

## “Mindful of the hour of conquest”: Welsh Patriotism in Southey’s 1798 *Morning Post* Poems

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Article abstract

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## *Romanticism on the Net*

### **“Mindful of the hour of conquest”: Welsh Patriotism in Southey’s 1798 *Morning Post* Poems**

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#### **Abstract**

This essay examines the six poems on Welsh subjects that Southey published in the *Morning Post* in 1798, specifically in the context of their being written during a time of political oppression. As scholars have pointed out, during this period Southey masked his poetry’s radical messages in historical or abstract terms in order to evade allegations that he was being politically subversive. But, these accounts have overlooked how in these Welsh poems Southey weaves a radical vision of Welsh history that he ultimately brings into modernity, as well as how this link to the present depends upon contemporary Welsh culture (and various English views of it). This essay focuses on how Southey’s repetition and development of key terms across the poems, such as “patriotism,” “gallantness,” and “stranger,” operate in order to unite Welsh and English people against common transhistorical forces such as “Treachery” and “Power.” A focus on such themes elevates their permanence across time and space, and also allows Southey to bring the people of Britain together through shared histories of conquest and subjugation. Finally, by repeatedly emphasizing Wales’s current pacifism despite its charged histories Southey funnels radical potential into a living community without identifying it as a potential target for repressive state measures.

#### **Biographical Note**

Matthew C. Jones is a PhD Candidate in the English Department of the University of Connecticut, Storrs. He holds an MA in Welsh & Celtic Studies from Cardiff University and an MA in English Literature from the University of Connecticut. His dissertation, “Tradition’s Chains: Wales in British Literature, 1780-1870,” examines how Wales’s social and cultural developments over this period challenge how the Welsh were portrayed in the English literary sphere and have been addressed in literary scholarship.

## I. Introduction: Southey in Wales, Wales in Southey

1. That Wales, its culture, and its people are intimately and integrally bound to Robert Southey's early decades is quite well known, well enough that one can confidently claim that the nation was quintessential to his early intellectual development. Before he was thirty he nominated it as the site of his and Coleridge's Pantisocracy scheme (their "republic of Reason and Virtue") (Holland and Everett 297), became a close friend of Iolo Morganwg and William Owen Pughe (two of the more notable Welsh literary figures of this time), was patronized by Charles Watkin Williams Wynn, attempted to move with his family to Maes-gwyn in 1802, and even considered learning the Welsh language.<sup>1</sup> Wales is the basis of his epic 1805 poem *Madoc* (which he began drafting in 1794 and in which Iolo makes a brief guest appearance), into which he poured such energy that he wrote, perhaps in jest, that its publication should entitle him to a poet laureateship of the "[Welsh] Principality" (qtd. in Pratt 99). It should come as little surprise, then, that Southey enlists Wales and its cultural contours elsewhere in his poetry of this period, calling upon them when composing images and narratives of idealized society and even popular resistance. Equally well-understood are concurrent waves of activity in Southey's life that ostensibly have little to do with Wales at all. By the end of the 1790s Southey had become a recognizable figure of political radicalism, and as such was a frequent target of political attacks, which reverberated into his private life and even his Welsh affairs. In late 1797 he began to be a focus of ridicule by the *Anti-Jacobin*, and in 1803 his reputation as a Jacobin led to his application to lease Maes-gwyn being denied (Pratt 88).
2. The goal of this essay is to begin to bring these contemporaneous developments of Southey's life—his deep affections for Wales and his political persecution—into dialogue with each other. Specifically, I will examine Wales, Welsh society, and Welsh history as they are built in a series of Southey's poems published in the *Morning Post* throughout 1798. This analysis, I argue, brings forth three revelations whose lineaments have heretofore not been deeply considered. First, it sheds light on how Southey constructed Wales, Welsh society, and Welsh history in ways that allowed him to publish radical messages at a time when he felt increasing pressure to be cryptic and subdued in his political discourse. Second, it illuminates how he conveyed such coded political messages in the present tense and in ways that appealed to a living British population. And third, it elucidates how Southey reoriented conventional qualities

of Welsh “otherness,” such as primitiveness, such that Welsh culture could function as a guide for addressing issues of the British state. A focus on these considerations will also delineate how Southey could and did engage with Wales in the present tense at a time when much of his political writing was set in a foreign and distant past (or otherwise abstracted). The six Welsh contributions to the 1798 *Morning Post* are: “St. David’s Day” (March 1), “Inscription for Cardiff Castle, where Robert of Normandy was Confined by his Brother Henry the First” (September 20), “Lines on Visiting Lanthony Abbey” (December 5), “Lines, Written amid the Ruins of Abergavenny Castle” (December 18), “Inscription for a Monument in the Vale of Ewias” (December 21), and “Ode (‘in Vain the trav’ller seeks Aberffraw’s tow’rs’)” (December 31).<sup>2</sup> Through a focus on how in these poems he distinguishes the Welsh from his English-language readers with the use of repeated key terms and concepts such as “patriotism” and “gallantness,” I argue that Southey sought to inspire a combined British audience to better discern oppressions that were confronting them as a whole. By diagraming Welsh identity and culture such that the Welsh could not be said to threaten any social or political order in the minds of English-language readers of any nation, Southey circumvented the possibility of raising suspicions of the living Welsh (and himself). The locations they inhabit and histories they celebrate, however, possess great intellectual potential for those who observe, inherit, and disseminate them.

## **II. Southey, his politics, and his Wales in 1798**

3. Lynda Pratt, in the only recent scholarship devoted to the six Welsh *Morning Post* poems (which were only republished in full in 2004; see also Curry), explains that through considering “both what happens and what might happen when we put Southey in Wales” we come to understand how Southey’s “ability to people the Welsh landscape with historical and imaginary characters and structures of his own choosing was not restricted to *Madoc*” (86, 89). In her discussion of the poems she brings our attention to how Southey acts as the conduit for “Welsh national feeling,” and how he conceives of the Welsh past as “heroic and glorious, uniting military prowess with godliness” (90). I will return to these themes as they arise in the individual pieces, but before considering them it is important to distinguish Wales from the other foreign locations that Southey employed in such manners at this time. Indeed, over this period he developed a collage of external nationalisms and histories that acted as vehicles for

his radical sentiments after it had become dangerous to make them explicitly. Kenneth R. Johnston notes that after the *Anti-Jacobin* attacks of 1797 Southey was in a “double bind” (268) of needing to write as a form of employment but needing also to be more covert in his utterances. Describing the nearly two hundred poems Southey contributed to the *Morning Post* between 1798 and 1799 (a period during which the *Morning Post* was increasing in circulation and had “republican” if “elastic” tendencies) (Erdman lxxv, lxxi), Johnston writes: “we see him being driven into a corner, as he tried to keep writing occasional poems of political commentary without running afoul of the technical terms of the Gagging Acts on the one hand and the vigilante terms of *Anti-Jacobin* satire and parody on the other” (268-269). He claims that, consequently, “many of these poems express very unhappy emotional states, either the speaker’s own, or ... those persons in even worse shape, suffering poor people” (269).

4. Lastly, and most importantly for my purposes, Johnston contends that Southey came to create distance between these “suffering poor people” and the paper’s readers. He notes a turning away from explicit topical references and toward various forms of the abstract: in the political poems, “[Southey] almost never writes on the news of the day, and he gradually moves away from the victimized poor to trek ... through ancient British history, the Bible, classical mythology, and Welsh, Irish, and Scottish legends and landmarks to find—or force—suggestive parallels for England in Pitt’s bad conduct of the war” (269). While all of these points are valid, in the case of Southey’s Wales they need to be amended. Beyond the Welsh *Morning Post* poems not entirely being set in the ancient past, Southey actually brings the “victimized poor” closer to himself and his readers. He does this by engaging with how the contemporary English imagination configured Wales and the Welsh (as a noble but pastoral and uncommercialized population, discussed below), and then elevating their current practices as beacons to guide his reading audience. The Welsh poems’ collective traversal of time and space is evident with their opening line, with “St. David’s Day” proclaiming that “This is the Cambrian’s day,” announcing to readers that the living Welsh continue to celebrate the history that Southey goes on to detail and embellish. What this all suggests is that these six poems do still orbit around social plight, but that the populations drawn upon not only still exist but also validate the Welsh histories that Southey goes on to forge. As such, Southey’s Welsh society could resonate among readers who were living within visual or auditory range of it (on the same island and as part of the same nation in this case). But, by virtue of the Welsh ostensibly gazing backwards upon a

radical past, they and their observers could escape the scrutinizing attentions of 1790s state surveillance. Johnston's claims thus support Pratt's averral that "Southey's politicized Welsh landscape is ... something that can be written onto" (91). But, additionally, Southey conducts his poems' Welsh populace as living bearers of this politicized history and ultimately grants the non-Welsh British population access to it. In doing so, he cloaks his radical messages in such a way as to avoid detection while simultaneously framing his readers as co-inheritors of the radical histories the poems depict. As I shall demonstrate, he achieves this through composing the living Welsh as possessing certain traits in "St. David's Day," and then developing these devices, such as "patriotism," "gallantness," and the "pure blood of Britain," over the Welsh history depicted in the other five poems. To best trace these terms' growths and developments, my sequencing is organized by genre rather than chronology, beginning with "St. David's Day," then the inscriptions for "Cardiff Castle" and "Vale of Ewias," then the lines to "Lanthonny Abbey" and "Abergavenny Castle," and finally the ode to "Aberffraw's Tow'rs."

### III. "St. David's Day," the inscriptions, and the "pure blood of Britain"

5. Southey opens "St. David's Day," named for the annual celebration of Wales's sixth-century patron saint, with the promise that the legacies of the forthcoming histories still survive (which by extension adds a layer of verity to the histories themselves). The poem's Welsh celebrants embrace these histories, allowing the poem also to act as a paradigm for the ones that follow it. Pratt identifies it as the poem in which Southey's own political agenda is perhaps most vivid, writing that he "invokes Welsh national identity and pride in the context of a heroic national past," and that "[its] invocation of Welsh national feeling is also an illustration of Southey's own radical patriotism, his ideological opposition to his own country, England" (90). Pratt's claims introduce a boundary between the Welsh population's collective sense of self, legacy, and tradition and that of the poem's unnamed English-language readers, the majority of whom are presumably not Cambrians. To these ends, the poem's Welsh portray qualities that English readers might benefit from emulating. Further, whatever cultural exchange or assimilation might take place throughout does not affect how the Welsh conceive of Saint David's annual celebration. Ultimately, the poem's Welsh population remembers and celebrates its conquest while subtly revealing nuances of the oppression against which their ancient patriots struggled, which of course bear certain resemblances to the conditions that were forcing Southey to

ventriloquize his ideologies at all. Certain elements of Welsh cultural memory thus reflect Southey's 1790s anxieties, but only in the later entries do we learn how the Welsh struggle extends to all of those living in Great Britain.

6. The poem opens by setting the scene of the patron saint's celebration. Southey cites no specific location of the festivities (this being the only poem not to include a strict setting in its title or body), reinforcing an invisible division between the Cambrians and the readers. Southey enters Wales's cultural past by way of the living inheritors in the opening lines:

This is the Cambrian's day, their high day this,  
When glad of heart, and with an honest pride,  
They boast their country; mindful of the hour  
Of conquest, and that Champion, whose *green crest*  
Play'd foremost in the battle; from whose sword  
The Saxons fled. (*EPW* V 176-177, lines 1-6)

The immediate contrast is between the immense pride on display and its purported source. Appropriately for a national holiday, the collective "Cambrians" come together through communal reflection, and the "honest pride" and "gladness of heart" that this reflection calls forth encourage future annual reflections. But, it is being "mindful of the hour of conquest" that initiates these feelings, and although the Saxons initially "fled," they were of course, as readers and celebrants alike are aware, and as we shall see more intimately in "Aberffraw's Tow'rs," eventually victorious. Pratt explains that the "*green crest*" "refers to the legend that St David told the Welsh forces to wear leeks in order to recognise each other in a battle against the Saxons on 1 March 640" (*EPW* V 490 n2). Here the "*green crest*," which we reencounter in "Vale of Ewias," is a material shibboleth for the Welsh, further defining their separateness as Cambrians while also encouraging others to follow their example.

7. As the poem continues and concludes we come to realize that the form that ancient resistance took is not to be replicated as such in modern times, despite no indication that the Saxon rule it describes has ended. Although the festival does not inspire the cultural inheritors to similar popular defiance, it does serve as an annual reminder of tyrannical forces that warrant resistance. The poem continues:

Long has the Solitary's fame surviv'd,

And long his fame shall live! A gallant race  
Still cheerly hold their Champion's festival,  
Proud of their country; and it is a pride  
That well becomes the children of that realm  
Thro' whose long annals many a patriot name,  
Amid the gloom of darker ages, shines  
Illustrious. (lines 27-34)

The "gallant race" Southey introduces here collectively agrees on such terms as pride and fame. We know from the opening lines that gallantry includes mindfulness of "the hour of conquest," and that the longevity of fame can be attributed at least in part to its inheritors' ability to remember and thus recognize the oppression against which its patriots fought. Continued praise is partly made possible by David's shift from the "Country's Champion" into Wales's "Hermit Saint" earlier in the poem (lines 14-15). His continued presence prevents any impression that the current age is brighter as a result of Wales's patriots being vanquished. Venerating him rekindles the knowledge that rebellion against tyranny is both necessary and patriotic.

8. The concluding lines bring this principle back into the modern moment. After populating the "patriot names" with Merlin, Boudica, and Arthur (Caractacus being alluded to earlier in the poem), Southey recalls Llewelyn (i.e., Llywelyn ap Gruffudd), and carries David's patriotism into the thirteenth century:

gallant Chief,  
Who for his Country's freedom liv'd in arms,  
And with his Country's independence died.  
Long shall your honours bloom, heroic names! (lines 45-8)

Llewelyn's fate reclarifies that ancient Welsh "gallantness" contains the willingness to take up arms and be martyred for a national cause. However, David's latent saintly influence imbues his followers with a knowledge and memory of the struggles that is present even when martial resistance is not an option (their "honours" still "bloom"). Wales lost its independence when it lost its renowned patriot freedom fighters, but the race of which they were part lives on. In continuously honoring ancient valor in public displays, the Cambrians consistently demonstrate to observers that resistance is remembered even when it is unsuccessful.

9. The dynamic of explicit themes of ancient heroism and ancient darkness counterbalanced by implicit themes of a more inactive meditation pervades the other poems, except with the living Welsh community removed. The two inscriptions aptly demonstrate this interplay. Pratt explains that this was a high period for inscriptions, which functioned “as a means of defining and transmitting both to contemporaries and to posterity an image (or images) of national identity” (93), and that they “shaped opinions” and could ultimately “inspire individuals to patriotic endeavours by the simple act of being read” (94). As we shall see, the envisaged English-language reader who would pass a monument and read Southey’s inscriptions would have been moved by a nuanced and selective telling of a history that occurred there, and hopefully be enthused by the same patriotic spirit that the Welsh, according to “St. David’s Day,” themselves never lost.
10. “Cardiff Castle,” set in the twelfth century, opens by cataloging traits that harmonize with those to which “St. David’s Day” ascribed significant value:

Here did he linger twenty tedious years,  
ROBERT OF NORMANDY, a guileless Knight,  
Brave, open-minded, bountiful, beloved’d... (*EPW* V 237-238, lines 1-3)

Any passerby-readers immediately internalize Robert’s virtues and adversity. Since “St. David’s Day” informed readers that the Welsh celebrate their native heroes for possessing very similar attributes, peripatetic English-language readers can assume that they appreciate the same values in Robert. Robert’s narrative guides readers through how to comprehend his imprisonment:

twenty tedious years,  
He never breath’d the air of liberty,  
The while his brother, on the Throne usurp’d,  
In peace enjoy’d whate’er of happiness  
Pow’r can bestow... (lines 4-8)

The tyrant’s “peace” is not accompanied by all-encompassing “happiness,” and Southey distinguishes here between Robert’s and Power’s unique traits. Power, in the form of social dominance, does not beget such virtues as bravery, bountifulness, or belovedness. Nor is it to be praised despite being, like Robert and David, remembered and recognized across time. By extension, one does not lose these traits as a result of subjugation. Rather, injustice creates a

more vivid contrast between noble prisoner and unhappy tyrant. By blending the historical Robert's fate with the allegorical Power's transhistorical reach, Southey stealthily informs his inscription's readers that Power might walk among them, and that oppressions might be imprisoning Roberts of a different name. As discussed below, cultural memory's nuanced accounts of "peace" and oppressive "power" become indispensable in assessing "Aberffraw's Tow'rs."

11. The later inscription for the "Vale of Ewias" also engages with power structures while harking back to Welsh identity as preserved in "St. David's Day." Calling to the wandering "stranger," it opens: "Here was it, stranger, that the patron Saint / Of Cambria pass'd his age of penitence" (*EPW* V 262-263, lines 1-2). Southey does not explicitly align David with Robert, but we know from "St. David's Day" that David and other Welsh patriots share many characteristics with Robert, and that both the living Welsh and those who come into contact with their cultural history can identify with all of them. "Vale of Ewias" proffers an agent through which these discrete populations can be more firmly bound. The inscription calls to mind "St. David's Day" through subtle allusions, and also delineates how Welsh history can become that of a combined Britain:

and if in thy veins  
Flows the pure blood of Britain, sure that blood  
Has flow'd with quicker impulse at the tale  
Of David's deeds, when through the press of war  
His gallant comrades follow'd his green crest  
To conquest. (lines 8-13)

Southey challenges the "stranger" to seek and be moved by the "pure blood of Britain," just as the ancient freedom fighters were. Observant strangers already know that the green crest's legacy is still regenerated among the Cambrians, and here the "gallantness" reaches directly to the stranger as well, who in turn might himself contribute to the list of "patriot names." English-language readers, be they English or Welsh (or anything else for that matter), here come together bound by the mutual recognition of tyranny as a universal enemy. The poem's closing lines return to the image of a "better age":

Stranger! Haterhill's mountain heights,  
And this fair vale of Ewias, and the stream

Of Hodney, to thine after thoughts will rise  
More grateful, thus associate with the name  
Of David, and the deeds of other days. (lines 13-17)

The influence expands to include other “deeds” from “other days” beyond David’s. As importantly, the influence transcends the anthropological and into the geographical, or even ethereal. What the transient stranger gathers from the site of the inscription he can then carry back to his origin and from there can spread the message still farther, effectively increasing the radius of David’s influence, as well as access to the symbolic potential of the “pure blood of Britain.”

#### IV. The lines, “Aberffraw’s Tow’rs,” and a stranger’s “peace”

12. “St. David’s Day” and the inscriptions exemplify Pratt’s point that Southey’s “land of Welsh patriot saints, sages and heroic warriors is predicated on his (and his reader’s) impassioned awareness of its eventual conquest by an aggressive England” (90). The lines, “Lanthony Abbey” and “Abergavenny Castle,” channel Wales and its histories toward the observer from new angles. No longer addressing an undefined general audience as in “St. David’s Day,” nor a traveling reader as in the inscriptions, in the lines Southey speaks to and reflects upon himself (with or without company). These add yet another dimension to what Pratt describes as Southey’s technique of “manipulat[ing] national history and legend in the cause of radical patriotism,” and indeed also her observation that his “politicized Welsh landscape is also something that can be written onto” (91). Even more importantly, their more intimate deliveries invite more immediate consideration of the role of the Welsh as bridges between the ancient and the modern worlds.

13. Perhaps what stands out most about the lines is their similar thematic framing to the inscriptions. “Lanthony Abbey” opens and closes in virtually the same manner as the inscriptions (and shares a twelfth-century setting with “Cardiff Castle”), exemplifying this overlap of content. It begins:

LANTHONY! I have had a toilsome way  
To visit these thy ruins; yet the sight  
Is such, as, with a satisfied delight,

A toil more wearying amply might repay.... (*EPW* V 258, lines 1-4)

Rather than the monument bearing and delivering a message to travelers, here the traveler speaks to the monument. Southey repositions himself as the historical authority and educator in the place of the site, effectively declaring what might fit onto its inscription were one to appear. Doing so also mimics how the wandering stranger might spread the messages he gathers from the inscriptions. Southey fortifies his position in the closing lines:

With added pleasure do I wander o'er  
Thy site, Lanthony! grateful for his [Giraldus'] page,  
And call to mind the days that are no more. (lines 15-17)

Through this inversion of authority Southey even obviates the need of the intermediary inscription, and his recall of the site's historical significance confirms also that he could share its lore even when he is not in close proximity to it. From this vantage point he retells a tale of Wales's "patriot warriors" being enlisted for the Third Crusade by Giraldus Cambrensis (i.e., Gerald of Wales):

And now my spirit to that distant day  
Rekurs, when old GIRALDUS came to rest  
Within thy friendly walls, a welcome guest.  
What, tho' on deeds to erring zeal intent,  
He summon'd Cambria's chieftains, distant far  
From their own mountains, to the holy war,  
Not with an idle eye his way he went  
Thro' the rude dwellers of th'unconquer'd land... (lines 5-12)

Even without identifying any of them by name, invoking "Cambria's chieftains" recalls David and the other named figures in "St. David's Day." Further, as we have learned from the inscriptions, there are avenues by which living people inspired by the Welsh past might come to count themselves among the ancient patriots.

14. "Cambria's chieftains" survive into the present in ways similar to the patriots of other poems: "But such as then they were, his faithful hand / Has bade their portraits reach the distant age" (lines 13-14). Just as other relics such as David's "solitary fame" and the "blooming" of other "heroic names" predate Wales's conquest and yet resonate among those in the present, these chieftains' legacies survive as well. These lines lead to the conclusion, and Southey's closing

reflection, that the ruins “call to mind the days that are no more” (line 17). Readers and listeners again face visions of a halcyon past, with the repeated emphasis effectively forcing the audience to question its own complacency and query how such days might return. By imbuing the “chieftains” with the traits shared among David and other patriots this poem’s speaker and audience can more immediately relate both to the “other days” evoked by other poems and to the omnipresent tyranny that ended them.

15. “Abergavenny Castle” shares with “Lanthony Abbey” formal similarities that belie its distinct content. Southey opens “Abergavenny Castle” by asking aloud “And is this not a scene that overpays / The toil of our long way?” (lines 1-2), juxtaposing the visible beauty of the castle’s ruins with the physical struggles to reach them (according with the overarching theme of personal and collective challenges being vindicated upon ultimately reaching one’s destination). “Abergavenny Castle,” which like “Cardiff Castle” chronicles twelfth-century tyrannical abuses, adds different layers of meaning to the ancient world from those set out in the other poems. After retelling a story of William de Braose’s massacre of Welsh lords, the poem closes:

God be thank’d

That, in our better age, a tale like this

With wonder strikes the half-incredulous ear! (*EPW* V 262, lines 19-21)

As many of the other entries hark to the past as being “gloomier” but possessing the patriotic heroes, the use here of the comparative “better” invites inquiry (any possible sarcasm notwithstanding). Blending the historical with the allegorical, Southey describes the event that immediately preceded his exaltation, and spurred him to elevate his age as “better”:

The day has been

When Treach’ry spread the feast, and Murder here

Receiv’d the guests; when yonder tott’ring tow’r

Re-echo’d to her cries, who in the morn

A wife and mother rose in liberty,

Ere night a widow, and the slave of him

Whose sword had made her childless. (lines 13-19)

While this scene warrants gratitude that such entanglements have passed, it also expands our scope of understanding how conquest operated and what forms its victories took in these ancient Welsh settings. This woman’s fall from grace into slavery metonymizes the experience

of a country's inhabitants when those fighting for its freedom are defeated. These lines' action, allegory, and resolution recall "Cardiff Castle," in which the "guileless," "Brave, open-hearted, bountiful, belov'd" Robert was opposed to "whate'er of happiness / Pow'r can bestow." Together, these offer at last a fuller image of what traits and fates David and others were fighting against and how they can echo forward in time.

16. Ultimately, despite the relief that such scenes as the one portrayed are no longer taking place, tensions between the "ancient days" as Southey frames them in this poem and how he frames them elsewhere remain somewhat unresolved. His current "better age" is, appreciatively, to be favored over any in which such massacres took place. But, the older days as the other poems compose them generated strong resistance against alien oppressors, the fame radiating from "patriot names" dying for their country, and an active "gallant" "patriotism." Modernity, at least among the Cambrians, by contrast elevates reflection above action (in keeping with David's transition into a "Hermit Saint"). Southey makes quite clear throughout the entries that Wales remains a conquered nation, and does not incite the Welsh or anyone else to rise in arms against any modern iteration of tyranny. This is all in keeping with Johnston's and Pratt's arguments, and helps to preclude any possible suspicions among readers that the Welsh are spreading treasonous ideas. His choices are all the more significant since the overwhelming majority of Wales did not speak English. Such illustrations help to imbue the eighteenth-century audience with the ability to notice that even mild reform has taken place, and that it can continue. The plight of the twelfth-century woman who "in the morn" was a free mother and wife and who "ere night" was a childless, widowed slave might lead one to be thankful that such enslavements are no longer taking place (in Wales at least). More importantly, it confirms that the patriotic Welsh qualities that are so praised can in fact reawaken when one is confronted with images of oppression.
17. But, declaring here that the current days are "better" while elsewhere lauding ancient patriotism brings us into the present with something of a conundrum. These complexities lead to "Aberffraw's Tow'rs," set during Edward I's thirteenth-century conquest of Wales. In it, the five earlier poems' shared themes coalesce, especially that of a benevolent present succeeding a somewhat conflicted past. More so than the others, "Aberffraw's Tow'rs" elucidates the boundary between what is to be praised and what is not, which moves toward a solution of the

puzzle. Unlike in the inscriptions and lines, this poem's traveler fails to discover the ruins he seeks. Yet their absence compromises neither the site's importance nor its history's veracity, as the second and third stanzas show:

Still to the ocean flows th'eternal stream,  
But now no palace tow'rs  
Shadow its sparkling tide;  
Fall'n is the seat of heroes and of kings.

Long, Cambria, has thine antient throne been broke,  
Long has a stranger sway'd  
The sceptre of thy kings,  
O land of heroes! but thy fame survives. (*EPW* V 265-266, lines 5-12)

Two stanzas later we are reassured that the critical "fame" keeps alive a memory of the patriot heroes (not unlike Geraldus and the page in "Lanthony Abbey"), suggesting that the heroes themselves are in some form still alive:

But still those old, delightful strains shall tell  
Of Arthur's peerless deeds;  
But still the high-ton'd harp  
Echoes to Owen's and Llewellyn's fame. (lines 17-20)

From this early point we learn that the towers' symbolism has outlived the towers themselves. Yet, reminiscent of the stranger being able to convey the symbolism of sites bearing lines and inscriptions even when he is far away from them, their significance can still be divined. Unlike in "St. David's Day" or to some extent the earlier poems, however, "Aberffraw's Tow'rs" depicts a scene in which the eternal "fame" is under direct threat, reminding readers that they are responsible for seeking out and acting on the histories whose preservation contemporary "pages" had secured. This tension speaks to fame's longevity, but also begins to outline how it is always at odds with tyranny, even when it is not being actively invoked.

18. Later lines help imagine fame's fraught survival while also complicating how, as an abstract quality, it operates. We learn that fame is different from notoriety, with patriotism associated with the former and oppression with the latter:

Poor was the triumph of thy Saxon foe,

Thee villain fraud betray'd,  
Thee force subdu'd unarm'd,—

No muse for Edward wreathes th' unwith'ring crown. (lines 25-8)

Pratt writes that for Southey “Wales’s past is heroic and glorious, uniting military prowess with godliness,” and points to these lines when comparing it with his depiction of England, whose “history is the reverse, its relations with Wales characterized by ‘villain fraud,’ ‘force’ and barbarism” (90). Southey conditions the general reader then and now to condemn tyrannical forces that embody those qualities. But we must also consider that even within this poem’s parameters the same conqueror who receives no muse sits upon Wales’s broken throne, “sways” its former kings’ scepter, and is remembered by name into the present. In this scenario, the living Welsh subject remains under the throne despite his received history condemning both the conquest and the conqueror.

19. Southey stops short of saying so explicitly, but attentive readers would have deduced that the scions of the tyrants who conquered Wales in the thirteenth century were already rulers over the people of thirteenth-century England (and that by extension, if one allows for numerous transfers of power across time, they likewise held a scepter over the entire island of Great Britain in 1798). Those acquainted with radical rhetoric would also detect here resonances of the “Saxon liberty” that was believed to predate life under the “Norman yoke.”<sup>3</sup> This point conditions how we must interpret what Southey describes as Wales’s zenith of patriotism. It took place when a neighboring population was already subjugated, harmonized with contemporary radical histories of that neighboring population, and acted as living proof that independence and resistance to oppression was possible. Awareness of the coexistence of independent Welsh and subjugated English people in the thirteenth century—in the poem’s terms—begins to evidence how the same jointly oppressed people in the eighteenth century could benefit from sharing their resources so as to confront their mutual oppressor. With this in mind, that Edward I remained a recognizable figure for centuries after his death invites a reanalysis of exactly how fame in these poems is to be understood. Most important for a memorialized figure’s legacy are the qualities with associated him, as becomes clear in a later stanza that recalls some of the ancient virtues and what they have withstood:

Thro’ London’s streets the savage multitude  
Beheld Llewellyn’s head

In barb'rous mock'ry borne,

And with her gallant prince his country fell. (lines 36-40)

As Pratt observes, here Southey points to the “savage [English] multitude” (90), which links the values of heroism and godliness with the Welsh while lamenting their defeat in terms that highlight their conquerors’ despotism. An equally important inversion involves Southey’s redirection of contemporary English disparagements of Welsh people, deemed even in learned circles as “barbarous” due in part to alleged “racial and cultural inferiority” to the English (Charnell-White 47-48). Here Southey refortifies the Welsh as a model people by freeing them of the widespread attacks made upon them in his own time.<sup>4</sup> Further, he suggests that one key to capitalizing on these histories, in his time and in antiquity, is the removal of racial and cultural prejudices in both directions.

20. As Llewelyn, whose qualities have transitioned smoothly from their provenance in “St. David’s Day,” did not lose his “gallantness” when his head was paraded through a foreign land, the Welsh retain their “gallantness” despite having lost their independence. For Southey’s 1798 readers who remember the previous poems, though, this last point is accompanied by knowledge that many of the traits that distinguished the oppressions across Wales’s history arise at different times under different guises. The poem’s final three stanzas more intricately delineate how a populace can both remember historical moments and still share their fallen patriots’ “gallantness.” The stanzas also begin to more thoroughly maneuver readers’ focuses away from the past and into the present and indeed the future, beginning with a nod from Southey to themes of legacy:

But not inglorious, nor to evil doom’d,

Fell Cambria and her King.

The patriot’s praise is his, -

A deathless meed his conqu’ror shall not know. (lines 41-4)

This stanza begins to answer the question of how to more fully understand “fame.” It is inextricably bound to “patriotism,” which is itself defined throughout these poems as acting in opposition to forces such as the foreign “conqu’ror.” Southey here confirms that he who conquers might attain an immortal status, but it is very different from the immortality of the patriot. By devoting attention to the oppressor Southey is not inadvertently contradicting himself by granting him “fame”; rather, references to Edward I warn readers that patriot

struggles do not end with defeat while promising that the fame of those who are defeated can reach future ages. These points color the final two stanzas:

And what tho' of Aberffraw's royal tow'rs  
No time-worn trace remains;  
Tho' Cambria's throne be fall'n,  
Her antient sceptre in the Saxon sway;

From her own mountains Freedom hath not fled,  
She never shall forsake  
Her old and fav'rite seat,

And with her, erst a stranger, sojourns Peace. (lines 45-52)

The penultimate stanza reiterates that in this instance the tower's remains are not essential for the maintenance of the history its site contains. Rather, so long as such values as the patriotic reflections and feelings it activates remain in the popular memory, the site can remain inspirational. Finally, the closing stanza accounts for what might be seen as Welsh inactivity in comparison to its gallery of "gallant" fallen heroes. Pratt's observation that this stanza is the culmination of the "mapping out of a geo-political terrain, a reading of the Welsh landscape (past, present and future) as the true home of Freedom" (91), is apt, and for English-language readers it is comforting to learn that "Freedom" houses itself within Great Britain. The trope of a native "spirit of Freedom" residing in the Welsh mountains was well entrenched in literary parlance by 1798 (Morgan). More significantly, Southey's invocation of it here within his Welsh history assures his fictional Welsh people and literal readers alike that the spirit of ancient patriotism was not vanquished with the patriots and that the goal of their struggles can still be achieved. That it "hath not" fled rather than "had not" further verifies its living status.

21. The stanza and poem resolve with the proclamation that although Freedom has resided in the Cambrian mountains from time out of mind (again, a convention that would be familiar to an English literary audience), Peace is only a recent settler. As it is written, we are to believe that Peace's period as a "stranger" coincided with Wales and its various patriots up to and including "the hour of conquest." Southey does not decree that Peace's "sojourn" with Freedom in the Welsh mountains was an immediate result of the conquest, but we are left to believe that Peace did not reside in Wales during the country's independence as it is chronicled across the

*Morning Post* poems. We are reminded of the paradox presented by “Abergavenny Castle”: chronologically, all of Wales’s named vaunted patriots lived during what is repeatedly referred to, in some form, as the “gloom of darker ages,” with a “better age” and even Peace not arriving until after their demise. Recalling “Cardiff Castle,” we know that “peace” does not necessarily mean “justice” or “equality”; rather, it refers to the end of invasive or internecine violence. Furthermore, as the poems collectively demonstrate, the patriotic spirit’s eternal temporality supersedes its bearers’ ephemerality (and that of its conquerors’ as well). Such a status allows future subjects such as Southey and his readers and those who come later to relate to and be enthused by the ancient struggles. “Patriotism” and “gallantness” are conveyed across the centuries in terms that the modern reader can comprehend. Likewise, the figures of Edward I and Robert’s captor die (just as the patriots do), but such virtues of theirs as “Murder” and “Treachery” live on. The reader might not have been alive for the poems’ medieval timeline, but through acquainting himself with and then acting on the histories that the poems make available, for instance in the inscriptions, the title of “stranger” is shed in favor of a shared “patriotism.” Read together, the six poems promise that this school of patriotism was not sealed off when its most notable representatives were killed, but instead can still be channeled into new struggles against the same tyrannical forces.

## **V. Conclusion**

22. As Southey makes explicitly clear in “St. David’s Day” and implicitly clear elsewhere, a living Welsh population that continuously celebrates its ancient heroes and their qualities vouchsafes their futurity. That the original struggles that brought forth the qualities echo into modernity invites people who are otherwise “strangers” to Welsh culture to themselves inherit them as well, and to apply them to current issues. Johnston’s observations that Southey was compelled to veil his politics are here confirmed. But, in the case of these six Welsh poems Southey does not drift as far into the abstract as Johnston alleges. The radical history Southey invokes was not only alive and well but was also celebrated by people under the same governmental constraints as he was. This is the circumstance that urges Southey to repeat throughout the poems that Wales has graduated into a “better” age and that Peace “sojourns” there currently. To have implied that the population still embraced patriotism based on armed resistance and on a collective desire to regain national independence would have given both those reading and

those surveilling cause for alarm. To have then further implied that this spirit of popular resistance could and would motivate all British people to act similarly would have been more subversive than Southey, or anyone else, could afford to be.

23. Together, Wales, its history, and its people then constitute an ideal organ in which to convey radical principles to an English-reading British audience in relatable terms. Southey's admiration of contemporary and ancient Welsh culture positioned him keenly as an intermediary and cultural translator of such subjects (even if, as Pratt points out, he took liberties with his tales of "national" history). If Southey was in an ideal position to invoke ancient and living Welsh culture, then his English-language readers were ideally positioned to receive it. The poems corroborate Johnston's general claim that for Southey's *Morning Post* entries Welsh history and geography—just as with Irish, Scottish, classical, and biblical histories—operate as "suggestive parallels for England" (269). But, it goes without saying, in order for two entities to be "parallel" they need to move in the same direction but be markedly separate and distinct from each other. In the popular English imagination Wales and its people were indeed seen as significantly different, with traditional characteristics ranging from barbarousness to a purity unsullied by commercialism.<sup>5</sup> These traits were generally reinforced by this period's linguistic divide. Upwards of ninety per cent of Wales still only spoke Welsh as late as 1800 (with English-language ability skewing toward the upper classes) (Jenkins 392, Franklin 11), meaning that much of the country could neither confirm nor contest English accounts of its history (nor for that matter read English inscriptions). In the case of these poems, such differences effectively bolstered Wales's radical aptitude and ultimately Britain's radical potential. The Cambrians lived on the same island and were subject to the same legislation, and even the same repressive measures of the 1790s (while, of course, grappling with localized social issues; see Davies, *History* 319-397). For Southey's purposes, the status of Welsh people in the English imagination allowed him to safely imagine the survival of radical values in a living population that was under the same state yoke and was near enough to be emulated. And, as these poems show, hegemony still exists within a time of peace.

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<sup>1</sup> Southey's friendship with Iolo was as vexed as it was industrious. Southey reflected after Iolo's death that the "Poor fellow" had "a wild heart and a warm head, [and] he had the simplicity of a child and the tenderness of a woman" (qtd. in Constantine 80). Not dissimilarly, after Southey became Poet Laureate in 1813, Iolo told his son that he had "gone to the Devil" (qtd. in Constantine 80). For information on Pantisocracy see Bernhardt-Kabisch 23-26; Bolton; Bosserhoff 51-74; Holmes 59-88; McKusick; Roe; Speck 42-60; and Storey 42-83. For an introduction to Iolo, his presence among English literary circles, his politics, and his friendship with Southey, see Charnell-White 46; Davies, "At Defiance" and *Presences that Disturb* 135-192; Jenkins, *Bard of Liberty*; and Mee. For an introduction to Pughe, see Carr. For an introduction to Southey's relationship to Wynn, see Pratt 87-88. For Southey's time in and around Maes-gwyn, see Pratt and Tilney.

<sup>2</sup> With the exception of "St. David's Day," throughout the essay I will be referring to each poem by its setting: "Cardiff Castle," "Lanthyony Abbey," "Abergavenny Castle," "Vale of Ewias," and "Aberffraw's Tow'rs."

<sup>3</sup> As Michael Scrivener explains, discussion of society predating the "Norman yoke" was part of a "constitutionalist rhetoric [that] justified reform as restoration to an earlier state of justice" (39; see also 100). This construction was well-known among English radical authors; according to Alan G. Steinberg, John Thelwall celebrated and shared his beliefs in a pre-Norman Saxon society founded on human rights, and that "the repository of those rights was the old Saxon Constitution of pre-Norman times, an amalgam of laws and traditions which for centuries ... had served as the consummate delineation of those natural rights which all Britons appropriated as their own" (149). For more background see Thompson, 84-87.

<sup>4</sup> For an introduction to contemporary disparaging views of Wales see Charnell-White, Morgan, and Williams.

<sup>5</sup> There were, of course, critical responses to such stereotypes by Welsh authors. See Davies, "Wales in English Travel Writing."