

Wales and the French Revolution

Travels in Revolutionary France  
&  
A Journey Across America  
by  
George Cadogan Morgan  
&  
Richard Price Morgan

edited by  
Mary-Ann Constantine and Paul Frame

University of Wales Press



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WALES AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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General Editors: Mary-Ann Constantine and Dafydd Johnston

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*For Pamela and Lyndon Frame (PF)*

*I Tom, Gwyn, Wil a Rhys: teithwyr y dyfodol (M-AC)*

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UNIVERSITY OF WALES PRESS  
CARDIFF  
2012

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*www.uwp.co.uk*

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-0-7083-2558-2

e-ISBN 978-0-7083-2559-9

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Typeset in Wales by Eira Fenn Gaunt

Printed by CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham, Wiltshire

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My nephew George has been *witness at Paris* to the glorious *scene*. He has seen all the events that have attended the revolution in the great kingdom that now astonishes Europe, that has scarcely a parallel in the history of the world, and that is likely to be the commencement of a general reformation of the governments of Europe. Heaven grant that it may be settled without much more bloodshed.

Richard Price, 'Journal', 2 August 1789.

But travelling upon paper, as well as moving amongst rocks and rivers, hath its difficulties.

Arthur Young, *Travels, during the Years 1787, 1788 and 1789, undertaken more particularly with a View of ascertaining the Cultivation, Wealth, Resources, and National Prosperity of the Kingdom of France* (1792).

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## WALES AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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The French Revolution of 1789 was perhaps the defining event of the Romantic period in Europe. It unsettled not only the ordering of society but language and thought itself: its effects were profoundly cultural, and they were long-lasting. The last twenty years have radically altered our understanding of the impact of the Revolution and its aftermath on British culture. In literature, as critical attention has shifted from a handful of major poets to the non-canonical edges, we can now see how the works of women writers, self-educated authors, radical pamphleteers, prophets and loyalist propagandists both shaped and were shaped by the language and ideas of the period. Yet surprising gaps remain, and even recent studies of the 'British' reaction to the Revolution remain poorly informed about responses from the regions. In literary and historical discussions of the so-called 'four nations' of Britain, Wales has been virtually invisible; many researchers working in this period are unaware of the kinds of sources available for comparative study.

The Wales and the French Revolution Series is the product of a four-year project funded by the AHRC and the University of Wales at the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. It makes available a wide range of Welsh material from the decades spanning the Revolution and the subsequent wars with France. Each volume, edited by an expert in the field, presents a collection of texts (including, where relevant, translations) from a particular genre with a critical essay situating the material in its historical and literary context. A great deal of material is published here for the first time, and all kinds of genres are explored. From ballads and pamphlets to personal letters and prize-winning poems, essays, journals, sermons, songs and satires, the range of texts covered by this series is a stimulating reflection of the political and cultural complexity of the time. We hope these volumes will encourage scholars and students of Welsh history and literature to rediscover this fascinating period, and will offer ample comparative scope for those working further afield.

Mary-Ann Constantine and Dafydd Johnston  
General Editors

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## *Preface*

The two travel accounts presented in this volume capture a vivid historical moment and map a period of profound social and intellectual change. The letters of the Dissenting minister and scientist George Cadogan Morgan, written from France in the summer of 1789, are an eye-witness account of the uprising in Paris that saw the storming of the Bastille; they also describe the response of the French provinces in the turbulent fortnight that followed. The autobiography of his son, Richard Price Morgan, evokes the 1790s London of his childhood, and the family's subsequent emigration to America. Between them, the two narratives raise interesting questions about the nature of historical witness, and the ways in which events are perceived and described in and over time. They show, too, how complex are the processes by which 'history' is made within families, how it is coloured and shaped by loyalties and inherited opinions, and how even a single family may have evolved competing versions or interpretations of events by the second or third generation.

Our edition of these previously unpublished texts is the result of a research collaboration. While working on a biography of Dr Richard Price (1723–91), Paul Frame became aware that letters, long thought lost, from Price's nephew George Cadogan Morgan had been deposited by descendants of the family at the Newberry Library, Chicago. Their rediscovery coincided with the start of an AHRC-funded project on 'Wales and the French Revolution' at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, and, with the Newberry Library's permission, the decision was made to publish them as part of the project series. Mary-Ann Constantine edited and introduced the 1789 letters and the *Address to the Jacobine Societies*, and Paul Frame edited and introduced the autobiography of Richard Price Morgan. We have both read, discussed and contributed extensively to each other's work.

We have been exceptionally fortunate in the support of many individuals and institutions. This work would not have happened without the funding for the wider project which came from the University of Wales and the Arts and Humanities Research Council. We are very grateful to the Board of the Newberry Library, Chicago for permission to publish the texts: Martha Briggs, Jill Gage and David Spadafora have been especially helpful in providing copies, checking specific readings and offering much useful information. Descendants of the Morgan family in America, Ginger Smith and Ben Coogle, kindly gave us access to an unpublished Memoir written by George Cadogan Morgan's grand-daughter, Sarah Morgan Ashburner, while genealogical work currently being undertaken by David Perry, John Morgan and Nicola Bennetts enabled us to correct and expand our family tree. Peggy Tuck Sinko also helped with research in America and our thanks go to her and the Chicago Cubs.

We are also very grateful to staff at the National Library of Wales, the London Metropolitan Archive and the Bodleian Library, Oxford; to Bethan Jenkins, who undertook the painstaking transcription of Edward Rigby's letters and travel journal; also to Nia Davies at the Centre for typing out *An Address to the Jacobine Societies and other Patriotic Societies of the French*. We have drawn frequently on the knowledge and expertise of friends and colleagues, and are grateful to them all, but specific thanks go to Jeremy Black, Martin Fitzpatrick, Mark Philp, Harriet Guest, and to David Jenkins and Ian Smith of the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea. Colleagues on the 'Wales and the French Revolution' project offered continual moral and intellectual support, as did the advisory panel: thanks to John Barrell, Gavin Edwards and Dafydd Johnston for comments on drafts of the introduction. A special thanks to David Parsons for taking on the job of first copy editor and for creating digital versions of the maps, and to Ralph Harrington for permission to use the wonderful volcano on the cover. Gwen Gruffudd has been a punctilious second copy editor, and, like everyone else on the team, we are much indebted both to her professionalism, and to that of Sarah Lewis, Siân Chapman and Dafydd Jones at the University of Wales Press.

October 2012

Mary-Ann Constantine and Paul Frame

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## *Acknowledgements*

The Newberry Library, Chicago: Fig. 1

David Parsons: Fig. 2

Paul Frame: Fig. 3

David Parsons and Paul Frame: Figs. 4, 5



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## *Abbreviations*

<i>DAB</i>	<i>Dictionary of American Biography</i> (20 vols., New York, 1928–36)
<i>DWB</i>	<i>The Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940</i> (London, 1959)
ECCO	Eighteenth Century Collections Online
NLW	National Library of Wales
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> at <a href="http://www.oxforddnb.com">http://www.oxforddnb.com</a>
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> at <a href="http://www.oed.com">http://www.oed.com</a>
<i>Rigby-Eastlake</i>	Lady [Elizabeth] Eastlake (ed.), <i>Dr Rigby's Letters from France &amp;c. in 1789</i> (London, 1880)
SMA, 'Memoir'	Sarah Morgan Ashburner, unpublished memoir



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George Cadogan Morgan  
Travels in Revolutionary France

met with artificial caves and rocks—but their Providence it became  
 them, they appeared in circumstances in which Nature never  
 placed them, and in which it is impossible that anything but the  
 monstrous folly of man should ever bring them. We saw attempts  
 likewise to make gurgling streams, by increasing the declivity  
 of the water, and by placing pebbles in its Bed, But the nighting  
 measure, and a quiet muddy stream which turns close to the  
 Babble, silently proclaim its absurdity. In short in the Gardens  
 I saw nothing but the Wringling hands of Art, Stone walls, red  
 Hedges, Simulations of Nature without attending to Circumstances,  
 and a profusion of wealth without doing the least good to the  
 Intestments of Him who squanders it. The House is little different  
 from all other great Mansion Houses, It is divided into Com-  
 mense of large, and dazzling with gold, and the most glaring  
 Colours. It contains a Cabinet of Natural Curiosities most  
 excellently arranged by Bonan one of the first Naturalists in  
 France, who happened to be at Chantilly at the same time and  
 who was very communicative indeed. Mrs. Bea's, my legs, my  
 eyes, and my very heart ached at length with fatigue. we saw  
 a vast deal, and left unseen a vast deal more. we returned to  
 the cars and immediately set off for Paris where we now are in  
 health and safety. An Account of what I have seen here and a  
 long letter to my Uncle will send by the earliest opportunity  
 Paris July 13. 89. 10<sup>o</sup> Clock in the Morning  
 The Accounts you will hear of this last nights tumults  
 in Paris have induced me to be thus early in my Assurance of your  
 safety. The Dastards, the Confusion, the Destroying madcaps of the  
 scene I have just witnessed have actually equalled those of town  
 taken

Figure 1. A page from the manuscript copy of George Cadogan Morgan's letters

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## *Introduction: 'A World of New Ideas'*

Early in July 1789 four men set out from Dover on a nine-week European tour that would take them down through France to Marseilles, Nice and the Italian and Swiss Alps, and back through Alsace and the Low Countries. Like hundreds of British tourists before and since, they went with the expectation of enjoying new landscapes, encountering new cultures, trying different kinds of food, and visiting notable monuments. More open-minded than many, they also took a keen interest in how these Continental societies organized matters such as agriculture, education and care of the sick. They had planned ahead, bringing letters of introduction to local mayors and merchants, as well as to various British and American expatriates. Their connections at home made them well aware of the rapidly evolving political situation in France, of the convocation of the Estates-General in May that year, and of the birth of the National Assembly a mere week or two before they set out. Yet, like the Calais innkeeper who confidently assured them that they would find Paris 'perfectly free from disturbance',<sup>1</sup> they could never have predicted that their arrival in the French capital in the second week of July would coincide with the eruption of popular unrest, the storming of the Bastille, and other extraordinary events of the French Revolution.

All four travellers must have recorded their experiences in letters home to their families, and, by huge good fortune, the accounts of three of them have survived. The letters of the Norwich doctor Edward Rigby were published in 1880 by his daughter, Lady Eastlake, and her edition has often been cited by historians of the French Revolution. The unedited manuscripts of these, discussed below, are in fact a more reliable source, since Eastlake did not hesitate to rewrite as she thought fit.<sup>2</sup> The letters of Samuel Boddington, the son of a prominent London merchant, have already been used to good effect by Jeremy Black in his studies of the Grand Tour.<sup>3</sup> Those of Ollyett Woodhouse either do not survive or have yet to be tracked down. The letters of the Glamorgan-born Dissenting minister and scientist George

Cadogan Morgan have until now only been known partially, from quotations cited in other works.<sup>4</sup> They are here published for the first time in their entirety,<sup>5</sup> together with a political pamphlet written by Morgan three years later at a critical moment in the Revolution. A lively autobiographical account by his son, Richard Price Morgan, reveals what happened to the next generation of this radical Dissenting family as, after their father's early death, they tried to make their lives in America.

Both men's accounts are striking testimonies of places and events that shaped the modern world: they are the responses of individuals caught up in the flow of history. The force of that flow is exhilarating and frightening, and like all travellers and adventurers, however well prepared, they cannot always control the pace and direction of the journey. Both narratives involve vivid descriptions of river journeys, and if George Cadogan Morgan is doing no more than other tourists have done before him when he takes a ferry down the Rhône, he is still awed by the strength of the forces at work: 'indeed, the velocity when the river is flooded is so great as to take away from the boatman all the power of his helm.' His son, precariously navigating timber rafts down the Mississippi, notes in his more matter-of-fact way that it 'required much care . . . to avoid being carried precipitously by a four mile an hour current against various dangerous obstacles, that are continually presenting themselves'.

Revolutionary France and early nineteenth-century America are, for these British travellers, *terra incognita*, and both are in their way dangerous. But the father and the son share a fundamental resilience, and an optimism about human nature that makes them ideal travellers, willing to negotiate obstacles and risk the loss of 'power at the helm'. Their gain is that of all those who travel with open minds. As George Cadogan puts it at the end of his account, still dizzy with delight at his experiences in the Swiss Alps: 'It has cost me a deal of trouble, but it has rewarded me with a world of new ideas.'

### *George Cadogan Morgan: a life*

George Cadogan Morgan was born in Bridgend in 1754, the son of a doctor, William Morgan, and of Sarah Price, sister of the political philosopher Richard Price.<sup>6</sup> He was educated at Cowbridge School, where he became Head Boy and showed a talent for the classics. He then spent a year in Oxford, at Jesus College, before moving, after his father's death, to complete his education at the Dissenting academy in Hoxton, where he was taught by his uncle Richard Price as well as by Andrew Kippis, Samuel Morton Savage and Abraham Rees. Financial reasons seem to have played a part in

this decision, but there is no doubt that his religious convictions shifted decisively at this period: he is said to have once declared Oxford and Cambridge to be 'full of debaucheries and luxuries'.<sup>7</sup> In 1776, aged only twenty-two, he was invited to preach at the Unitarian Octagon Chapel in Norwich. In 1783 he married Anne (Nancy) Hurry, from a prominent Dissenting family in Great Yarmouth: they would, in fifteen years together, have nine children, a daughter and eight sons, and she would prove an extraordinarily resilient mother after her husband's early death.<sup>8</sup> In Norwich, Morgan pursued scientific studies, writing a paper on electricity and combustion which was published by the Royal Society.<sup>9</sup> He seems at this point in his life to have been liberally inclined (he supported, for example, the work of the Society for Constitutional Information), but not yet radical: a speech made in 1784 shows him to be an advocate of parliamentary reform for wider representation, but has none of the fire of his writing and opinions in the 1790s. A certain taste for conflict is nevertheless revealed in a long, ill-tempered pamphlet of 1782 attacking the Revd F. J. Brand, who, he claims, has insulted his 'literary and moral character' and, unforgivably, criticized the writings of Richard Price.<sup>10</sup> It seems likely, too, that his time in Norwich brought him into contact with Edward Rigby, a doctor of gynaecology and future mayor of the city, also with radical sympathies.

In 1785 Morgan moved to Great Yarmouth, where he began to take paying pupils at home in addition to his preaching duties. Two years later he was invited to take up a ministry in Hackney. Here, besides preaching alongside his increasingly frail uncle at the Gravel Pit Meeting House, he taught courses in the classics, mathematics and science at the recently established New College at Hackney – where William Godwin was among his students – and continued to tutor several of his own pupils at home.<sup>11</sup> Some of the scientific lectures from this period would appear as *Lectures on Electricity* in 1794. For reasons apparently connected with the somewhat volatile nature of the college at this time (it was riven with factionalism and financially unstable) he did not take up Price's ministry upon the latter's retirement,<sup>12</sup> and in 1791 – the year Price died – he moved his family and pupils to Southgate in Middlesex, where he lived close to his brother William Morgan, the actuary, and to the Boddington family, with whom he had close ties. Throughout the 1790s his home was a busy hub of progressive education and increasingly radical Dissent. Gatherings of like-minded friends met, according to his son, 'every Saturday afternoon, to discuss the political condition of the world, and the interesting events daily occurring on the continent'. A flavour of these meetings is captured in an entry from William Godwin's diary for September 1794, which reads: 'Dine at Morgan's, w. Battie, Boddington & Amelia; adv. Ives Hurry & Walters; talk of God &

Burke. Sleep at Southgate.’<sup>13</sup> If Richard Price Morgan’s memories of early childhood are to be trusted, they did more than talk:

some of my first recollections were the patriotic songs of the period. For while trotted on the knee, I was frequently entertained with the ‘Marseilles Hymn’, ‘Ca ira’ and a variety of lively French national tunes.<sup>14</sup>

Morgan’s social circles were, as far as we can tell, primarily defined by the overlapping spheres of religious Dissent and radical politics. The sources are frustratingly sparse, but one gets little sense here of ‘Welshness’ as a cohesive factor. His mother spoke Welsh, and his brother William could apparently ‘turn a Welsh song into elegant English on the spur of the moment’,<sup>15</sup> but we know nothing about George Cadogan’s knowledge or use of the Welsh language, though it seems entirely likely that he spoke it as a child. His name does not appear in the lists of the Gwyneddigion or the Cymmrodorion, the two main London–Welsh societies of the period, and nothing in his surviving works shows any particular antiquarian or linguistic interest in matters to do with Wales. Yet, scattered as they were across London and East Anglia, the different branches of the Morgan family remained very much in touch with their South Walian roots. As George Cadogan’s son Richard would later remember, a network of cousins, aunts and uncles preserved Glamorgan as a place of renewal and of family sociability for many generations. Caroline Williams records nice vignettes of George swimming energetically in the sea (‘the person of Mr Morgan,’ noted his obituary, ‘was about the middle size, tending to corpulency but athletic and powerful in an uncommon degree’); or, with his brother William and their respective elder daughters – ‘the two Sarahs’ – visiting an aged aunt.<sup>16</sup> Glamorgan ties apart, however, there is little evidence for a consciously Welsh identity, and almost none at all in the letters from France. Just once, travelling near Marseilles, he seems implicitly to acknowledge his Welshness when he teases Rigby for being ‘loud and boisterous’ over ‘two stupendous mountains’: ‘I affected great indifference at the sight, and intreated Rigby to be less troublesome when he next saw what was astonishing only to the Marshland Eyes of a Norfolk Man’. Elsewhere, however, he is happy enough to describe himself as ‘one of John Bull’s calves’.

The ‘interesting events’ abroad moved Morgan, in the critical summer of 1792, to pen an anonymous *Address to the Jacobine Societies*, urging the French to seize their opportunity to obliterate the institution of monarchy – ‘the most destroying Pestilence that ever desolated the Universe’. The powerful language of this essay, discussed further below, doubtless echoes what his son calls the ‘bold political eloquence with which he electrified his

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