Angharad James (mentioned as the other female manuscript copyist by Lewis Morris) were corresponding with each other, but it is significant that one copy of Angharad’s *marwnadau* (“elegies”) to her son is written in Marged Dafydd’s hand. One could say these poetic connections and correspondences created a bardic sphere around Marged – a sphere of which Lewis Morris was aware.

Rhys Jones (1713– 1801)²⁰

Born in 1713, Rhys Jones was the eldest son of John Jones of Blaenau, Llanfachreth, Meirionnydd. He died in his home area in 1801 and is buried at Llanfachreth church. Educated at Dolgellau and Shrewsbury, it was Jones's intention to become a lawyer but when his father died as Jones was only eighteen, he returned home to Blaenau where he spent the remainder of his life, marrying Ann, daughter of Richard Griffith of Tan-yr-allt, Caernarfonshire in 1741. Rhys's most important publication was *Gorchestion Beirdd Cymru* (Masterpieces of the Welsh Bards) which, published in Shrewsbury in 1773, contained the work of Aneirin, Taliesin, and "Llywarch Hen," among others. Influenced greatly by this poetry stylistically, Jones wrote an *awdl* of praise for William Vaughan of Cors-y-gedol using the patterns of *awdlau* by Gutun Owen and William Llŷn – poets also found in *Gorchestion Beirdd Cymru*.

Gorchestion Beirdd Cymru was not Rhys's only publication and earlier, in around 1750, he published *Cerdd Newydd iw chanu yn y Lloerig Gymdeithas yr hon sydd wedi i sefydlu iw chadw yn Lloerig Nant Tafarn yn fisol beunydd ar ddydd Iau nesaf o flaen y Llawn Lloer* (A New Song to be Sung in the Lloerig Society which has been Established to be Kept Monthly on the Nearest Thursday before the Full Moon) together with *Cywydd i Ofyn Gwn i'r Pendefig Wm. Llwyd o Riwedog Ysgr* (A Cywydd to Ask the Noble William Llwyd of Riwedog Esqr. For a Gun). Later, in 1817, he published *Can neu Fyfyrdod ar Ddaioni yr Arglwydd yn Anfon yd i'n Gwlad er ein Hachub rhag y Newyn a'i Ganlyniadau etc., ar fesul "Old Darby"* (A Song or Meditation on the Goodness of the Lord for sending Corn to our Country to Save us from the Famine and its Consequences etc., to the Tune of

²⁰ Information taken from: Jones, D. G., (1959), JONES, RHYS (or RICE) (1713 - 1801), antiquary and poet. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. <https://biography.wales/article/s-JONE-RHY-1713>. [accessed: 5/5/2024].

“Old Darby”). After his death, his collected works were published under the title *Y Llyfr Gwyrdd Diweddar Rice Jones o’r Blaenau, Meirion. Gan Rice Jones Owen, Wyr yr Awdur* (Rice Jones of Blaenau, Meirionydd’s Latest Green Book. By Rice Jones Owen, the Author’s Grandson).

Thomas Edwards (Twm o'r Nant; 1738–1810)²¹

Thomas Edwards was born at Penparchell Isaf, parish of Llanefydd, Denbighshire but his parents later moved, when he was still a child, to Nant, near Nantglyn. He died in the April of 1810 and was buried at Whitchurch, near Denbigh. In his autobiography, Edwards recounts writing songs and two interludes before the age of nine and playing in interludes before the age of twelve. He learned to read and write in a circulating school headed by Griffith Jones (1683–1761). Evan Evans (Ieuan Fardd, Iauan Brydydd Hir; 1731–1788) officiated on his wedding day, marrying Elizabeth Hughes of Pont-y-garreg, Llanfair Talhaearn. A timber hauler by trade, Edwards first set up business in Denbigh but soon came into debt. For a time, he had to turn to writing and acting in interludes to support himself and his family. He found himself bankrupt once more and moved to South Wales, working in timber haulage in Abermarlais and other places, farming a turnpike gate, and later innkeeping in Llandilo. Returning to North Wales in 1786, he again had to fall back on writing and acting in interludes, eventually settling in Denbigh, becoming a stonemason.

The interludes Edwards wrote in his youth have not survived but his later works were published in pamphlet form. The following survive: *Tri Cydymaith Dyn* (Man's Three Companions); *Cyfoeth a Thlodi* (Wealth and Poverty); *Cain ac Abel* (Cain and Abel); *Pleser a Gofid* (Pleasure and Sorrow); *Tri Chryfion Byd* (Three World Strengths); *Pedair Colofn Gwladwriaeth* (Four Pillars of State); *Cybydd-dod ac Oferedd* (Greed and Vanity); and *Y Farddoneg Fabilonaidd* (The Babylonian Poetry). His interludes are known for their wit and quality of versification. A collection of Edwards's poetry, *Gardd o Gerddi* (A Garden of Poems), was printed at Trevecka in 1790 and some of the stylistic features of his *cywyddau*

²¹ Information taken from: Parry, T., (1959), EDWARDS, THOMAS (Twm o'r Nant; 1739 - 1810), poet and writer of interludes. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. <https://biography.wales/article/s-EDWA-THO-1739>. [accessed: 5/5/2024].

show that he was familiar with the work of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century poets. Also a collector of manuscripts, Edwards sold several to William Owen Pughe which are now housed in the British Museum. An avid competitor at *eisteddfodau*, Edwards did not have much success and the closest he came was vying for first with Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain; 1761–1849) and Jonathan Hughes, Llangollen (Bardd Pengwern; 1721–1805) at the Corwen eisteddfod in 1789. Ultimately, Davies was chosen. In 1790 at St. Asaph, Edwards was awarded the prize for extempore verse-writing.

Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain; 1761–1849)²²

Walter Davies was born in July 1761 at Y Wern, near Tomen y Castell, Llanfechain, Montgomeryshire, claiming kinship, through his father, William Davies, with the families of Nant-yr-erw-haidd in Edeirnion and Kyffin of Tre-brys. Davies died in 1849 in Llanrhaedr-ym-Mochnant. Walter Davies was educated at the village school, leaving when he was twelve years old to pursue the copper craft. He competed at several *eisteddfodau* when he was young, joining the fraternity of the bards, and his eisteddfodic success meant that he was brought into the attention of poets and antiquarians such as Owain Myfyr (Owen Jones; 1741–1814) and William Owen Pughe (1759–1835). Under Owain Myfyr's support, he attended Oxford University, graduating from All Souls in 1795. He later earned an MA from Trinity College, Cambridge. After graduating the first time, Davies took orders and became curate of Meifod, Montgomeryshire and later Ysbyty Ifan, Denbighshire.

Walter Davies was active in the London-Welsh circles, particularly the Gwyneddigion Society and along with David Rowland (1782–1820) he was instrumental in forming provincial eisteddfodic societies. At the Gwyneddigion Society's first *eisteddfod*, held in Carmarthen in 1819, he won the silver trophy for his *awdl* and he won the *eisteddfod* earlier in 1789. He was often also in demand to adjudicate at the *eisteddfodau*. Davies's interests were varied – he studied medicine, astronomy, literature, genealogy, and antiquities – and he was a great book collector. Over three hundred of Davies's manuscripts are now in the National Library. During his lifetime, Davies published several things including *Rhyddid: Traethawd a ennillodd ariandlws y Gwyneddigion* (Freedom: An Essay

²² Information taken from: Owen, J. T., (1959), DAVIES, WALTER (Gwallter Mechain; 1761 - 1849), cleric, poet, antiquary, and literary critic. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. <https://biography.wales/article/s-DAVI-WAL-1761>. [accessed: 5/5/2024].

that Won the Gwyneddigion Silver Trophy) in 1791 which was an essay on the French Revolution from his viewpoint as a Whig of the Walpole school.