

# Online Research @ Cardiff

This is an Open Access document downloaded from ORCA, Cardiff University's institutional repository: <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/100411/>

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted to / accepted for publication.

Citation for final published version:

Bowen, Lloyd 2017. Structuring particularist publics: logistics, language and early modern Wales. *Journal of British Studies* 56 (4) 10.1017/jbr.2017.118 file

Publishers page: <https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2017.118> <<https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2017.118>>

Please note:

Changes made as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing, formatting and page numbers may not be reflected in this version. For the definitive version of this publication, please refer to the published source. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite this paper.

This version is being made available in accordance with publisher policies. See <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/policies.html> for usage policies. Copyright and moral rights for publications made available in ORCA are retained by the copyright holders.



## **STRUCTURING PARTICULARIST PUBLICS: LOGISTICS, LANGUAGE AND EARLY MODERN WALES**

The concept of a ‘public sphere’ in early modern England has been a stimulating and fruitful contribution to historical scholarship.<sup>1</sup> A number of interpretative problems remain with this view of early modern England, however, and this article considers the experiences of Wales as a means of exploring some of them.<sup>2</sup> It argues that the public sphere has offered a view of early modern England predicated upon metropolitan and Anglophone developments which are implicitly understood as paradigmatic for the rest of the kingdom. This tends towards a homogenization of public politics and effaces questions of linguistic and cultural difference that are potentially significant for understanding public life and participation beyond London. As Conal Condren observed, “as a discursive model, the public sphere requires ... that participants be equally *and* adequately informed,” and this was patently not the case in many parts of the early modern state.<sup>3</sup> Through the example of Wales, this article demonstrates how questions of language difference and cultural particularity intruded into the world of early modern public politics in ways which have been discussed in some transnational histories, but which have yet to

---

<sup>1</sup> Its most important elaboration remains Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, “Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England,” *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 2 (April 2006): 270-92.

<sup>2</sup> Since the Acts of Union of 1536 and 1542, Wales was part of the unitary state of “England and Wales” and thus an integral part of “English” politics and administration.

<sup>3</sup> Conal Condren, “Public, Private and the Idea of the ‘Public Sphere’ in Early-Modern England,” *Intellectual History Review* 19, no. 1 (2009): 15-28, at 16 (emphasis in the original).

be applied to the English realm, let alone to Britain more widely.<sup>4</sup> It argues that future research should attend to these questions of rupture and discontinuity in discussions of public politics, and be more wary of the seductive uniformity suggested by the metaphor of the “sphere” in the “English public sphere”. Thinking about the unevenness of the field of political reception suggests that historians need to consider more seriously the heterogeneity of political knowledge cultures in the British archipelago than is currently the case.

Condren’s point about the discursive homogeneity of any putative English public sphere also brings into focus another issue which demands closer consideration: the problem of logistics. Given that so much of the evidential and conceptual underpropping of the public sphere rests on the circulation of information, historians need to consider more fully the impediments which slowed and obstructed its movement and exchange. It remains problematic to discuss ‘English public politics’ when regions such as north-west Wales could not engage with the volume of information in print, correspondence, and informed oral discussion found in London and its environs. The lack of a printing press in Wales is part of this picture, as is the absence of a vibrant culture of news and print in the vernacular. Moreover, questions of geographical distance and topography have a bearing in terms of the time which news and information took to travel along the communication networks of England and Wales, and, it is argued, this changes the dynamics of the public sphere in subtle but important ways.

This article adopts the pluralizing approach to interest formation which foregrounds localized and overlapping forms of multiple *publics* rather than a single hegemonic public

---

<sup>4</sup> Katherine Grandjean, *American Passage: The Communications Frontier in Early New England* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2015).

sphere.<sup>5</sup> I discuss Wales as one such (potential) public, although, it should be noted at the outset, even this is too gross a classification to capture its complexities. Wales might be divided in terms of its associational topography in several ways based on geography, language use, and dialectical forms. I describe the Welsh public as ‘particularist’ to acknowledge its incorporation within the broader currents of English political and religious cultures, but simultaneously to suggest the uneasy and sometimes partial nature of that incorporation. The intention, then, is not to suggest any form of quasi-national separation but, rather, to describe the ways in which Welsh publics (and, indeed, publics within Wales) were fashioned from the materials of British politics, but in unique configurations on account of the principality’s social, cultural, and linguistic contexts.

#### **FASHIONING THE FAITHFUL: MAKING A WELSH PROTESTANT PUBLIC**

Any discussion of public discourse in early modern Wales needs to accommodate the fact of overwhelming Cambrophone monolingualism. Around 90% of the population used Welsh as their sole mode of communication in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> Attempts to mobilize opinion in Wales, then, needed to gain traction in the Cambrophone community to succeed. It is telling, however, that the Welsh language had very little presence in the kinds of print and manuscript cultures which have garnered most attention in recent studies of early modern politics. I have argued elsewhere that in Wales this helped privilege the role of the bilingual elite among the clergy and gentry who were important in interpreting and disseminating

---

<sup>5</sup> The emphasis on publics can be traced in publications by members of the “Making Publics” project based at McGill University: <http://www.makingpublics.org/>.

<sup>6</sup> Geraint H. Jenkins, Richard Suggett, and Eryn M. White, “The Welsh Language in Early Modern Wales,” in *The Welsh Language before the Industrial Revolution*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins (Cardiff, 1997): 45-122, at 45-8.

such materials for the majority.<sup>7</sup> This provided a particular cast to the complexion of any putative public emerging from early modern Wales, although we should not think of the Welsh majority as closed off in some kind of linguistic ghetto from broader religious and political currents. In addition to elite linguistic brokers, interlocutors such as traders, drovers, and chapmen also offered a means for information to cross the linguistic divide. The increasing volumes of political and religious discussion found in English language print and manuscript did not, however, transfer easily into this milieu. Although news and polemic were shared between England and Wales, we need to recognize the possibility for the formation and cultivation of Welsh language publics which were not separate from English political and religious discourses, but were distinct in their personnel, cultural resources, and communicative practices. We might locate one such particularist Welsh public in the cause of Welsh language Protestant reform (and its Catholic counterpublic) which flared episodically into life from the mid-sixteenth century.

The Reformation in Wales had a rocky progress, in no small measure because it took little account of the cultural landscape there and appeared to many as an unwelcome and alien, that is to say English, imposition. The translation of the Scriptures and liturgy into English was of little use for most Welsh men and women because, in the words of one Elizabethan bishop, “Gods worde” remained closed up “from [the majority] in an unknown tongue.”<sup>8</sup> A concerted attempt to fashion a Welsh Protestant public and address Catholic obduracy through print and polemic was, however, made by the Oxford-educated Denbighshire cleric, William Salesbury. Salesbury initially seems to have envisaged the creation of an Anglo-Welsh Protestant linguistic community,

---

<sup>7</sup> Lloyd Bowen, “Information, Language and Political Culture in Early Modern Wales,” *Past & Present*, 228 (2015): 125-58.

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Robinson to William Cecil, 7 October 1567, The National Archives, State Papers 12/44/27.

and began providing the necessary tools for servicing this in the 1540s and 1550s by publishing a Welsh-English dictionary and a guide for pronouncing Welsh words.<sup>9</sup> His principal goal, however, was to assimilate the Welsh within the Church of England as rapidly as possible, and he increasingly acknowledged the imperative of providing religious texts in Welsh to achieve this.

In a 1547 publication, *Oll Synnwyr Pen Kembero Ygyd* (*The Whole Sum of a Welshman's Head*), Salesbury invoked the idea of an engaged Welsh public which, he hoped, would press for the translation of the Bible into Welsh. In a rhetorical mode he would employ again years later, Salesbury addressed the Welsh people directly in the (Welsh) preface to this work, arguing,

If you do not want to become worse than animals ... obtain learning in your language. If you do not wish to become more unnatural than any other nation, love your language and he who treasures it. Unless you wish to abandon the faith of Christ completely, unless you wish to have nothing to do with Him, unless you wish wholly to forget and neglect His will, obtain the holy scriptures in your tongue as your fortunate ancestors, the old British, had it ... Make a barefoot pilgrimage to the King's Grace and his Council that you may petition them to have the holy scripture in your language, for the sake of you who are unable and unlikely to learn English.<sup>10</sup>

This was a call for active political engagement by Cambrophone readers and auditors; for a mobilization to lobby royal authority and effect a change in the official policy of linguistic

---

<sup>9</sup> William Salesbury, *A Dictionary in Englyshe and Welshe* (London, 1547); idem, *A Briefe and Playne Introduction* (London, 1550); idem, *A Playne and Familiar Introduction* (London, 1557).

<sup>10</sup> *Rhagymadroddion, 1547-1659*, ed. G.H. Hughes (Cardiff, 1951), 11-12.

uniformity promulgated at the union of Wales and England in the 1530s. It appealed to and addressed the ‘Welsh people’, and so conjured and looked to mobilize a distinctive interest group within a state that was politically homogeneous but linguistically diverse. This was a matter of “national interest,” although this was a nation constructed through faith, language, and a common historical lineage rather than political forms. Indeed, Salesbury would later refer to the project in patriotic terms as “our countrey matter.”<sup>11</sup> The word Salesbury used for “language,” “*iaith*,” was also the most evocative sixteenth-century term for describing the Welsh “national” community. He also referred to the potent idea that the Welsh were descendants of the original Britons, thus appealing to particularist sentiment and opening a space in which a Welsh public could marshal its resources to influence the political center.

It is difficult to know exactly who Salesbury envisaged as his audience. Foremost in his mind was probably bilingual gentry and clergy, but the message was conveyed within a demotic vernacular discourse of patriotism and historicity which suggests a wider reception was simultaneously imagined. Of course, he could not agitate openly for independent mass mobilization, but combining the language of commonwealth reform with magisterial direction and supplication struck a judicious balance early in Edward VI’s reign. That he was looking to influence and mobilize a socially variegated set of publics is suggested by his Latin dedication to the bishops of Wales and of Hereford in a work of 1551 which translated the Epistles and Gospels into Welsh. Here Salesbury described his “long expectation” that

either the people themselves, or those officially set over them, or you their most watchful

---

<sup>11</sup> William Salesbury, *A Playne and a Familiar Introductio[n]...* (2nd ed., London, 1567), sig. A.ii<sup>v</sup>.

pastors ... would, as suppliants, entreat and on their knees demand, and, in short, would press ... urgently on the king's pre-eminent majesty ... to excogitate how to uproot and destroy the extreme tyranny of the Bishop of Rome ... those bulwarks I mean erected out of foreign tongues with which the vineyards are hedged and by reason of which, alas, the Word of God is bound with fetters.<sup>12</sup>

While there is little evidence for any popular agitation stemming from these efforts – indeed the tone would long remain one of despair at the slow progress of reformation in Wales – that there was some form of wider mobilization by like-minded reformers along the lines Salesbury discussed is suggested by a survival which probably dates to early in Elizabeth's reign. This anonymous petitionary address, possibly directed to the Privy Council, called for the translation of the “Lodes Testamentes into the vulgare Walsh tong” by godly and learned divines. This, it was argued, would accomplish “the expulsment of sooch miserable darknes for the lack of the shynyng light of Christes Gospell ... among the inhabitantes of the ... Principallitie.”<sup>13</sup> The evidence is sparse and ambiguous, but across the mid-sixteenth century we can identify an effort to fashion and sustain, largely through print, a particularist Welsh voice for reform: a vernacular Protestant public. While this obviously had important connections to wider developments, such as the 1549 rendering of the Prayer Book in English, this was nevertheless a distinct kind of public being mobilized within the political and religious structures of the realm.

---

<sup>12</sup> William Salesbury, *Kynniver Llith a Ban* (London, 1551), dedicatory epistle, translation from D.R. Thomas, *The Life and Work of Richard Davies and William Salesbury* (Oswestry, 1902), 71.

<sup>13</sup> Materials relating to the translation of the New Testament, MS 17,115E, fol. 1, National Library of Wales (henceforth NLW).

The arguments of Salesbury and the anonymous petitioner(s) ultimately swayed official opinion, and an Act authorizing the translation of the Bible and Book of Common Prayer into Welsh was passed in 1563. Its most significant outcome was the 1567 translation of the New Testament by Salesbury and the Bishop of St David's, Richard Davies. The volume's reach was extensive as it was placed in every Welsh parish church. The work was prefaced by a remarkable text which, as Salesbury had in 1547, addressed the Welsh people directly as an engaged collective capable of corporate action and possessed of the capacity to effect change.<sup>14</sup> The text, "Epistol at y Cembu," or "Letter to the Welsh People," opened with a striking entreaty: "Awake thou now lovely Wales ... do not denationalize thyself, do not be indifferent, do not look down, but gaze upwards to the place thou dost belong."<sup>15</sup> Salesbury and Davies appealed to the patriotic sentiments found in Welsh language communities, but this patriotism was here additionally construed as constitutive of a confessional public. The glue which bound this prospective public together would be language and faith, but the "Epistol" also made considerable play on the historical ancestry of the Welsh, claiming that Protestantism was the rediscovery of the pure faith of the original Britons. This was a complex vision which at once embraced the reformed monarchy but also appealed to peculiarly Welsh sentiments. For example, the "Epistol" described the Saxon Augustine as the villain who had contaminated the British with the degraded teachings of Rome. On some readings this could be understood as anti-

---

<sup>14</sup> The text is attributed to Richard Davies, but there is evidence that the direct apostrophizing passages were Salesbury's: Peter Roberts, "The Union with England and the Identity of 'Anglican' Wales," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5<sup>th</sup> series 22 (1972): 49-70, at 67 and nn. 52-3.

<sup>15</sup> [Richard Davies and William Salesbury], *Testament Newydd ein Arglwydd Iesv Christ* (London, 1567), sig. aiii, translation in Albert Owen Evans, *A Memorandum on the Legality of the Welsh Bible* (Cardiff, 1925), 84.

Englishness, but here the intention was integrative, albeit through particularist discourses. This text looked to graft a confessional dimension onto the existing linguistic and historical community of “y Cymry” (“the Welsh people”).

Although we cannot attribute the ultimate success of Protestantism in Wales solely to appeals made in print, of course, it is nevertheless the case that Welsh language texts and translations were crucial in shaping, supporting, and naturalizing the Protestant faith. After the initial inroads made by the 1567 New Testament, the most important of these works was William Morgan’s 1588 translations of the complete Bible and Book of Common Prayer, but other key texts of basic Protestant piety bolstered the cause. Several authors echoed Salesbury and Davies’s appeals for the popularizing and vernacularizing of Welsh Protestantism, with the translator Morris Kyffin indicating that he had chosen the “simplest, easiest, most vulgar words” and “uncomplicated expression,” so that his work could be accessible to those who knew only spoken Welsh.<sup>16</sup> Examining the efforts of sixteenth century reformers in Wales, then, we find a concerted undertaking by a coterie of humanists to lobby for a genuinely popular public engagement with, and adoption of, an acculturated Protestantism.

It is important to note, however, that the Protestant public that emerged in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was neither static nor the simple realisation of Salesbury’s patriotic vision. It may be more accurate to think of an increasingly confident reformed public emerging by stages from the Catholic past. The slow pace of religious reform in Wales allowed the Church to assimilate long-established traditions of indigenous saints and local folkloric beliefs.<sup>17</sup> What emerged from this process was a version of the Church of England

---

<sup>16</sup> Morris Kyffin, *Deffynniad Ffydd Eglwys Loegr* (London, 1595), sig. \*iii<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Katharine Olson, “Slow and Cold in the True Service of God’,” in *Christianities in the Early Modern Celtic World*,

which had Welsh cultural sensibilities entwined in its fabric. This was an institution capable of embodying a vision of a Welsh public good which was forged out of English reformed principles but was not reducible to them. It was “British” in origin and character, and some even suggested that the English were junior partners in the conjoined confession.<sup>18</sup> However, this Welsh Protestant public never had any kind of institutional existence separate to that of England. This may be why even the most aggrandising “Cambro-British” enthusiasts never articulated any imperial ambitions for their faith in the way the Covenanting Scots did in the 1630s and 1640s. While the sixteenth century reformers glossed their texts with the patriotic language of the “nation”, this confessional identity was understood to encompass rather than challenge English Protestantism. The gradual pace of religious change in Wales, however, left spaces in public discourse which opponents looked to occupy.

### **CONSTRUCTING A CATHOLIC COUNTERPUBLIC**

One of the more intriguing elements of the campaign to produce a Welsh Protestant interest was the attempt by Catholics to create a counterpublic which was equally rooted in particularist cultural sensibilities. Welsh Catholics, of course, were excluded from the London print market, but it was they who produced the first book on Welsh soil on a clandestine press in a cave near Llandudno. They also employed presses on the Continent and drew on a rich tradition of manuscript circulation and oral culture to make their case for resisting the Elizabethan settlement. Looking to address the growing penetration into Welsh language communities of the

---

ed. Tadhg O’ Hannrachain and Robert Armstrong (London, 2014): 92-107, at 107.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Richard Davies to Matthew Parker, March 1566, MS114A, p. 493, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

arguments made by reformers like Davies and Salesbury, some native Catholics argued that they needed to draw on the power of the press to sustain an alternative public interest. The Anglesey-born Catholic exile, Owen Lewis, wrote in August 1579 to an influential cardinal requesting Rome's support for a planned campaign of Catholic printing in Welsh. This, Lewis argued, was necessary because English "heretical books" had recently been translated into Welsh, corrupting the people who, hitherto, had remained "healthy ... because [they] did not understand the English heresies written in the English tongue."<sup>19</sup> Lewis's disquiet is suggestive of the inroads being made by the Salesbury-Davies translations, and an anxiety that the reformers were winning over the Welsh through a deftly calibrated cultural appeal. Also telling is the fact that men like Lewis thought Welsh Catholics should answer in kind, with a "remedy ... to save our brothers' souls": the writing and distributing of Welsh "books to be sent over to these [Welsh] shires."

Lewis's initiative was not supported by the papacy, however, and his Welsh co-religionists had to make do with more *ad hoc* schemes for influencing public sentiment. These included the clandestine text produced in the north Wales cave, *Y Drych Cristianogawl* (*The Christian Mirror*). This was printed in late 1586 or early 1587, probably by the Caernarvonshire missionary priest Robert Gwyn.<sup>20</sup> In a further sign that Salesbury and Davies's work was proving effective as a piece of public polemic, Gwyn's move into the world of vernacular print tried to steal his opponents' presentational and rhetorical clothes. *Y Drych* appropriated Salesbury and Davies's tactic of addressing the Welsh people ("the beloved Welsh") directly as a confessional, historical, and linguistic collective that could be persuaded through argument and evidence. Essentially, he invoked and addressed an alternative Welsh language public. The text

---

<sup>19</sup> Geraint Gruffydd, "Dau Lythyr gan Owen Lewis," *Llên Cymru* 2 (1952-53), 36-45, at 44-5.

<sup>20</sup> 'G.R.' [i.e. Robert Gwyn], *Y Drych Cristianogawl* (Rouen [i.e. Rhiwledin], 1585 [i.e. 1586/7]).

played heavily on the synergetic connections between Welsh concepts of British antiquity and the lineage of the true Catholic faith on the island, to refute the account narrated at length in the “Epistol.” Patriotic tropes were also on display with Welsh being presented as the ancient language of the Catholic faithful. Moreover, it was argued that the language was being betrayed by the country’s English Protestant rulers as well as their local gentry satraps who, it was claimed, oppressed and neglected Welsh in favor of English. In betraying the community of language, of course, there was the clear implication that these groups were betraying the historical and religious inheritance of all Welsh people. By contrast, the author presented the Catholic faith as the natural home of Welsh, and, again echoing arguments made by Protestant reformers, suggested that his mission was to provide spiritual counsel for the generality of Wales, including the illiterate and uneducated, by addressing them “in the most common and vulgar language now used by the Welsh people.”<sup>21</sup>

The author of *Y Drych* acknowledged the difficulties of getting such works published, and the output of printed Catholic literature in Welsh was miniscule. However, there was an established tradition of manuscript circulation and oral communication which afforded a refuge for Catholic discourse within Welsh language contexts.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the preface of *Y Drych* acknowledged that it had originally been intended to circulate in manuscript only, and had “journeyed from hand to hand through many places across Wales, receiving great esteem and welcome everywhere ... some wishing to read it; others, unable to read, desiring to hear it read; a

---

<sup>21</sup> Geraint Bowen, “Gweithiau Apologetig Reciwsantiaid Cymry,” *National Library of Wales Journal* 13, no. 1 (Summer 1963): 1-28, at 22.

<sup>22</sup> Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh and their Religion* (Cardiff, 1991), 152.

third part willing to copy it, to have many copies to go about the country.”<sup>23</sup> It was this popularity which convinced the author to have the first part of the larger manuscript printed, knowing that a receptive audience had already been identified and established.<sup>24</sup> This kind of manuscript circulation has acquired an important presence in the scholarly literature on early modern public opinion, with illicit religious works jostling with material such as satirical rhymes and political libels in the critical public sphere theorized before the deluge of popular print in the 1640s. Given the logistical problems of printing Welsh Catholic texts, it is perhaps unsurprising that we find manuscripts assuming an important role in attempts to sustain a Catholic presence in the Welsh language public of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The process of receiving texts, reading them aloud, and producing scribal copies for onward distribution described by the author of *Y Drych* was probably common in Welsh recusant communities. For example, we know that *Y Drych* was one of several polemical manuscripts Richard Gwyn circulated in Wales, although the only one which ended up being (partly) published. Two others took the form of extended answers to John Jewel’s *Apologia*, and it is significant that Morys Kyffin felt the need to print a Welsh Protestant translation of, and gloss on, Jewel’s text in the mid-1590s, suggesting the need to challenge recusants’ vilification of the work in the vernacular sphere.<sup>25</sup> Gwyn wrote in one of these brief treatises that he had composed

---

<sup>23</sup> ‘G.R.’, *Y Drych Cristianogawl*, sig. C4<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Although a number of copies were made, only one complete manuscript survived: *Y Drych Kristnogawl: Llawysgrif Caerdydd 3.240*, ed. Geraint Bowen (Cardiff, 1996).

<sup>25</sup> Geraint Bowen, “Gweithiau Apologetig Reciwsantiaid Cymru,” *National Library of Wales Journal* 12, no. 3 (Summer, 1962): 236-49.

it for the “unlearned,” and “every common man” who desired to follow the Catholic faith.<sup>26</sup>

While he may not have had the sense of a zealous Welsh population ripe for rebirth which permeates Salebury’s writings, Gwyn clearly had an eye to bolstering the piety and resolve of a socially diverse constituency.

Some of the attractiveness of Gwyn’s work may have stemmed from its social inclusiveness, but his presentation of Protestantism is also interesting for the ways in which it sought to fashion and present his particularist Welsh public. Among other derogatory terms Gwyn used for reformers was “gwyr newydd,” or “new men.” One of the manuscripts he circulated was “Gwssanaeth y Gwyr Newydd” (“Service of the New Men”), and was part of wider post-Tridentine arguments against attending Protestant services which, in England, was spearheaded by Robert Parsons. Gwyn also, however, described the reformers as “gwyr newydd o loyger,” or, “the new men of England.”<sup>27</sup> This was an intriguing strategic attempt to place Protestantism outside the cultural matrix of a genuine Welsh identity and to connect it with the old enemy beyond Offa’s Dyke. Gwyn even deployed this label of national exclusion within Wales itself, on one occasion referring to “gwyr newydd o Loyg[e]r, ie, a Chymru hefyd,” “new men of England, yes, and Wales too.”<sup>28</sup> Here, then, we encounter a form of public-making which sought to mesh confessional, linguistic, and national identities and suggest that the true Welsh population was that which adhered to the Old Faith and the Old Language. Such tactics are reminiscent of Geoffrey Keating’s Gaelic language history of Ireland, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, which made close connections between identity, faith, and language, and positioned true

---

<sup>26</sup> Robert Gwyn, “Y Lanter Gristnogawl,” MS 15,542B, fols. 77v, 78, 255, NLW.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 5v, 121v.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 151.

Irishness against recent Protestant interlopers. Keating's "New English" are not so far from Gwyn's "Gwyr Newydd o Loyger."<sup>29</sup>

### **PUBLIC PATRIOTS?: THE GENTRY AND WELSH ROYALISM**

Ultimately, of course, Welsh Catholics were outgunned by the ability of reformers to dominate the pulpits, presses, and the coercive machinery of the state. The Welsh gentry adopted a sympathetic and gradualist approach to religious reform which generally was sensitive to local attitudes. There were few, if any, Protestant zealots among the lay elite to alienate a religiously conservative population, but their indulgence of Catholic survivalism did not extend to compromising their role as agents of the Protestant Crown. The incorporation of Wales into the administrative and political systems of England was crucial in co-opting gentry support for, or at least benign accommodation with, the Protestant settlement in Wales. The structures of governance rolled out under Henry VIII provide a stark contrast to the stillborn English state in early modern Ireland, where English rule was a colonial imposition by outsiders.<sup>30</sup> In Wales it was the local gentry, sympathetic both to the needs of their countrymen and the authority of the monarch, who were the state's agents. The praise poems of Welsh bards demonstrate how the gentry's new administrative roles became incorporated fairly quickly into the landscape of local honour politics.<sup>31</sup> These poems also suggest how Welsh vernacular publics drew on older

---

<sup>29</sup> Bernadette Cunningham, *The World of Geoffrey Keating: History, Myth and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Brendan Bradshaw, "The Tudor Reformation and Revolution in Wales and Ireland: The Origins of the British Problem," in *The British Problem, c.1534-1707*, ed. idem and John Morrill (Basingstoke, 1996), 39-65.

<sup>31</sup> J. Gwynfor Jones, *Concepts of Order and Gentility in Wales, 1540-1640* (Llandysul, 1992).

qualities of good lordship and protection of the Welsh language and culture, but mixed these readily with the religious and political forms of the incorporated state.

The union and the Reformation were intimately connected in a state building process that enmeshed the Welsh gentry in the fabric of the wider confessional realm. It was also crucial for the nature of early modern politics that Wales was incorporated fully into the structures of English government: unlike Scotland and Ireland, there were no autonomous institutions to provide fora for any putative Welsh public voice. As one eighteenth-century clergyman declared (originally in Welsh), after the Acts of Union, “neither have we [the Welsh] any separate interest from theirs [the English]; nor are we to reckon ourselves two distinct bodies, but as one and the same body politick with the English.”<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, the combined influence of a culturally-modulated Reformation, a sympathetically-implemented union, and the conviction that the Tudors and Stuarts embodied British, and thus culturally Welsh, ruling dynasties, imparted a particular cast to the principality’s politics. Wales’s public culture under Elizabeth and the early Stuarts was characterized by a close relationship between language, religion, and loyalty. The kind of patriotic monarcho-centric Protestantism found in Salesbury’s works became a significant resource for the formation of social and political identities in early modern Wales, and hence for the kinds of publics which flourished there. It seems fair to say that, in general, the social geography of language produced a less critical culture of public politics in Wales than that found in much of the recent literature on early modern England. That is not to say that Welsh publics could not, on occasion, be critical of Church and state, but the resources for constructing such discourses were more limited, and the diversity and critical vitality of political publics

---

<sup>32</sup> Jeremy Owen, *The Goodness and Severity of God ... with Respect to the Ancient Britains* (London, 1717), 15.

consequently more circumscribed.<sup>33</sup> This argument might be developed by considering public mobilizations during the political crisis of 1642 which incorporated ideas of Wales and Welshness.

It is, of course, difficult to generalize about the nature of politics across the thirteen counties of Wales, but it is noteworthy that printed petitions which emerged in the name of “Wales” during the period preceding the outbreak of civil war were sympathetic to the cause of Charles I and his Church rather than that of parliament. It is also significant that these appeals incorporated particularist cultural perspectives. One of these was a petition to the House of Commons dated 12 February 1642 in the name of “many hundred thousands ... within the thirteene shires of Wales.”<sup>34</sup> Such levels of support were rhetorical rather than real, but it is notable that this language was used to articulate, invoke, and speak on behalf of a coherent Welsh public. The petition declared that Wales had “always shown our loyalty to his Majesty [and] our awfull obedience to you [the Commons].” Although lip service was paid to the Commons, another passage suggested how “Wales” was becoming estranged from parliament because of satirical publications seen as connected to the parliamentary interest. The petitioners warned that this “epidemicall derision of us” was a “scorning detestation of our known fidelity” and cautioned that, if not tackled, this would “become a great discouragement to all our countrymen.” This was a Welsh political public being embodied in a publication articulating anxieties about the politicization of cultural difference at a moment of acute crisis. It was also a resolutely pro-royalist public.

Also revealing is another petition submitted to the Commons on 5 March 1642 as part of

---

<sup>33</sup> Bowen, “Information, Language and Political Culture”.

<sup>34</sup> *The Humble Petition of Many Hundred Thousands Inhabiting within the Thirteene Shires of Wales* (London, 1642).

a campaign supporting the beleaguered episcopate. This petition also embodied a corporate identity, but this time was presented in the name of the six counties of north Wales. It claimed to have the subscription of thirty thousand hands, being “the unanimous and undivided request and vote of this whole country.” Even if this was not wholly representative of local opinion, and the numbers are almost certainly inflated, it was nonetheless a striking attempt to claim (and perhaps help construct) such united Welsh opinion for the anti-puritan cause. It is also interesting that the petition, unlike others supporting the episcopate, was presented on behalf of several counties forming a distinct territory rather than an individual shire. This suggests an attempt to represent or mobilize a culture region as much as an administrative unit. Importantly, the petition emphasized the particularly “British” dimensions of episcopacy, claiming it to be “that forme which came into this island with the first plantation of religion heere, and God so blessed this island that religion came earlely in.” Here, then, was the Salesbury-Davies vision of a British Church as a rallying point for Welsh public politics. A further British component of this Welsh political public was found on broadside copies of the petition: prominently displayed at the top were the three feathers and initials of the Prince of Wales, “C[arolus] P[rinceps],” with the legend “Ich Dien”, “I serve.”<sup>35</sup> This connection “with the Prince of Wales was important in maintaining ties between Wales and the British Crown under the early Stuarts.”<sup>36</sup> The role of the Prince was also publicized in an account of an entertainment involving the future Charles II at Raglan in 1642, where he was informed that “it is the glory of the Brittaines that we are the true

---

<sup>35</sup> *The Humble Petition of the Gentry, Clergy and others ... being the Six Shires of Northwales* (London, 1642): shelfmark 669, f.4(72), British Library; shelfmark Arch. G.c.5 (12), Bodleian Library (henceforth Bodl.)

<sup>36</sup> Tim Thornton, “Dynasty and Territory in the early Modern Period: The Princes of Wales and their Western British Inheritance,” *Welsh History Review* 20, no. 1 (2000): 1-33.

remaining and only one people of this land ... We know of no sun that can with the influence of royall beames cherish and warme our true British hearts but the sun of our gracious sovereigne ... In what true and ancient Britaines may serve you, you may command us to our uttermost strength, our lives and fortunes to be ready to assist you.”<sup>37</sup>

Such publications describe the fashioning of a Welsh royalist public rather than simply a royalist public in Wales. This was not merely importing into a Welsh context the public politics of England; rather it was the invocation and mobilization of political constituencies through culturally specific modes and references. These petitions offer a guide principally to gentry perspectives and, of course, we should be wary of extrapolating too promiscuously from this material to evaluate popular attitudes. However, the gentry were important in publicizing the king’s propaganda, and the sparse evidence we have suggests that this was translated orally into Welsh for general consumption more readily than parliamentary material.<sup>38</sup> Certainly the Welsh language poems and ballads produced during the 1640s and 1650s were predominantly royalist, often aggressively so. It is interesting to note that a recurrent refrain from parliamentary sources was that the gentry and clergy in Wales had “deceived” the people, which might reflect how the construction of a royalist public in Wales owed more to the agency of elites, or perhaps the convergence of elite and popular opinion, than elsewhere in the kingdom.<sup>39</sup> It was also the case that puritan and parliamentary publics which drew a good deal of their momentum from English language manuscript and print did not translate readily into the Welsh context.

---

<sup>37</sup> *A Loyal and Loving Speech ... at Raglan Castle* (London, 1642).

<sup>38</sup> Lloyd Bowen, *The Politics of the Principality: Wales, c.1603-1642* (Cardiff, 2007), 245-50.

<sup>39</sup> Bowen, “Information, Language and Political Culture,” 152-5.

### **THE PROBLEMS OF PURITAN PUBLICS IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY WALES**

The dynamics of public making described in the previous section seems important in explaining the force of Welsh royalism during the 1640s. Although there is no doubt that parliamentary propaganda circulated in Wales, its impact seems to have been attenuated by the fact that the linguistic brokers among the gentry and clergy were generally hostile to its messages. In part because of these problems, the small numbers of Welsh parliamentarians argued that an effort to reform the people in the Welsh language was necessary, and piecemeal initiatives to that end were adopted at points during the 1640s. Their cause was, however, hampered in no small part because reforming texts were produced almost exclusively in English. It is telling that puritan sympathies flicker into life during this period primarily in bilingual urban areas close to the border with England such as Wrexham and Cardiff. Initiatives culminating in the establishing of the Commission for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales (1650-53) placed considerable emphasis on the need for evangelization of Wales by Welsh-speaking ministers; but this need was not met. Indeed, the Commission, as conceived by its masters in the Rump Parliament, took insufficient account of the cultural realities facing the project, and this lay at the heart of many of its problems.

The Commission's activities demonstrate the awareness by a group of zealous radicals of the need to convince and reform the people of Wales in their native tongue, but also the difficulties in making this a reality in a world where the language of the saints was English. Commissioners were empowered to expel unworthy ministers and replace them with a new godly Welsh-preaching pastorate. They also emphasized the need for education, something intimately related to language and the majority's inability to access edifying literature (and

presumably also state propaganda). Another important component in the propagation scheme was to be the provision of Welsh language Bibles for the masses, probably because most people only had access to such texts through the interpretative authority of their minister. The kinds of individually-derived scriptural piety so central to the English puritan experience were understood to be beyond most Welsh communities.

The comparatively small numbers of the godly in Wales mobilized impressively with petitions of thanks and support for establishing the Commission, and this does represent a crucial moment in the formation of what might be described as a Welsh nonconformist public.<sup>40</sup> One of the Commission's problems, however, was that it was not an organic growth from Welsh popular culture and, because of the relative weakness of the godly cause there, a good deal of its authority, direction, and leading personnel hailed from England. As a result, it had difficulty in integrating with and helping to transform Welsh public opinion. One of the Commission's leading lights, Vavasor Powell, acknowledged these difficulties, noting that despite their best efforts the propagators could not supply enough godly clergymen "especially because they wanted the Welsh tongue."<sup>41</sup> A considerable problem facing the Propagation Commission, then, was its capacity for effective political communication; its ability to construct and invigorate a vernacular public.

Something of an exception in this regard was the north Wales puritan Morgan Llwyd, who appropriated and adapted traditional Welsh literary forms in pamphlets, verses, and other writings that helped plant the seed of a different kind of particularist public in Wales. As Stephen

---

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, *The Petition of the Six Counties of South Wales and the County of Monmouth* (London, 1652); *Gweithiau Morgan o Wynedd*, ed. T.E. Ellis et al., 3 vols (Bangor, London and Cardiff, 1899-1994).

<sup>41</sup> Vavasor Powell, *Tsofer Bepah, or, The Bird in the Cage Chirping* (London, 1662), sig. A8<sup>v</sup>.

Roberts has written, “When most of the self-styled Saints in Wales used English as their natural medium for the printed word ... Llwyd’s mission was to reach the Welsh people with books in the language they themselves used in everyday speech.”<sup>42</sup> There are some interesting resonances between the work of Llwyd and Salesbury which speak to the way they adapted their message to follow the lines of force within Welsh public discourse. As was the case with Salesbury, Llwyd argued for the Welsh as a particularly zealous constituency of the wider polity ripe for the gospel; indeed, both men maintained that the Welsh were among God’s chosen people and that Welsh was an ancient language of faith. Moreover, Llwyd, like Salesbury, made claims for his brand of piety as deriving from the ancient British roots so beloved of the Welsh.<sup>43</sup>

Under the aegis of the Commission and its successor republican regimes, men like Llwyd were able to make a genuine bridgehead for a form of popular Welsh nonconformist culture. After the Restoration, dissent had greater success in combining with Welsh language culture on account of a concerted effort to spread its message through speech and vernacular print. This drew on the resources of sympathetic English individuals such as Thomas Gouge and Edward Stillingfleet, as well as native dissenters like Stephen Hughes and Charles Edwards. In the 1670s these men established The Welsh Trust, whose principal aim was publishing and distributing Welsh Bibles and (uncontroversial) vernacular literature for the edification of ordinary Welsh men and women.<sup>44</sup> Although outwardly an ecumenical project, the Trust had important

---

<sup>42</sup> Stephen Roberts, “Religion, Politics and Welshness, 1649-1660,” in *“Into Another Mould”*: Aspects of the *Interregnum*, ed. Ivan Roots (Exeter, 1990), 37-8.

<sup>43</sup> *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, i. 125-50; 185.

<sup>44</sup> M.G. Jones, “Two Accounts of the Welsh Trust, 1675 and 1678,” *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 9 (1939): 71-6.

dissenting roots and represented a significant moment in bringing together nonconformity, the Welsh language, the technologies of print, and the mechanics for its widespread distribution. This helped provide a degree of institutional scaffolding to support a Welsh nonconformist public presence in the later seventeenth century and beyond. Still, however, the dominant presence in Welsh public discourse was one which stressed allegiance to the Church of England.<sup>45</sup> For many it was easier and more natural to mobilize behind familiar patriotic discourses which stressed that Morgan Llwyd's piety was a foreign import by the "Ffanatics o Lunden" ("Fanatics of London").<sup>46</sup>

#### **EARLY MODERN WALES AND THE LOGISTICS OF COMMUNICATION**

The problems faced by the saints in Wales were common in England too, of course, with godly reformation stumbling in the face of the unregenerate mass. However, the Welsh case highlights the particular problems reformers faced here. Emphasizing the problems encountered when, literally, translating political and religious debates circulating in England into the Welsh context should, of course, not be taken too far. Wales was part of a unitary Protestant state and debates over the major issues affecting Church and government ramified throughout the social order. Although the Welsh gentry may have helped shape access to certain kinds of political knowledge, nevertheless, news, information, and gossip crossed linguistic boundaries at all social levels.<sup>47</sup> There is no evidence, however, that this managed to sustain anything like the

---

<sup>45</sup> Philip Jenkins, "Church, Language and Nation: The Welsh Church, 1660-1800," in *The Local Church in National Perspective*, ed. Jeremy Gregory and Jeffrey S. Chamberlain (Woodbridge, 2003): 265-84.

<sup>46</sup> David Jenkins, "Bywyd a Gwaith Huw Morys," 2 vols (MA diss., University of Wales, 1948), 2: 388-9.

<sup>47</sup> Bowen, "Information, Language and Political Culture," 133-8.

kind of critical publics posited for Stuart England. The barriers and exclusions in Welsh public life thus need to be integrated into accounts of early modern British politics, and doing so provides something of a corrective to recent historiographical trends which have been relentlessly integrative, both geographically and socially. Addressing these questions in the Welsh context brings language to the fore, but I wish to conclude by considering another neglected dimension of the early modern public sphere: the logistics of communication.

Much of the literature on the early modern public sphere is London-centric and often considers the provinces as a uniform space into which news, information, and print was transmitted.<sup>48</sup> However, when we factor linguistic difference and unevenness in the infrastructures of print and distribution into the equation, things become more complex. A significant factor structuring early modern Welsh political and religious publics was the fact that the country possessed no press before 1718. This caused considerable frustration, delay, and error in the production of Welsh language texts by London printers who did not understand the language, whose copy had to travel long distances, and who frequently needed native speakers to supervise production. It also made printing Welsh books more expensive, less commercially viable, and limited the degree to which a vernacular voice entered the world of political print.<sup>49</sup> While the printing of Anglican Welsh translations and devotional works experienced something of a step-change from the later seventeenth century, often because they were subsidized by charitable benefactors, the more ephemeral forms of political print which have been so important

---

<sup>48</sup> This is true even with such subtle and evidentially robust studies concerned with reception as Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013).

<sup>49</sup> *Gwaith Mr. Rees Prichard*, ed. Stephen Hughes (London, 1672), “Llythyr ar Rai Gweinidogion Cyfrifol yng Hymru.”

in discussions of the early modern public sphere in England and Europe simply were not produced in Welsh.

Popular printing in Welsh only really arrived with Thomas Jones, an almanac maker who worked initially in London but moved to Shrewsbury in the 1690s.<sup>50</sup> Although Jones made many topical allusions to political events in his almanacs, it is significant that his attempt to invigorate a Welsh vernacular news culture did not flourish. In the preface to one almanac Jones wrote of his intention, beginning in December 1690, to send a serial Welsh language “collection of all the news published in England” the previous month to serve local communities. However, the following year he reported that this “Monthly News” (“Newyddion Misawl”) had failed due to lack of support from booksellers and readers. Interestingly, Jones had been told that this was because there was no need to get news from London as local news was more popular and, in any event, people would not be able to afford the proposed digest.<sup>51</sup> While this response may have been partly the product of obstructionism by booksellers suspicious of Jones’s commercial ambitions, it does not alter the fact that there was no discernible groundswell of support for the scheme. As a result, topical Welsh language news materials did not appear in any significant form until the late eighteenth century.<sup>52</sup> Thus the type of “post-revolutionary” public sphere posited by Lake and Pincus was not viable in Wales: the country lacked the raw materials of a

---

<sup>50</sup> Geraint H. Jenkins, *Thomas Jones yr Almanaciwr* (Cardiff, 1980).

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Jones, *Newyddion Mawr Oddiwrth y Ser, Neu Almanacc, am y Flwyddyn ... 1691* (Shrewsbury, 1691), sig. A2<sup>v</sup>; idem, *Y Mwyaf o'r Almanaccau am y Flwyddyn ... 1692* (Shrewsbury, 1692), sig. A1<sup>v</sup>; Geraint H. Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society in Wales, 1660-1730* (Cardiff, 1978), 233-4.

<sup>52</sup> Marion Löffler, *Welsh Responses to the French Revolution: Press and Public Discourse, 1789-1802* (Cardiff, 2012).

dynamic culture of political vernacular print and the associated urban centers for distributing and consuming it.

This absence of major urban centers in Wales contributed to its rudimentary communications infrastructure, something which played a role in shaping the country's participation in wider political publics.<sup>53</sup> As a 1998 article by three historical geographers noted, in early modern England, "when thinking of travel, contact and communications ... it may be an oversimplification to think in terms of only one 'periphery'. There was a readily accessible periphery and a less-accessible one."<sup>54</sup> That Wales occupied this less accessible periphery has a material bearing on the degree of its integration within the realm of public discourse at all social levels. If thinking about early modern publics involves, in part, examining the way "political communication was shaped by emerging markets and developing infrastructures of communication," we should consider the ways in which the friction of distance and the presence of underdeveloped markets changes the dynamics of "national" political discourse and interest formation.<sup>55</sup>

While there is little question that the amount of political news, print, and correspondence circulating in Wales increased significantly across the early modern period, the country remained somewhere off the beaten track and logistical problems helped limit its assimilation into the broader cultures of British politics, even at elite levels. It is relevant here to note Michael

---

<sup>53</sup> Lake and Pincus, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 290, emphasise the importance of towns to the growth of early modern publics.

<sup>54</sup> Philip Harrison, Mark Brayshay, and Brian Chalkley, "Knowledge, Nationhood and Governance: The Speed of the Royal Post in Early-Modern England," *Journal of Historical Geography* 24, no. 3 (July 1998): 265-88, at 281.

<sup>55</sup> Lake and Pincus, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 289.

Warner's claim that "a public can only act in the temporality of circulation that gives it existence."<sup>56</sup> In these terms, the public cultures of London and the principality were somewhat out of sync and, while closely connected, were also discrete. Wales's eastern border was open to wider currents of information – it was one reason Thomas Jones established his press at Shrewsbury – yet even here there was a sense that one occupied the margins of British public life. James Morgan lived in Kynnersley, Herefordshire, and in 1700, after thanking James Brydges for sending him news, declared that "we country folks see things at a distance and but very darkly, unless sett off[f] by such a light as you give to them."<sup>57</sup> Slightly further beyond the Anglo-Welsh border in April 1677, Mutton Davies of Flintshire thanked a family friend at the Inner Temple for sending him a recent newsletter, observing that "so much news, frugally manag'd may help me to entertain my neighbours yet a fortnight, for news like fashions may be fresh in the country though stale at London, and an Act of Parliament cry'd in every street with you, may make me pass for a man of intelligence."<sup>58</sup> While some of this may have been a rhetorical positioning of the country as ignorant compared with the sophisticated metropolis,<sup>59</sup> there is no reason to doubt the core truth behind such statements that political news was particularly cherished in Wales and the Marches because it was less common and less frequent than areas closer to London. There was an economic dimension to this, as correspondence and

---

<sup>56</sup> Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York, 2005), 96.

<sup>57</sup> James Morgan to James Brydges, 25 November 1700, Temple of Stowe MSS, STT vol. 58/1, fol. 16, Huntington Library.

<sup>58</sup> Mutton Davies to Thomas Mostyn, 24 April 1677, Mostyn (Additional) MS 9067, no. 5, University of Bangor Archives.

<sup>59</sup> Lindsay O'Neill, *The Opened Letter: Networking in the Early Modern British World* (Philadelphia, 2015), 53-8.

carriage was usually paid by the recipient and charges generally increased according to distance travelled. As a result, as James Daybell has observed, communications were “more sporadic in outlying parts of the country [from London]” making it more difficult for those in places like Wales to “keep abreast of current news.”<sup>60</sup> This was true in terms of conveying political print as well as personal correspondence, with Sir Thomas Myddleton paying 1s. 1d. to obtain a Protectoral declaration in Denbighshire in January 1654, but only a penny for a diurnal when in London in May 1651.<sup>61</sup>

Some of these problems stemmed from distance, the geographical barriers to communication, and the underdeveloped nature of the postal system beyond the two major east-west routes in the north and south of the country. Even the Lord President of Wales, the earl of Bridgwater, complained in the 1630s how “letters passe slowly & uncertainly,” partly because of the “difficulty & danger” of travelling in parts of Wales.<sup>62</sup> The Bishop of St Asaph, William Lloyd, informed William Sancroft in May 1687 that a group he had anticipated ordaining had not arrived, adding “I know not what hindered them, for they live above 30 miles from hence in ye inner parts of ye countrey with which we have no correspondence.”<sup>63</sup> This problem of connectivity worked both ways, of course, and those at the political center often had only a sketchy knowledge of Wales and developments there. One London-based commentator on the royalist rising in Wales during the spring of 1648, for example, noted “Wales is at such a distance that intelligence from those parts is rare & very uncertaine,” and “so full of uncertaintys

---

<sup>60</sup> James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford, 2006), 131.

<sup>61</sup> *Chirk Castle Accounts, 1605-1666*, ed. W.M. Myddleton (Privately printed, 1908), 42, 145.

<sup>62</sup> Bridgwater to Lord Keeper Coventry, 20 September 1636, Ellesmere MS 7233, Huntington Library.

<sup>63</sup> William Lloyd to Archbishop Sancroft, 27 May 1687, Tanner MS 29, fol. 28, Bodl.

that I know not what to determine.”<sup>64</sup>

Wales’s poor postal network was cited as an important reason for difficulties in circulating information, even after the establishment of the Post Office. At Swansea in 1667, for example, one correspondent lamented to a government official that “these partes of Wales hath not bene soe carefully suplied [with post] ... as they ought to bee which hath occasion’d not onely delays but some miscariadg[e]s to the detriment both of publique & private concerns.”<sup>65</sup> This worry was shared by the Deputy-Postmaster General, Roger Whitley, a Welshman by birth, who wrote in January 1673 to the postmaster at Carmarthen, “noe letters (noe not from Cornwall or Scotland) are soe uncertaine and irregular as those from South Wales and I am more troubled about you than all other businesse.”<sup>66</sup> Things were no better in the north, however, with Whitley describing the “very greate neglects” and abuse of the “publique” by the poor performance of the posts there.<sup>67</sup> The terrain often necessitated using foot posts to deliver messages, which meant slower connections and a weaker integration into wider information networks. Even in the mid-eighteenth century, correspondents in north Wales were grumbling that “the post is a great while coming [here], sometimes a fortnight.”<sup>68</sup>

At the very least, these comments direct us to be more cognizant of the logistics of early modern publics and the manner in which even relatively short distances could have important

---

<sup>64</sup> Letters of intelligence, 25 and 18 May 1648, Clarendon MS 31, fols. 88, 83, Bodl.

<sup>65</sup> John Man to Secretary Williamson, 8 April 1667, TNA, SP29/196/153.

<sup>66</sup> R.T. Prichard, “The Peover Papers and Wales,” *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1960): 77-96, at 90.

<sup>67</sup> Prichard, “Peover Papers,” 85-6.

<sup>68</sup> *Additional Letters of the Morrises of Anglesey (1735-1786)*, ed. Hugh Owen, 2 vols. (London, 1947-9), 1: 267.

implications for a locality's ability to access and participate in wider mobilizations. While I am not arguing that Wales was aloof from wider political and religious developments and debates, this evidence does indicate that historians have tended to flatten out the field of reception beyond London in their discussions of the early modern public sphere where things were, in practical terms, more complex. We are dealing with a series of asymmetries and inequalities in the information state which have implications for the nature of Welsh public participation and levels of political knowledge. In addition to the deformations and ruptures in any theoretical English public sphere that may be wrought by language difference, then, we should also consider the ways in which speed and accessibility warped the fabric of reception and participation.

#### **CONCLUSION: POLITICS AND PARTICULARIST PUBLICS**

The comparative dearth of Welsh popular print meant that oral dissemination remained particularly important in transmitting knowledge and informing opinion. However, lacking a critical mass of independent voices, the interpretative authority of the gentry and clergy seems to have had a formative role in structuring early modern Wales's political publics. A zealous Anglican cleric of the eighteenth century, Griffith Jones, a man revered for increasing levels of Welsh literacy, commented on this in 1742. Arguing against campaigners who maintained that the Welsh should be made to speak English, he wrote, "our language is so great a protection and defense to our common people against the growing corruption of the times in the English tongue; by which means they are less prejudiced and better disposed to receive divine instructions."<sup>69</sup> He continued, "although we have not the happiness to express our allegiance [to Church and king] in

---

<sup>69</sup> Griffith Jones, *Welch Piety* (London, 1742), 36 [mispaginated for 44].

the words of your language, yet we hope that in deed we shall not be found defective in it.”<sup>70</sup>

Jones had in mind principally the threatening blandishments of Catholicism and nonconformity, but was describing a form of vernacular public which had its roots in the patriotic visions of William Salesbury. We should not overstate the continuities at play here. I am not suggesting that the mid-sixteenth and mid-eighteenth-century Welsh publics were the same. However, the cultural resources from which they were formed, a patriotism embracing the Welsh language, a particularized version of Britishness, a moderate, Cambricized Protestantism, and a close identification with a Briticized monarchy, remained surprisingly consistent. These were nodal reference points in Welsh public discourse throughout this period.

As Griffith Jones indicated, albeit obliquely, effective political and religious mobilizations in early modern Wales needed to be acculturated within a Cambrophone milieu. This fact, along with the dynamics of print and communication in Wales, tended to serve the crown, gentry, and Church better than alternative voices of dissent. While such publics described above were obviously linked intimately to wider political and religious developments, the landscape of reception in Wales rendered them qualitatively different. The dynamic of religious and political communication in early modern Wales thus modifies familiar accounts of the post-Reformation and post-revolutionary publics in significant ways and introduces discontinuities into the fabric of early modern religious and political communication which have hitherto been largely unheeded.

Of course Wales was a unique case, but particularist publics were not. Considering the way local cultures received the appeals made by various interest groups and the ways they

---

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 54.

fashioned their responses (one might say created their particularist publics) partly from culturally-specific resources, offers suggestive insights into the variegated politics operating within the English public sphere. The work of Tim Thornton (Cheshire), Diana Newton (the north-east), Mark Stoye (Cornwall), and Katrina Navickas (Lancashire), may be suggestive of the directions such work might take.<sup>71</sup> This speaks to the competing claims of a largely apolitical provincial landscape elaborated in the scholarship of early Stuart revisionism, and the near-universally politicized nation which emerges from the literature of post-revisionism. An approach incorporating particularist publics might help reconcile these positions by emphasizing processes of reception and interest formation within particular cultures without reifying the locality into a space juxtaposed either against the politics of the center or entirely subsumed within “national” political discourses. This is reminiscent of the kind of dialogic relationship between local and national political cultures found in David Underdown’s *Revel, Riot and Rebellion*, but in this iteration particularist publics emerge from a complex of cultural heritages, social structures, linguistic and dialectical variations, and rhetorical appeals rather than being understood as products of ecology.<sup>72</sup>

The possibilities for also applying such insights within the other kingdoms of the British

---

<sup>71</sup> Tim Thornton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State, 1480-1560* (Woodbridge, 2000); Diana Newton, *North-East England, 1569-1625: Governance, Culture and Identity* (Woodbridge, 2006); Mark Stoye, *West Britons: Cornish Identities and the Early Modern British State* (Exeter, 2002); Katrina Navickas, *Loyalism and Radicalism in Lancashire, 1798-1815* (Oxford, 2009).

<sup>72</sup> David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1985). For some stimulating ideas on such processes in another context, see Robert Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics in Provincial England, 1540-1640* (Oxford, 2012).

archipelago are clear. Here, however, the dynamics of linguistic and cultural difference are complicated further by the existence of separate confessional establishments, different legal structures, and a variety of constitutional relationships with the wider British state. For early modern Wales, the integration with English government and politics was particularly thorough, but this did not preclude the possibility of its distinctive voice sounding in the conversations that constituted political discourse in the British archipelago.