

## A Lost Seventeenth-Century Welsh Book Rediscovered in Paris

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On 30 June 1880, H. W. Lloyd gave a talk to the Cymmrodorion Society in London called ‘Welsh books printed abroad in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries’. A version of the talk was published in *YCymmrodor* the following year and it has an intriguing final paragraph. After surveying the Welsh Catholic books that were printed in Italy and France before 1700, Lloyd notes that there was one other book whose title is known but which Lloyd did not believe to have survived. The book was called *Drych Cydwybod* [*A Mirror of Conscience*] and Lloyd had seen a copy thirty years earlier. He writes, ‘There was, to my knowledge, a copy of [*Drych Cydwybod*] in the possession of a poor person in Caernarvonshire in 1848. Whether it is still in existence, I am unable at present to ascertain.’<sup>1</sup> It is clear from his description of the title page that Lloyd had examined this copy himself but there is no record of his having subsequently tracked it down. Lloyd’s article appears to be the last reference to a copy of the book in Wales and no copy could be located anywhere in 2001 when the supplement to *Libri Walliae*, the standard catalogue of early Welsh printed books, was published by the National Library of Wales.<sup>2</sup>

Earlier this year, my attention was drawn to the existence of some Welsh books in the Bibliothèque Mazarine in Paris by my colleague Professor Maurice Whitehead, a leading historian of Catholic education and of the Jesuits in England and Wales. Among these books I was able to identify a copy of *Drych Cydwybod*, the seventeenth-century book thought to have been lost, a discovery which may lead to a re-evaluation of this crucial period of Welsh publishing history.

A small number of Welsh books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were printed in continental Europe and introduced into Wales and London. Not all of these books were Catholic texts, although they were all linked in some way to the community of people from Wales – mostly recusants – who travelled or lived abroad after 1558, when Elizabeth became queen, and particularly after 1570, when Elizabeth was excommunicated by the Pope. The

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1 H.W. Lloyd, ‘Welsh Books Printed Abroad in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, and their Authors’, *YCymmrodor*, 4 (1881), 25–69.

2 Charles Parry (ed.), *Supplement to Libri Walliae* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 2001).

two earliest examples are the first part of *Gramadeg Cymraeg* [*A Welsh Grammar*] by Gruffydd Robert, published in 1567, and Morys Clynog's *Athrauath Gristnogawl* [*Christian Doctrine*], published in 1568, both of which were printed in Milan,<sup>3</sup> and there is at least one title, *Y Drych Cristianogawl* (1585), which Professor Geraint Gruffydd has famously shown to have been printed secretly in Wales.<sup>4</sup> Most other Welsh books by Catholic writers were printed in France, most commonly – it is difficult to generalize from such a small sample – in Paris.

Amongst this group of about a dozen titles is the book called *Drych Cydwybod* [*A Mirror of Conscience*], one of the lost Welsh books of the old faith, as Geraint Bowen wrote in the introduction to his edition of *Y Drych Kristnogawl* in 1996.<sup>5</sup> *Drych Cydwybod* was known by Welsh antiquarians as one of this group of recusant texts: it appears in Moses Williams, *Cofrestr o'r holl lyfrau prinjedig [...] yn y Jiaith Gymraeg* [*A Register of all the printed books [...] in the Welsh Language*], the first systematic bibliography of Welsh printed books, which was published in London in 1717. *Drych Cydwybod* is also listed in the 1869 revised edition (by D. Silvan Evans) of the *Cambrian Bibliography*, a list of books printed in Welsh, or relating to Wales, from 1546 to the end of the eighteenth century, where it appears under the year 1661.

Returning to the copy of *Drych Cydwybod* in the Bibliothèque Mazarine, it seems increasingly likely that this is now the sole surviving copy of the book. The description of the book in the Mazarine library catalogue contains a transcription of the opening of the book, taken from the title page, together with the following information:

**Adresse bibliog** [S.l.] : [s.n.], [s.d.][15—/17—]

**Collation** [22], 186, [6] p. ; 12°

**Note sur provenance** Cachet du couvent des barnabites Saint-Eloi, Paris, au titre 751063002

**[Catalogue number]** Bibliothèque Mazarine 8° 41510

Although the catalogue number is '8° 41510' the format of the book is duodecimo, with ten regular gatherings of twelve leaves, leaf size 125mm x 72mm. The book consists of ten gatherings, plus endpapers and binding, and appears to be a complete, unsophisticated copy. The book is in a seventeenth-century plain vellum binding with a circular paper label at the foot of the heavily discoloured spine which reads '41510'. Internally, there are no marks

3 See G. J. Williams (ed.), *Gramadeg Cymraeg gan Gruffydd Robert* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1939) and *Athravaeth Gristnogawl . . . Morys Clynog* ([London]: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1880).

4 See R. Geraint Gruffydd, *Argraffwyr cyntaf Cymru* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1972).

5 Geraint Bowen, *Y Drych Kristnogawl* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1996).

of ownership apart from library stamps and two accession numbers which are written on the title page: '40, 573' which has been crossed out and replaced by '41510'. The stamp of the Mazarine library appears three times in the book, on the title page, on the first page of the text (A1r) and on the final leaf of the book (I12r). The title page also carries a second stamp which has the legend 'BARNABITARUM . S . ELIGII . PARIS .' enclosed in a circle surrounding a bishop's mitre with crossed croziers below, the whole surrounded by an olive branch motif. This is the stamp of the Barnabite library from the school at St Eloi in Paris. The Barnabites were keen on collecting printed exotica in cabinets of curiosities, and this book was one of many unusual devotional works which they acquired during the seventeenth century, either by bequest or purchase. During the French revolution, however, the library at St Eloi, like many others in revolutionary Paris, was confiscated and most of the books ended up at the book triage in the Arsenal building, from where it was legally claimed and, like thousands of others, saved for posterity by the librarian of the Bibliothèque Mazarine, Abbé Gaspard Michel 'Leblond'. The Mazarine itself, based on the library of the famous bibliophile Cardinal Mazarin (1602-1661), had been available for public study since 1643 and was therefore largely immune to the turmoil of popular revolution because of its status as the oldest public library in France. The current library catalogue number confirms that *Drych Cydwybod* was acquired by the Mazarine in the late eighteenth century, and it has survived there, safe but unrecognized, for the last two hundred years.

The title page (†2r) consists of a descriptive paragraph, which is also the opening paragraph of the book, three New Testament quotations about penance, a fourth quotation about penance from the writings of St Augustine, and the formulation 'Permissu Superiorum' which indicates formal diocesan approval for the publication. The title page transcribes as:

DRYCH CYDWYBOD

SEF MODD

Cymmwys, a ffrwythlawn, i ddwyn  
pob math ar ddyn i gael gwybo-  
daeth oi bechodeu, a megis ei  
gweled gar bron ei lygaid, gan  
ddangos iddo pa fodd i gwnaiff  
ei gyffes iw Dad-enaid, ar modd  
i gael meneginieth am danynt.

*Oni bydd i chvvi bænydio, yn yr vn modd  
chvvi a fydvch i gyd golled[ig. Ioan] 3.5*

Pechodeu pwybynnag a [? faddeuir hwy a]  
ryddheir; a phechodeu pwybynnag a gae-  
thiwoch, a gaethiweir. Ioan 20. 2[23]

*Gvnevych bænyd, o blegid, tyrnas nef a nesaiss*  
Matth. 3. 2.

Os dyn heb fedydd a ddigvvydd iddo fod yn lla-  
ddvver celain, Bedydd ai glanvvhethia ef, ond  
os dyn vvedi i fedyddio iuv ef Pœnyd ai hail-  
gymmod ag ai meneginiaetha ef. S, Avvstin lib  
de adult. Coniug. Cap. 16.

#### Permissu Superiorum

The above transcription preserves lineation, spelling and punctuation but does not reproduce the long ‘s’ of the original. In three places, an unclear reading is given in square brackets where the text is obscured by a library stamp.

The book collates [†1-12] A-I 1-12, and is rather confusingly paginated [i-xiv], 1-18, 21(19), 22-174, 17(175), 176-192, 169(193)-174(198), 17(199), 176(200)-179(203), 80(204), 181(205)-186(210), [211-216]. Apart from a couple of simple pagination errors, such as p. 175 being misnumbered as p. 17, the main problem is in the final gathering (I) which is paginated identically with the preceding gathering (H) except that the final pages are not numbered at all. What has happened is that the skeleton forme (that is, the basic page layout) has been re-used with minimal changes to running headers and pagination, an indication of haste or carelessness on the part of a printer who could almost certainly not read Welsh. This means that the running headers for chapters 20 and 21 still read ‘Pen. 19’.

The book is mainly set in Roman fount in a variety of sizes with italic fount used for running headers, chapter headings and some quotations. Chapters are mostly separated by a simple decorative border device which is repeated seven times in a line across the page. There are also examples of mixed type being used, most obviously in the case of the letter ‘w’ which appears in at least three different lower case forms: two kinds of letterforms (with and without crossing central stems) and also ‘vv’.

The main text of the book, which fills the nine gatherings A-I, has eighty-two sectional headings in twenty-one chapters and the first gathering contains three prefaces:

*At yr hovvddgar ar bo- / neddigaedd Gymru.* [Preface I]

[To the kind and gentle Welsh (reader)]

[p. v] †3r – [P. xvi] †8v

*Rhybydd ir darllenddyn.* [Preface II]

[Warning to the reader]

[p. xvii] †9r – [p. xxiii] †12r

*Hefyd, rhaid i mi ych rhybyddio, / . . .* [Preface III]

[Also, I must warn you . . .]

[p. xxiv] †12v

The final, short preface consists of nine lines, all in italic fount, which refers the reader to a table of printer's corrections at the end of the book, and looks as though it has been supplied during printing to fill the final blank verso of the first gathering. Together with the list of printer's errors these nine lines are evidence that the author, or somebody who was able to read Welsh, was on hand to see the book through the press. The first of the twenty one chapters then begins:

(p. 1, A1r)

DRYCH CYDWYBOD, SEF MODD CYMMVVS, A  
FFRVVYTHLAVVN, I ddwyn pob math ar ddyn i gael  
gwybodaeth oi bechodeu, a megis ei gweled gar bron ei lygaid,  
gan ddangos iddo pa fodd i gwnaiff ei gyffes iw Dad-enaid, ar  
modd i gael meneginieth am danynt Y PENNOD I. YMHLITH  
y rhoddiō nefol ar gras, a dawodd Christ Iesu (ein prynwr) iw  
Eglwys iniol, wrth dderchafu ir nefoedd; vn or rhai pennaf iw  
Sacrafen Pœnyd. yr hwn sydd yn rhagddwyn dyn i stad wirion,  
ag megis yn i ail gymmod a Duw, ag yn i wneythyr yn Etifedd  
ag yn aer iddo i feddianu tyrnas nef: ag yn tynnu ein henwe allan  
o lifr Ange ag yn i hail scri- fennu mewn llyfr y bywyd.

[A MIRROR OF CONSCIENCE, THAT IS THE PROPER  
AND FRUITFUL MEANS, TO bring every kind of man to have  
knowledge of his sins and as it were to see them before his eyes,  
showing him in what way to make his confession to his spiritual  
Father, and the way to find remedy for them. CHAPTER 1

AMONG the heavenly gifts and grace which Christ Jesus (our redeemer) left to his church, as he ascended to heaven, one of the main [gifts] is the Sacrament of Penance, which brings a man to a truthful state and reconciles him again to God, and makes him an heir to inherit the kingdom of heaven: and removes our names from the book of Death and reinscribes it in the book of life.]

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The status of *Drych Cydwybod* as a recusant book directed at a readership of Welsh Catholics, in Wales and on the continent, is clear from its contents: it is a Catholic book of devotion which is mostly concerned with the varieties of sin and the importance of confession. If we look again at the series of quotations on the title page, reproduced above, we may note that the final quotation, beginning 'Os dyn heb fedydd', is a translation from Augustine's *De adulterinis coniugiis*, a work about sin and penance in relation in marriage. An English edition of this work had been printed in London in 1550 under the title *A woorke of the holy bishop S. Augustine concernyng adulterous mariages written by him to Pollentius, diuided into two bookes, very necessary to be knowen of all men and women*, and it is just the kind of work that might have been acquired by a young priest who was in Wales or England before 1570.<sup>6</sup>

The other three quotations are more interesting, however, as they are not taken from any translation of the Welsh Bible which was published before 1640: in other words, the author has made his own translations from the Latin Bible and has not followed the standard Welsh translations of the New Testament made by William Salesbury in 1567 and the complete Bible made by William Morgan in 1588, translations produced within a staunchly Protestant context. It is interesting to look at the last of the three quotations, the translation of Matthew 3.2 (beginning 'Gvnevych boenyd') and compare it with the Welsh translations of the Bible made in 1567 and 1588, and then with two standard Catholic editions of the late sixteenth century: the English translation of the New Testament published in Rheims in 1582 and the Clementine text of the Latin Bible, the *Vulgata Clementina*, published in Rome in 1592:

'Gvnevych boenyd, o blegid, tyrnas nef a nesaiss'  
*Drych Cydwybod*

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6 *A woorke of the holy bishop S. Augustine concernyng adulterous mariages* Lonndini [sic]: [In fletestrete at the signe of the George next to saynt Dunstones Church by Wyllyam Powell], Anno. 1550. STC 641.23.

‘Doe penance: for the Kingdom of heauen is at hand.’  
*The Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ* (Rheims, 1582)

‘Pœnitentiam agite: appropinquavit enim regnum cœlorum.’  
*Vulgata Clementina* (Rome, 1592)

‘Edifarewch: can vot teyrnas nef yn gyfagos.’  
*Testament Newydd* (London, 1567)

‘Edifarhewch, canys daeth teyrnas nefoedd yn agos.’  
*Y Beibl Cyssegr-Ian* (London, 1588)

It is clear that the translator of the quotation in *Drych Cydwybod* was following a Catholic source, not a (Protestant) Welsh source, in choosing the word ‘penyd’, from the Latin *poenitentia*, rather than ‘edifarhau’, as used in the standard Welsh translations of the Bible: that is, the author of *Drych Cydwybod* was signalling an interest in penance (‘penyd’) rather than repentance (‘edifarhau’). This was one of the central divisions of Reformation theology, with the concept of penance associated with the Catholic tradition of worship while Protestant theology stressed the importance of repentance. The author of *Drych Cydwybod*, rejecting the discourse of the standard Welsh translations of the Bible made in the sixteenth century, deliberately adopts, in his own Welsh, the discourse of Catholicism.

What, then, can be deduced about the production of this unique little book? There is much work that will need to be done on the text itself and an analysis of the language will certainly offer clues about its provenance and composition, but there is already much that can be learnt from the physical bibliography of the book itself. First of all, the survival of the book in a library in Paris suggests that this may have been one of the many Catholic books which were printed in France at a time when it was illegal, and dangerous, to print Catholic books in England. (There was, of course, no legal printing of any kind in Wales before the eighteenth century.) However, the use of two kinds of ‘w’ alongside the more common ‘vv’ suggests that the book was not printed by an ordinary Parisian printer. There is no letter ‘w’ in early seventeenth-century French, as Thomas Parry points out in the introduction to his edition of Rhosier Smyth’s *Gorsedd y Byd*, a book which was printed in Paris in 1615.<sup>7</sup> Even in modern French the letter only occurs in a small number of loan words, so the use of ‘w’ appears to rule out an ordinary Parisian printer. This suggests that the book was printed either at a secret press in England or Wales, or by a French printer who specialized in printing English books for the English market.

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7 See Thomas Parry, *Theater dv Mond* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1930).

A second piece of evidence concerns the short third preface on preliminary page xxiv (†12v), the final page of the first gathering. At the top of the page the printer has inserted the nine lines, set in italic type, referring the reader to the table of printer's corrections at the end of the book, but that still left a blank half page, and the printer has filled it with a decorative device. The device consists of an orb and cross, with a figure contained within the orb, flying or running or perhaps spinning the globe. With the orb and cross well-established as a symbol of the Holy Roman Empire, this device would have signified Catholicism to post-reformation England. Flying figures, whether they are human or angelic, nearly always represent messengers, so iconographically this device represents the message of Catholic truth flying around the globe. So far, I have found only one other book in which this device appears, and in that book it is used as a printer's device on the title page. It is another anonymous devotional work, this time written in English, called *Instructions for your search into religion. With reasons, why truth once found, further conference is not to be admitted*.<sup>8</sup> This book is dated 1607 and attributed by the English Short Title Catalogue (STC) to Laurence Kellam in the northern French town of Douai. Laurence Kellam senior died in 1612 and was active as a printer in Douai from about 1603 to 1611. His most famous work is the Douai Bible of 1609-10, an English translation of the Bible for Catholics. It is possible that *Drych Cydwybod* was printed by Laurence Kellam in Douai, using the same device of the orb and cross that appears in Kellam's *Instructions*.

There is more work to do on the book itself, particularly on typography and paper, both of which should give further evidence of location and date, but my initial suggestion is that the book was printed in Douai, at the press of Laurence Kellam, possibly between 1604 and 1611 and certainly no later than the mid 1620s, for reasons outlined below. It is also worth mentioning that if the book was in fact printed in 1611 then it is possible to imagine a later note to this effect being misread or mistranscribed as 1661, the date which is attached to the book by the *Cambrian Bibliography*. There is one more thing to note about the 1661 date. Analysing all the titles listed in the standard catalogues of Catholic books between 1558 and 1700, we find that whereas up to 80 per cent of English Catholic books printed before 1640 were published abroad, the proportion declined to a mere 20 per cent between 1641 and 1700.<sup>9</sup> Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Charles II was relatively tolerant of Catholics and this change is partly reflected in the change in the balance of domestic and continental printing. So it is far less likely that a Catholic book published as late as 1661 would be printed in France, and if it

8 Anon, *Instructions for your search into religion* [Douai: L. Kellam] M.DC.VII [1607], STC 14107.5. There is a copy in the Lambeth Palace library.

9 See John Barnard and D.F. McKenzie (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, 1557-1695* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 738-39.



were, it is very unlikely to be anonymous and undated, as *Drych Cydwybod* is.

The final piece of physical evidence is the most spectacular. The front cover of the binding bears a partly legible four-line inscription written vertically, bottom to top. With some specialized optical equipment and the assistance of Dr Christophe Vellet, the Mazarine's senior palaeographer, it was possible to establish that the inscription reads:

Appart[ient (à)]  
Ma[gister / (a)ître] Owen chanoine  
du Mans  
Au Mans

That is, the book belonged to Master Owen, a canon of Le Mans in northern France. But what was the book doing in the library of a provincial French canon? The answer is that canon Owen began life as Robert Owen of Plas Du, Caernarfonshire, one of the strongholds of the old faith in north-west Wales. Robert Owen went into exile in about 1570, studied for a number of years at the new English college at Douai in northern France, and seems to have spent the rest of his life as a canon in Le Mans.

The identity of Robert Owen is confirmed in the historical record. In the *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, printed by the National Archives, there are a number of items listed that were not fully transcribed in the original edition of the *Calendar*. Some of these missing items were included as an appendix by Henry Foley in the fourth volume of his extraordinarily useful *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*. One of these is *State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth*, vol. 34, Addenda number 42, giving intelligence about known recusants to Sir Robert Cecil in October 1601: 'At Mentz, the brother of Hugh Owen, a Canon there, a very shrewd fellow.'<sup>10</sup> 'Mentz' is an Anglicization of the old French form of the placename that became Le Mans. Fortunately, the Catholics in exile kept extraordinary biographical records. Some of the earliest records of the English College at Douai were edited by Thomas Francis Knox in 1878, and this material contains further references to Robert Owen.<sup>11</sup> William Allen established the English College at Douai in 1568 and 1569 with fewer than a dozen people, and arrivals in the earliest years included Edmund Campion, Robert Owen and Robert Gwyn of Penyerth, whom Professor Geraint Gruffydd has identified as the probable author of *YDrych Cristianogawl* (1585), the first book to be printed on Welsh soil. Robert Owen's presence at Douai is recorded in the first *Douai Diary* under the year 1570: 'Robertus Oenus, nobilis, postea sacerdos in Galliis'

10 See Henry Foley, S.J. (ed.), *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, vol. 4 (London: Burn and Oates, 1880), p. 734.

11 Thomas Francis Knox, *First and Second Diaries of the English College, Douay, and an appendix of unpublished documents* (London: David Nutt, 1878).

(Robert Owen, a gentleman, afterwards a priest in France [Gaul]). On 30 June 1573, after completing his studies, Pope Gregory XIII commended Robert Owen by letter to the French bishop, describing him as a Welsh exile for religion, who had studied law for some years at the University of Douai, and asking that some benefit might be conferred on him.<sup>12</sup>

The *Pilgrim Book* of the English College in Rome also has this entry for 8 May 1610: 'Rev. Mr. Owen, with a relation and two servants [. . .] May 6. Eight days. [One of] the servants, after making the Spiritual Exercises, was admitted to the college habit' (*Douai Diary* I). The Rev. Mr Owen is probably Robert Owen and the 'relation' may well have been his more famous brother Hugh, a leading recusant who was linked with numerous plots against Elizabeth. Hugh Owen reportedly received a pension from the King of Spain, was a supporter of the Spanish Armada and has traditionally been associated with the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. After 1570, he was mostly based in Brussels but travelled extensively throughout Europe. He retired to the English College in Rome in 1610-11, and died there on 30 May 1618.

Hugh's brother, Robert Owen, is the 'Ma[gister] Owen' who owned the Paris copy of *Drych Cydwybod*. After his death, by one means or another, the book entered the library of the Barnabite school at St Eloi in Paris and from there it was rescued during the Revolution by the librarian of the Mazarine. This means that the traditional date of 1661 is too late by about half a century. First of all, Robert Owen is said to have died a very old man in 1629 so the book must have been printed in the 1620s at the latest.<sup>13</sup> Then there is the connection with Laurence Kellam, the Douai printer, who was active 1603-1611. Finally, there is what might be called the second wave of Welsh printing in Europe, a phenomenon which provides a possible context for the printing of *Drych Cydwybod* and which overlaps with Laurence Kellam for only three years, from 1609 to 1611. The list below summarizes the Welsh books printed in France during the first two decades of the seventeenth century:

**1609 Paris**

Roger Smyth, [*Crynnodeb*] *o adysc Cristnogaul* (*Catecism Petrus Canisius*)

**1611 Paris**

Roger Smyth, *Sum ne grynodebo* (*Catecism Petrus Canisius*)

**1611(?) Douai(?)**

*Drych Cydwybod* (*A Mirror of Conscience*)

**1612 Paris**

Roger Smyth, *Coppi o lythyr crefydhwv* (*Robert Southwell's Epistle*)

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12 See the entry for Robert Owen in Godfrey Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests: A Dictionary of the Secular Clergy of England and Wales 1558-1603* (Durham: St Edmunds's College, 1968).

13 See Émile Louis Chambois, *Répertoire historique et biographique du diocèse du Mans* (Le Mans, 1896). Vol. II, p.68 records that Robert Owen was elected canon of Le Mans on 23 April 1588 and died there on 9 November 1629.

**1615 Paris**

Roger (Rhosier) Smyth, *Theater dv mond sef ivv Gorsedd y byd*  
(*Pierre Boaistuau*)

**1618 Saint-Omer**

[John Salisbury], *Eglurhad helaeth-lawn o'r Athrawaeth Gristnogavvl*  
(*Bellarmino*)

If *Drych Cydwybod* was printed by Laurence Kellam, as the use of the printer's device suggests, then it must have been between 1603 and 1611, but wherever it was printed it must have appeared before Robert Owen's death in 1629.

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It is too early to speculate about the authorship of *Drych Cydwybod* but there is one more important and moving piece of evidence which is worth recording here. At the end of the first of the three prefaces ([xv] †8r – [xvi] †8v) the author apologizes for any shortcomings which the work might have and adds that:

'Y *gymraeg* wrth hir aros allan /  
or Wlad, aeth ar gyfyrgoll, ag os gwir a ddywedaf, ni bum er ei oed  
gyfarwydd ynthi. Hefyd nod oedd na llyfr *cymraeg* na chymmorth arall yn y  
byd, o fewn y wlad lle ir oeddwn wrth ei scrifennu, i ymgynghori, ag i ofyn  
am lawer o eiriau, ar a oedd yn ddiffygiol, ag arnaf fawr eisie am danynt [...].'

'[My] Welsh through long absence /  
from the Country, has been completely lost, and if I tell the truth, I was  
never expert in it. Also there was no *welsh* book nor any other support in the  
world, in the country where I was when I was writing, to consult, or to ask for  
many words, which I lacked, and for which I had a great need [...].'

On one level, this is simply a variation on the rhetorical *topos* of (false) modesty, which was well-established in Renaissance writing. There is a strikingly similar sentiment in a manuscript written by Robert Gwyn in Douai in 1574 which survives in a copy of 1604.<sup>14</sup> There is yet another variation of it in the preface to Rhosier Smyth's *Theater dv mond*. In both cases, it is the same *topos* but not the same language. Perhaps the author of *Drych Cydwybod* had read one of these works and the same motif suggested itself as he wrote his own preface. But whatever the connection, and however commonplace the *topos* might be, the pathos of exile is clear to a modern reader.

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14 See 'Cyfarchiad Robert Gwyn i'r Cymry', in *Rhyddiaith Gymraeg*. Cyf. 2: *Detholion o Lawysgrifau a Llyfrau Printiedig 1547-1618*, ed. by Thomas Jones (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1956), p. 197.

So, with much work still to be done, the preliminary indications are that *Drych Cydwybod* may have been printed in Douai, perhaps in 1611, and that the Paris copy belonged to Robert Owen, the canon of Le Mans who lived in exile for almost sixty years. Whoever turns out to have written the text, the context of the book's production and readership keep pointing to Caernarfonshire, where this story began, with the copy that was described in H. W. Lloyd's *Cymmrodorion* talk. That lost Caernarfonshire copy may well have belonged to a man called William Owen, an antiquary and printer who was born at Biwmaris in 1785 and whose Catholic sympathies led to him being known in Caernarfon as 'Y Pab' ['The Pope'].<sup>15</sup> He is reported to have lived in considerable poverty but he did survive until 1864 and therefore lived to see the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy and the beginnings of Catholic education in England and Wales. His ownership of that fragile copy of *Drych Cydwybod*, perhaps the last in Wales, provides us with a narrative link between nineteenth-century Caernarfonshire and the Welsh Catholic families of Plas Du, the home of Robert Owen, and Penyberth, home of Robert Gwyn, some of whom were almost certainly involved in the production of the book and very possibly with its secret distribution in Wales.

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15 See Prys Morgan, 'The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 85.