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THE RISE AND FALL OF THE 'NOBLE SAVAGE' IN ANN OF SWANSEA'S WELSH FICTIONS

Jane Aaron



WITH HER PSEUDONYM 'ANN OF SWANSEA', the poet and novelist Ann Julia Hatton (née Kemble, 1764–1838) took upon herself a Welsh authorial identity. Born in Worcester, to an English father and Irish mother, Ann's recreation of herself as Welsh, an unusual move in any epoch, was in the first decade of the nineteenth century virtually unprecedented. This article aims firstly to explore, through an introductory account of her earlier life and publications, some of the possible motivations behind her adoption of the pseudonym, before proceeding in the main body of the piece to assess the representation of Wales in her subsequent fictions.

Before she became Ann of Swansea, Ann Julia Kemble, subsequently Mrs Curtis and finally Mrs Hatton, had lived a sensational life of some notoriety. The family into which she was born were travelling players, touring England and Wales with their troupe of itinerant actors. John Ward, her grandfather on her mother's side, had also managed such a troupe; when his daughter Sarah, against his wishes, married one of his players, John Kemble, the young couple broke away in 1761 to run their own independent company. Of their fifteen children, a number rose to national fame on the stage and dominated the theatre of their day. Ann's older sister, born in the 'Shoulder of Mutton' tavern in Brecon, became, as Sarah Siddons, an internationally acclaimed star: according to William Hazlitt, 'the homage she has received is greater than that which is paid to Queens'.¹ Her brother, John Philip Kemble, was a leading London actor and manager of Covent Garden Theatre, while another brother, Stephen Kemble, became director of the Edinburgh Theatre Royal. No career outside the theatre seems to have been envisaged by their parents for any of their offspring who survived the family's difficult early days as itinerant players. While still in childhood, the Kemble infants were expected to contribute to the family business and thrust onto the stage, with Sarah, for example, performing her first major Shakespearean role, as Ariel, at the age of nine.² Ann, however, was born with a slight disability: she was lame, which in her family's opinion debarred her from the stage, and thus in effect from full membership of the Kemble troupe. Her education was, she later complained, much neglected, and parental neglect may also have been a factor in her early marriage, at the age of sixteen, to a London actor of the name of Curtis who was shortly afterwards convicted of bigamy. In want after Curtis's imprisonment, and apparently abandoned by a family intent upon establishing their respectability within the precarious theatrical profession, Ann in 1780 took

up a post as a model and lecturer at the notorious Temple of Health and Hymen, run by the quack Dr James Graham in Pall Mall. The Temple sported 'electromagnetic beds', advertised with the promise that their electric currents would have an enhancing effect on sexual and reproductive potency. To her family's mortification, Dr Graham publicly advertised Ann's lectures as those of 'Mrs Siddons' younger sister, Mrs Curtis', and when in 1783 Ann published her first volume of poetry, *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*, she also used her sister's fame in the attempt to attract readers; the author's name on the title page was given as 'Ann Curtis, sister of Mrs Siddons'.³

The verses included in this slight volume are far more conventional and pedestrian than their author's life at this period, and express such orthodox sentiments as reverence for the king, George III, and veneration of the British military. 'Belov'd of heaven is he who fills the throne', 'Rever'd Britannia' is told in 'Peace', a poem on the close of the American War of Independence which welcomes British soldiers home as valiant 'Heroes'.⁴ Without any apparent irony, the poet refers with satisfaction to the restoration of 'peace' as enabling Britain's continuing expansion and commercial exploitation of its imperial conquests. As 'Commerce again lifts up its late-crush'd head', 'Neptune' will once more 'waft' to 'the wide bosom of the silver Thames' all the wealth of India and 'Arabia's spicy store', and Albion will 'spread thy wish'd-for empire wide'.⁵ Little of this restored prosperity made its way to Ann Curtis, however; her *Poems* failed to arouse much interest, and when Dr Graham's Temple also failed, Ann was destitute again. A friend inserted a notice in the press on her behalf informing the public that the impoverished

Mrs. Curtis is the youngest sister of Mess. KEMBLE and Mrs. SIDDONS, whom she has repeatedly solicited for relief, which they have flatly refused her; it therefore becomes necessary to solicit, in her behalf, the benevolent generosity of that Public who have so liberally supported THEM.⁶

In exasperation, particularly after Ann made a desperate and very public plea for help by trying to commit suicide with poison in Westminster Abbey, the Kemble siblings promised her an allowance of £90 per year on condition that she live at a distance of no less than 150 miles from London.

The annuity made Ann marriageable once more, and in 1792 she married a violin maker, William Hatton, and emigrated with him to the United States. In New York, benefitting no doubt from her family's theatrical connections, she was commissioned to write the lyrics for the play *Tammany*, which in 1794 was performed with some success by the Old American Theatrical Company. The milieu in which Ann now moved and wrote was strongly pro-revolutionary and radical, and the politics of the Tammany songs differed significantly from those of the verses she had published in 1783: they portray the Native American chieftain Tammany as a Rousseauesque Noble Savage destroyed by a corrupt European civilisation. 'Before art had moulded our behaviour, and taught our passions to speak an artificial language, our morals were rude but natural', wrote Rousseau in the 1750s: 'Compare without partiality the state of the citizen with that of the

savage [...] you will see how dearly nature makes us pay for the contempt with which we have treated her lessons.⁷ In Ann's *Songs of Tammany*, the white man is figured as a corrupt usurper and betrayer, motivated by lust, while humanity and nobility belong exclusively to the Indian. The free life of the nomad, in tune with nature before the white man's coming, is described in Act I, in which 'happy Indians' laugh, dance and play their way through an idyllic existence of hunting and fishing. But Act II sees the attempted seduction and then rape of Tammany's squaw Manana by the perfidious white man Ferdinand, with Manana's violation representing as it were the rape of a continent. Finally, in Act III, Tammany avenges Manana's wrongs before both of them are captured and condemned to death by fire, the victims of a colonising process which they with their last breath defy, proclaiming in Ann's lines: 'Together we die for our spirits disdain, | Ye white children of Europe your rankling chain.'⁸

These radical sentiments were not abandoned by Ann after her return to Britain in 1799, when William Hatton took out a lease on a hotel in the so-called 'Brighton of Wales', Swansea. Why the decision to settle in Swansea? The town was of course outside the 150-miles-from-London perimeter set by the Kembles, on whose annuity the Hattons were still dependent, and as an aspiring tourist destination it also boasted a theatre, but the same was true of many another township in England in which Ann and her husband could have established themselves. That their choice of destination was not an arbitrary decision is suggested by the fact that in less than a decade after her arrival in the town, Ann Hatton had adopted a full-fledged Welsh identity, signing herself 'Ann of Swansea' and retaining the pseudonym throughout the rest of her prolific authorial career. Her motivations for doing so may be traced through the radical themes which recur throughout her second volume of verse, *Poetic Trifles* (1811), printed for 'Ann of Swansea' in Waterford, at that time comparatively easily accessible, given the frequent passages to Ireland from Swansea Bay.

In one of that volume's most significant pieces, the long poem 'Oppression', Ann of Swansea makes her American-influenced principles evident as she asks inspiration's aid in a vital cause:

Oh, muse belov'd! I ask thy sounding lyre,
Thy melting pathos, thy energetic fire,
Oh! smiling come, and aid the arduous plan,
Teach me to vindicate the rights of man.⁹

In 1811, with Britain still at war with revolutionary France, thus to evoke Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791) was to proclaim one's allegiance to the more radical wing of contemporary Romanticism. By means of a sequence of verse narratives, the poem aims to bring to light the various ways in which 'Far as the restless waves of ocean roll, | Thy pow'r, Oppression, warps the human soul.' (p. 175) The horrors of the slave trade, that 'Disgraceful blot upon the Christian name', are first versified, and the tale told of an African couple whose lives were destroyed by slavery, the woman violated and her husband killed when he seeks to revenge her (p. 175). Then the poet turns her gaze back to Britain, saying, 'Why should

the muse a foreign realm explore, | Oppression stalks triumphant on our shore.' (p. 185) To illustrate this fact, the next tale is of the devastation wrought by a British landlord upon a tenant farmer whom he imprisons, and his daughter whom he seduces; she is persuaded that her father will be released and that the farm will be returned to them if she acquiesces with his demands, but in this she is deceived. Like the tale of Tammany and Manana, Ann of Swansea's verses also, after 1799, frequently concern vulnerable and defenseless maidens cheated of their virtue by lying violators; her innocent young female victims would appear to represent the subordinated masses, everywhere threatened by oppressive colonial and hierarchical systems.

Before the close of the poem 'Oppression', Ann of Swansea openly refers to herself as having also been the victim of such machinations:

E'en she whose hand now tries the ills to trace,
That from Oppression goad the human race,
She, she has known, has mourn'd through many an hour,
And writhing bent beneath its barb'rous pow'r. (pp. 196–97)

It is her own past history as the neglected outsider not accepted by her family, who was left on its margins to fall from the edge into the hands of a bigamist and an unscrupulous quack, which haunts these poems, and intensifies her identification with the oppressed. Her American experience has provided her with a politicised discourse with which to express this radical theme, a discourse which we would now term postcolonial.

Significantly, further poems included in *Poetic Trifles* present the Welsh nation and its history as also the objects of colonial oppression, violated by rapacious interlopers. In 'Kidwelly Castle', for example, the poet takes upon herself the role of the silenced Ancient British Bard singing the elegy of a lost glory:

Where sleeps the sounding harp, oh, Cambria! tell?
Which erst thy druids swept with so much art; [...]
Moulder'd to dust, alas! the minstrels rest,
To dark oblivion all their songs decreed;
Whose high wrought themes with ardor fir'd the breast,
Urg'd the bold thought, inspir'd the gen'rous deed. [...]
One less energetic now presumes to sing,
Since proud Aneurim's [*sic*] magic powers are o'er. (pp. 68–69)

Her misspelt reference to Aneirin, a sixth-century Welsh bard, indicates her acquaintance with the antiquarian Celtic revival movement, which since Evan Evans' 1764 edition of *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Ancient Welsh Bards, Translated into English* had succeeded in popularising the work of the early Welsh poets. Identifying herself with their cause, 'I pensive lean upon the walls, | That proudly once oppression's menace brav'd', writes the poet, as she proceeds to mourn 'the lib'ral and the brave' Welsh who once 'Nobly repelled th' invaders of their shore' (pp. 69–70). In fact Kidwelly Castle, situated a few miles along the south Wales coast line from Swansea, was built in 1106 by Wales's Anglo-Norman conquerors rather than its native defendants, but the direction of Ann of Swansea's sympathies

are clear for all her historical confusions. Like the Native Americans of *Tammany*, the ‘Noble Savages’ of Wales’s past had also withstood as far as they were able the tyrannous invasion of their land and the destruction of their traditional culture. Radicalised by her American experience, Ann Hatton identifies with both tribes by virtue of her own personal experience of dispossession; she too has ‘writhed’ beneath the ‘bar’brous power’ of oppression, and had the roles of ‘outsider’ and ‘other’ thrust upon her through no initial fault of her own. Such sympathies no doubt motivated her decision by 1810 to inscribe herself into authorial records as ‘Ann of Swansea’.

Those sympathies also can be said to have informed the representations of contemporary Wales in Ann of Swansea’s fictions. Her first public adoption of the pseudonym Wales occurred in 1810, with the publication of her first novel, *Cambrian Pictures*. Its hero, Henry Mortimer, scion of a titled English family but early orphaned, has been reared in north Wales by his father’s friend Sir Owen Llewellyn. In Dolegelly [*sic*] Castle, buttressed by ‘mountains of stupendous height’, Henry has been taught to follow nature’s guide in all his doings, which ill prepares him for the artificial sophistications of the society he later encounters as a Cambridge student. On a visit to an undergraduate friend’s paternal estate in Devonshire, he has the misfortune of attracting the amorous attention of the Dowager Duchess of Inglesfield, and is discomposed by her open flattery:

‘Why I protest,’ said the Dutchess, ‘you blush like a miss just led forth from the nunnery, and exposed for the first time to the rude gaze of man—you must discard this silly practice. A blushing girl is a subject for ridicule in fashionable circles; but a blushing man, mercy on me! He would be the jest of enlightened society.’

Henry laughed and apologized for his *mauvais honte*, said he had but just escaped from the mountains of Wales, and that as yet he had not got his feelings in subjection.

‘O, then you have feelings!’

‘Yes,’ said Henry, blushing still deeper, ‘and I trust they will never be blunted by intercourse with fashionable manners.’¹⁰

Lord Dungarvon, Henry’s English grandfather, who has previously shown little interest in his grandson, now appears, intent upon persuading Henry to marry the wealthy if ageing Duchess. Spurning him angrily when he refuses to do so on the grounds that he cannot love her and will not sell himself, Dungarvon tells Henry: “Go, sir, return to the mountains where you have hitherto vegetated; hide in the shades of obscurity those notions which in the great world among enlightened people, would be laughed at and despised.” Nothing loath, Henry responds, “I go to enjoy upon the mountains and among the shades the bliss of tranquillity; I leave to your lordship rank and splendid misery.” (I, 123–24) In this novel, Welsh locations denote a harmonious state in which the inhabitants are at one with nature, while the supposedly enlightened civilisation of the English gentry is consistently represented as artificial, corrupt and preoccupied with the acquisition of wealth to the detriment of all natural feeling.

When Henry is abducted by the frustrated Duchess, his story represents an interesting reversal of the expected gender roles, with a young man instead of a woman as the vulnerable prey of the wealthy oppressor. Back in Wales, a young Welsh woman manages to fend off an unwanted suitor of her own by means of another gender reversal. The spirited Eliza Tudor, neighbour and friend of the Llewellyn family, disguises herself as a male and challenges her suitor to a duel in order to prove his cowardice to her father, Sir Griffith. The suitor returns to London much discomfited when her trick is discovered, saying, "Miss Tudor is far too wild for me. The city, big as it is, would not be wide enough for her [...] so she had better stay here among the mountains." "[A]s for marrying Eliza', he now thinks, 'he would every bit as soon tie himself to an outlandish creature from foreign parts; for she was wilder by half than the goats on her own mountains.' (I, 260, 263) Interestingly, one aspect of wild Wales, as it is represented in *Cambrian Pictures*, would appear to be its deviation from the heavily polarised patterns of gender difference expected in more sophisticated English circles. Welsh-reared women, even those of aristocratic birth, are in Ann of Swansea's novels freer to be less feminine, and their menfolk to be less masculine, than their English equivalents, and in its engagement of the reader's sympathies with both Eliza and Henry, the text would appear to approve of this national difference.

Another member of the Dolegelly social circle, Eliza's friend Rosa Percival, is, however, more seriously imperilled by an English visitor. Rosa's father, an English aristocrat, had initially seduced and 'ruined' Rosa's Welsh mother, but had then been persuaded to marry her by the dowry offered by her rich tradesman brother Gabriel Jenkins. Although Sir Edward abandoned both mother and daughter immediately after the marriage, leaving Rosa to be reared in Wales by her uncle, his interest in her is renewed by his friend Lord Clavering's offer of ten thousand pounds for her hand in marriage. Gabriel warns Rosa of her plight, telling her that Lord Clavering

'came here with your father, on purpose to marry you [...] the bargain was made, signed, sealed, and delivered [...] now you must live in London, and spend your days in dressing and visiting, and coaching and carding, telling lies, and pretending to like people to their faces and cursing them behind their backs [...] you must clean forget all your sincerity.' (III, 29-30)

But his warnings are unnecessary, for Rosa says firmly, "Lord Clavering is my aversion," much to her uncle's delight:

'Tol der lol,' sung Gabriel Jenkins [...] 'gad, but this is nuts for me to crack; a mountaineer, as your father calls you, to have spirit enough to refuse a lord; but come along, Rosa, I long to let them see a bit of Cambrian blood, pure and honest, neither ashamed nor afraid to refuse the gingerbread gilding of title [...] your father would have sold you without pity, just as if you had been timber on his estate, to this Lord Clavering, and this noble would have bought you: very

decent proceedings truly, just as bad to the full as if you had been a negro slave in a West-India plantation.' (III, 33)

In 1810, when this book was published, Britain was preening itself on being the world's foremost opponent to the slave trade, the Abolitionists having finally succeeded in their aims in 1807, after two decades of well-publicised campaigning. To equate the situation of Welsh women, and by implication of Wales generally, with the slave question was therefore strongly to emphasise the moral rightness of saying no to the buying up of people and of lands by English wealth and influence. The various intertwined narrative strands of *Cambrian Pictures* together establish the Welsh as 'noble savages' still in modern times beleaguered by the more powerful, amoral English, whose pretensions to a greater sophistication have been acquired, as Rousseau put it, at the expense of humanity and natural feeling.

So powerful are their neighbours, however, and so frail their national boundaries, that many of Wales's less advantaged inhabitants, as represented in Ann of Swansea's fictions, are more vulnerable than Rosa to the seductions of the sophisticated, particularly when they lack their natural defences, the rural mountains. On Swansea's fashionable seafront all is already lost, or so at least Ann of Swansea's caricature of the citizens of Gooselake in her 1816 novel *Chronicles of an Illustrious House* would suggest. The *ton* of Gooselake, would-be social climbers one and all, are as artificial and false in their behaviour as any aspiring Londoner, spending their days jostling for superiority, faking propriety and maligning their neighbours. Their characters are anatomised by the eccentric heiress Lady Elizabeth Plastic, 'whose delight was the development of that character in which the ridiculous was most predominant'; she has travelled from Gloucestershire with friends on 'what she called a quizzing expedition', with the conscious intention of making herself acquainted with 'the great little folk of Gooselake' and reaping 'much amusement from seeing their clumsy attempts at aping the manners and style of dress of herself and party.'¹¹ A subscription ball in the town affords her ample opportunity to indulge in her favourite sport. A Miss Vellum, for example, 'a person of no little consequence in her own opinion' assures Lady Elizabeth's party 'that the tradespeople of the town knew their distance better than to attempt coming to the subscription-balls and mixing with their superiors.' (II, 79) At this Mr Fungus, another Gooselakeian present at the Ball, is observed to look uneasy; as Lady Elizabeth has already discovered:

he was in the coal trade, and his family, though some of them were wealthy, were all of the plebeian class; to avoid, therefore, any unfavourable construction being placed upon his origin, he considered it necessary, in order to obtain consequence, to tell a few white lies respecting his family and connexions; he also thought proper to boast a college education, though it was well known that his father's numerous family had precluded every advantage of so expensive a nature. (II, 80)

In this he is but representative of the town-dwellers as a whole; Lady Elizabeth, summing them up disparagingly, tells another of the residents: 'your great people

of Gooselake, Mrs Clackit, have mostly made their money in trade, and retired here to figure as gentlemen.' (II, 116)

An 1818 manuscript held in the National Library of Wales, and thought to be written in Ann of Swansea's hand, provides the key to these named Gooselakeians, all of them prominent Swansea townspeople: Mr Fungus was apparently a portrait of Alexander Raby, a local entrepreneur, Miss Vellum a member of the Jeffreys family, solicitors in the town, and Mrs Clackit the daughter of Calvert Richard Jones, a prominent townsman and promoter of local commerce.¹² Some were newcomers to the town, arriving in it as industrial entrepreneurs; others were locals who had made fortunes out of trading with the new communities of the early coalfields, but all have together succumbed to the lure of pretending to a greater degree of sophistication than they actually possess. Ann of Swansea's novel, which was subtitled as *Embellished with Characters and Anecdotes of Well-Known Persons*, is a deliberate caricature of these historical figures, all of them in her account petty snobs without justification; worse still, they also pretend to a greater degree of moral rectitude than they actually possess. Miss Lucretia Marine says of the neighbours she observes at the ball:

'[S]uch girls have no pretensions to mix with us—but the stewards pay no sort of regard to family or reputation.'

'Which I am sure must be very distressing to you, Miss Marine,' rejoined Mrs. Clackit, 'who have been so perfectly correct in every stage of life; I don't wonder that you notice Captain Goggle's conduct; a remembrance of past times ought to influence his attentions, but men are ungrateful wretches!'

At this, Mr Mullins, another member of Lady Elizabeth's visiting party, comments: 'These are dear friends—will closely press each other's palms when they do meet; yet they do delight in cutting gibes, in scandals more venomous than all the worms of the Nile.' (*Illustrious House*, II, 97–98)

In their vices as well as their follies, however, the Gooselake citizens are but aping their more sophisticated 'betters', as Lady Elizabeth observes. "I perceive your little town of Gooselake abounds with all the vices of the metropolis", she says; in Gooselake as in London, "virtuous poverty is shunned like a contagious disease, while affluent vice, though ever so glaring is followed and flattered" (II, 120–21). The townspeople can afford her amusement, however, because they still retain too much innocence to be aware of the manner in which she is setting them up to be ridiculed by herself and her friends. Throughout those chapters from *Chronicles of an Illustrious House* devoted to Gooselake, its inhabitants are exposed as 'too little versed in tonish manners to perceive that her very affable ladyship was taking all possible pains to expose their ignorance and gratify her own passion for quizzing' (II, 96). In a sense, therefore, for all the Gooselakians' deficiencies, it could be said that the most malign characters in the text are not so much the deluded townspeople but their elite visitors, who have constructed and made fashionable the sophisticated corruptions the townspeople ape, only then to scorn them for their attempts at mirroring such vices.

From Ann of Swansea's point of view, however, it would appear that her exposure to the actual contemporary inhabitants of her adopted town had proved disillusioning: Swansea's denizens had not in reality lived up to her initial portrayal of contemporary Wales in *Cambrian Pictures* as peopled with 'Noble Savages' of unsophisticated incorruptibility. Yet, in later novels, she still insistently portrays Welsh characters who though similarly exposed to the lure of an artificial civilisation have managed to withstand it and retain their elevating innocence. In a sub-plot which dominates the fourth volume of her 1822 novel *Guilty or Not Guilty*, a young English gentleman is saved from acquired viciousness by his love for a Welsh maiden who has resisted all attempts to rid her of her natural nobility. Captain Frederick Seymour 'had good natural talents [...] but too early initiated in the vices of his brother-officers and too much noticed by women, his better principles had yielded to the corruption of example—he had become a rake, a gambler, and a coxcomb.'¹³ On a visit to Wales he is taken by a friend to the home of one Sir Morgan ap Rees, whose estate is situated not in the highlands of Snowdonia, buttressed by its mountains from invading sophistications, but in Glamorgan, on the banks of the river Taff. For all his propinquity to neighbouring influences, Sir Morgan has yet managed to retain the traditional native virtues; he welcomes his guests 'with that genuine hospitality which in the olden time characterized all the sons of Cambria, from the prince to the peasant, but which now alas! is forgotten, or exists in the hearts of very few' (IV, 133) Seymour watches Sir Morgan's daughter as she joins in the rustic dances which form their entertainment: 'At twelve o'clock the dance ceased, and Laura having with her own hand placed a goblet of wine in that of the harper [...] apologized for having kept him from his rest till so late an hour.' (IV, 136) Her grace and sweetness are a revelation to Seymour, who proclaims:

'This is primeval innocence—all that is beautiful in nature is to be found in Wales—kindness and simplicity in their loveliest forms, hover round me; sure I have never lived till this blessed hour [...] It is the artless manner, the beautiful naiveté of Laura [...] that captivates me; her every word, look, and action seem the unsophisticated impulse of nature.' (IV, 136–40)


This is the language of radical revelation, of new birth, akin to the language of the religious revivalists so potent in Wales during this period. In expressing the conviction that he has 'never lived till this blessed hour' Seymour presents himself as having been born again; his sudden vision of Laura as 'the unsophisticated impulse of nature' has redeemed his faith in human kind and therefore in himself.

But in fact, as Seymour is soon to discover, Laura had been educated in a very different type of culture, in Bath. When her aunt, Winifred Ap Rice, sees her niece affectionately embracing her father in front of their guests, she protests, "after passing six years at the first seminary in Bath, that seat of elegance and fashion, who could possibly believe you would still throw your arms round your father's neck and kiss him, especially before strangers?" (IV, 145–46) Bath, with its various imperial associations, should have taught Laura more civilised values:

“those enlightened people, the Romans, taught their children to be respectful, not familiar” (IV, 146), protests Winifred. But Sir Morgan defends the Welsh against their first colonisers:

‘The customs of the Romans were not to be compared with those of the ancient Britons; the Romans [...] were a very hard-hearted people [...] I am certain there was not one of them to be compared, either for valour or humanity, with the ancient and modern Cambrians.’
(III, 146–48)

To which Winifred responds by referring to the (from her point of view) obviously superior merits of their later colonisers: “Let the Welch boast their valour and their humanity as much as they please, they are a rude, unpolished people, and still in a state of Gothic ignorance, when compared with the English.” (IV, 148) Neither Roman remains nor English education have proved sufficient, however, to dry up Laura’s flow of natural affection and its spontaneous expression, and it is this freshness which has so restorative an effect on the previously dissipated Seymour.

The sophistications of the contemporary *ton* are, indeed, but a blemish in this text; they have already nearly undone Seymour, who arrived in Wales a debtor and known libertine. Under Laura’s influence, however, as he strives to win her love, he is reformed, and when at the close of the fifth volume he returns to his family in England as her affianced husband he is a new man. It is evident to all his old acquaintance that the captain was no longer ‘the essenced fop they had formerly known, distorted with affectation and grimace, but a fine, interesting young man’ (V, 211). Such is the redeemable influence of the Noble Savage who has consciously recognised the merits of his—or her—bond with nature and can remain true to it in the face of an encroaching destructive artificiality. It was, I suggest, because she saw such potential in Wales that Ann Hatton wished to identify herself with it; the hope of being herself born again from the distortions and humiliations of her own personal history led her to present herself as a reformed Welsh bard—as ‘Ann of Swansea’, though that town itself seems on closer acquaintance to have disappointed her. Unfortunately, no useful National Library of Wales manuscript in Ann of Swansea’s hand providing information as to any real-life equivalents of Sir Morgan ap Rees and his family exists; their portrayal may well be a fantasy, inspired more by the bardic remnants popularised by the Celtic revival than by Mrs Hatton’s actual Welsh acquaintance. But even as such they provided her with a vehicle by which to express her difference from the metropolitan sophisticates of her earlier life and their value systems. Her antagonism against dehumanising oppressions and her empathy with the marginalised, along with the hope that the natural justice of the ‘Noble Savage’ might yet prevail, found creative realisation by means of her adopted Welsh identity. 

NOTES

1. William Hazlitt, *A View of the English Stage* (1818), in *Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by P. P. Howe, 21 vols (London: Dent, 1930–34), V, 211.

2. Russ McDonald, 'Sarah Siddons' in *Garrick, Kemble, Siddons, Kean: Great Shakespeareans*, vol. 3, ed. by Peter Holland (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 117.
3. For further biographical details, see Ivor J. Bromham, "Ann of Swansea" (Ann Julia Hatton: 1764–1838), *Glamorgan Historian*, 7 (1971), 173–86; and Jim Henderson, 'Ann of Swansea: A Life on the Edge', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 34.1 (2006), 1–47.
4. Ann Curtis, 'Peace: A Poem', in *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects* (London: Millan & Rae, 1783), pp. 12–13.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
6. 'Donations in favour of Mrs Curtis, the youngest sister of Mrs Siddons', 1783 advertisement, quoted in Henderson, 'Ann of Swansea', p. 12.
7. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'A Discourse on the Arts and Sciences (1750)' in *The Social Contract* (London: Dent, 1913), p. 132; Rousseau, 'A Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind' (1755), *Social Contract*, pp. 241–42.
8. Ann Julia Hatton, *The Songs of Tammany, or the Indian Chief: A Serious Opera* (New York: Harrison, 1794); rptd in James Henderson, 'An Edition of the Poems of Ann of Swansea (Ann Julia Hatton, nee Kemble, 1764–1838) including Unpublished Material', 2 vols, unpublished master's thesis (University of Glamorgan, 2005), 1, 211.
9. Ann of Swansea, 'Oppression', in *Poetic Trifles* (Waterford: For the Author, 1811), p. 175. Subsequent references are from this edition of the text and are given parenthetically in the essay.
10. Ann of Swansea, *Cambrian Pictures; or, Every One Has Errors*, 3 vols (London: Kerby, 1810), I, 113–14. Subsequent references are from this edition of the text and are given parenthetically in the essay.
11. Ann of Swansea, *Chronicles of an Illustrious House; or, the Peer, the Lawyer and the Hunchback*, 5 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1816), II, 77. Subsequent references are from this edition of the text and are given parenthetically in the essay.
12. See 'Ann of Swansea Manuscript' (1818), NLW MS 23958C.
13. Ann of Swansea, *Guilty or Not Guilty; or, a Lesson for Husbands*, 5 vols (London: Newman, 1822), IV, 127. Subsequent references are from this edition of the text and are given parenthetically in the essay.

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