THE SUBVERSIVE POWER OF ST. DAVID'S: GERALD OF WALES AND THE
DOMINION OF CANTERBURY, A POSTCOLONIAL APPROACH

by

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my grandfather, Ronald Irons, who never stopped believing in me.
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I would first like to thank Professor Amelia Rutledge for guiding me through the process of researching and writing this thesis. I know that I can be particularly difficult at times, so Professor Rutledge’s patience has been invaluable to me. Additionally, I would like to thank my committee, Professor Michael A. Malouf and Professor Winifred Keaney, for taking the time to read my thesis and for their effort to make comments and suggestions. I am certain my project would not have been the same without the guidance and encouragement I received from my committee.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Introduction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: The Welsh Frontier</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Gerald &amp; Geoffrey</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: Anatomy of the Tale</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five: Conclusion</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

THE SUBVERSIVE POWER OF ST. DAVID’S: GERALD OF WALES AND THE DOMINION OF CANTERBURY, A POSTCOLONIAL APPROACH

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The twelfth century writer Gerald of Wales was a product of unique hybridity in terms of not only sociopolitical culture, but also ecclesiastical spaces. Gerald often walked a line between the colonizer, the Archbishopric of Canterbury, and the colonized, the Welsh Church. The ways in which he navigated his career between the two emphasize not only Gerald’s goals of an independent Welsh Church and a bishopric at St. David’s, but also the ways in which Gerald orientalized himself. Through a postcolonial reading of Gerald’s Irish and Welsh texts, this study examines the ways in which he characterizes the native peoples and their religions in the folklore he collects in order to identify Gerald’s ultimately futile argument for an independent Welsh Church. This study of the colonizer and colonized additionally reveals how Gerald inadvertently further identified himself as Welsh in the eyes of his Anglo-Norman readers.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Deeds which are known to have been done in a praiseworthy spirit of devotion should receive all publicity that is due to them.” (Journey 69, 2nd Preface)

Itinerarium Kambriae, written by Giraldus Cambrensis\(^1\) (1146-1223) in the late twelfth century, operates as a postcolonial text in its critique of ecclesiastical power structures as well as of political authority. Through both Gerald’s description of his journey with Stephen Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, through Wales on a mission for the Third Crusade, and in his collection of Cambrian\(^2\) folktales and miracles, Gerald expresses his frustration with the subjugation of the Welsh church of St. David’s to the authority of Canterbury. The epigraph to this chapter, which quotes from Gerald’s second preface,\(^3\) defines the power that Gerald wishes his text to exert. If his narratives are written “in a praiseworthy spirit of devotion” then Gerald presumes they will carry such a weight for Archbishop Stephen as to gain the interest and action of both the ecclesiastical and political authorities of England (Canterbury and the king, respectively). Gerald was born in the southern Marches of Wales to a Cambro-Norman family. His heritage affords

\(^1\) Commonly referred to as “Gerald of Wales”.
\(^2\) “Cambrian” is one way to refer to the Welsh in this period. The term follows the Welsh word for their country, “Cymry” which Gerald uses. He discusses the difference between “Wales” and “Cymry” in Description, page 232. He openly disagrees with Geoffrey of Monmouth’s history of Walo and his choice to call the people Welsh. Despite Gerald’s misgivings, the term ‘Welsh’ will primarily be used over ‘Cambric’ for this project because it is the name that has endured to the present.
\(^3\) Dedicated to Stephen Langton, Cardinal Archbishop of Canterbury, 1207-1228.
Gerald a unique position from which both to catalog Welsh lore and to re-package it as an economic object which might contribute to his appointment to a bishopric. This particular function of his various texts is made clear through the successive prefaces of both *Itinerarium Kambriae* and *Descriptio Kambriae* (collectively the Welsh texts), which he dedicated to various authority figures, as well as his own accounts in his autobiography *De Rebus a se Gestis*.

Gerald was a prolific writer of the late twelfth (and early thirteenth) century. Since he was not the eldest son in his family, Gerald would not have a claim to the family’s land and property; thus he was groomed from a young age for the church. Gerald indicates in *De Rebus* that he considers an appointment to the bishopric of St. David’s to be something of a birthright (*De Rebus* 36). Gerald’s uncle David held this bishopric and encouraged Gerald to become a “future churchman”; he later appointed Gerald archdeacon of the see of St. David’s (*Journey* 10, 169). Gerald provides an anecdote in his autobiography, which further describes this grooming from his family:

> [Gerald] was the youngest of four brothers, lawfully born of the same womb; and when the other three preluding the pursuits of manhood in their childish play, were tracing or building, in sand or dust, now towns, now palaces, he himself, in like prophetic play, was ever busy with all his might in designing churches or building monasteries. And his father, who often saw him thus engaged, after much pondering, not unmixed with wonder, being moved by this omen, resolved

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4 For this project, these texts will be referred to by their English translations, “Journey Through Wales” and “Description of Wales” since these are the commonly translated titles used by Lewis Thorpe. This project relies heavily upon Thorpe’s translations.

5 Bishoprics are not entitled by birthright to anyone, but from a young age Gerald’s ambition rested heavily on a desire to be appointed to this bishopric. St. David’s was the most prominent twelfth-century see in Wales.
with wise forethought to set him to study letters and the liberal arts, and would oft
in approving jest call him ‘his Bishop’ (*De Rebus* 35).\(^6\)

In the text of *Journey*, Gerald attempts to cultivate Archbishop Baldwin’s favor
by suppressing references that could be read as being written by a Welshman in order to
more carefully identify as not only Norman, but a sophisticated academic clergyman. It is
important for the context of his desires for Gerald to be recognizable as a man of the
Church first, and a Welsh or Norman man secondarily. He has to distance himself from
his Welsh heritage, which includes relations to powerful and rebellious native Welsh
princes, in order to gain an appointment to the bishopric he desires. Due to that goal,
Gerald characterizes himself in the narrative as acting against the interests of the monks
of St. David’s in *Journey* as it suits the aims of Archbishop Baldwin by further pursuing
their mission in Wales (*Journey* 76-7).\(^7\) Working against the monks for the aims of
Baldwin’s entourage reveals Gerald’s act of submission, which would give his audience
the impression that Gerald is willing to participate in the colonizer/colonized system,
offering Wales to the English under the condition that he too gets to participate as a
colonizer and align himself with the ecclesiastical authority through future appointment.

During that journey, Gerald provides Baldwin with a copy of his *Topographia
Hibernica*, a reductive text which promotes the superiority of the Norman colonizers
during their invasion of Ireland by exoticizing the Irish as ‘monstrous’ figures. This
identification of monstrosity is a side effect of colonial subjugation of the indigenous

\(^6\) Note that Gerald applies qualifiers such as “prophetic” and “wonder”. Gerald had a
clear picture of what he wanted and what he thought was his rightful career path.
\(^7\) This only occurs in the third version of the text, which accompanies the preface
Version III is in the MS British Library, Bib. Reg. 13B.XII.
population. The *Topographia* and its companion *Expugnatio Hibernica* (collectively the Irish texts)\(^8\) are similar to the Welsh texts because Gerald collects native lore as a voyeuristic colonizer. The difference is that in the text of *Journey* Gerald is both the colonizer and the colonized, a ‘hybridity’ discussed at length by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in his article “Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands: The Bodies of Gerald of Wales.” Gerald further separates himself from the Welsh by requiring a translator for his sermons during his travels with Archbishop Baldwin (*Journey* 186).\(^9\) This apparent lack of ability to speak the language calls into question Gerald’s ability to act as a reliable authority on Welsh lore, although this credibility is not problematic for his intended Norman audience. Gerald is a primary source of Welsh folklore and marvels for this particular audience and was a respected clerk, archdeacon, and academic. Gerald gave live readings of his Welsh and Irish manuscripts at Oxford (*De Rebus* 97). Even the pope had copies of his works (*De Rebus* 165).

Beyond Lewis Thorpe’s translations and analyses of Gerald’s manuscripts, the first comprehensive modern study of Gerald was published by Robert Bartlett. In his book *Gerald of Wales: A Voice of the Middle Ages*, Bartlett considers the different contexts that shape Gerald, including social, political, and ecclesiastical motives; his study is the only text amongst its contemporaries that includes a study of all Gerald’s narratives. Several scholars followed Bartlett with a focus on Gerald’s most popular works, the Irish texts. John Brannigan identified Gerald’s construction of the barbarous

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\(^8\) Like the Welsh texts, the Irish texts will be referred to by their translated names, the Topography of Ireland and Conquest of Ireland, respectively.

\(^9\) Gerald makes further note of this language barrier in his autobiography, *De Rebus a se Gestis* (101).
Irishmen as confirming what had previously been written by Greek and Roman authors. Brannigan states that this “circular system of authentication” and Gerald’s position of relative power established his “intellectual authority” (122). Subsequent to Brannigan’s article, significant weight has been given to the analysis of Gerald’s Irish figures. Asa Simon Mittman focuses on monstrosity as a tool of oppression in the Irish texts. Michelle Brown, an art historian, takes a similar stance in her paleographic study of Gerald’s marginal illustrations. Barbara Lynne McCauley branched out from this study of the monstrous in order to focus on Gerald’s treatment of Merlin, which included a study of Gerald’s tension with the Historia Regum Britanniae. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has contributed the most significant study of Journey since Barlett’s work. Cohen edited The Postcolonial Middle Ages, which contains his own article on Gerald’s hybridity. Cohen offers a new postcolonial terminology to Gerald scholarship, including “ambivalence,” “mimesis,” and “sly civility,” in order to consider the “monstrous embodiments of cultural hybridity” (85).

Postcolonial theory postdates the period in question, but Cohen is right to suggest that it is applicable to Gerald. In his essay “Can the Middle Ages be Postcolonial?” Simon Gaunt addresses the issue of anachronism through a survey of postcolonial approaches to the medieval period. Such approaches include translation of texts as a means of looking at cultures in contact and the application of exoticism in travel narratives. While his conclusions suggest that the approach is not always beneficial, he agrees with Robert Bartlett’s assertion that certain “cultural symptoms of colonialism” must be present in order to make a meaningful argument for postcolonial analysis of
medieval phenomena (Bartlett, *The Making of Europe* 185, Gaunt 164). It is not difficult
to find symptoms of colonialism in late twelfth and early thirteenth century Wales. Cohen
addresses sociopolitical hybridity as one such symptom; however Cohen’s focus is on the
monstrosity of the “Other;” which in the context of his article is the new generation of an
Anglo-Norman/Welsh people, a “mixed ethnic identity” which is “ontologically difficult
because it arises at the border” (92). This problem of hybridity may be taken a step
further to address the matter of ecclesiastical power and the intermediary status of both
Gerald and his Welsh church. I propose to extend the discussion of hybridity in precisely
this way because both Gerald and the Welsh church simultaneously give allegiance and
fealty to both Canterbury and Rome, while Canterbury asserts dominion as a form of
colonizer.

Cohen describes Gerald’s texts as expressing ‘hybridity’. This is a particular term
in the vocabulary of postcolonial theory used to refer to the new generation that develops
in the wake of two cultures in contact. Identifying this sociopolitical contact is imperative
to considering the subsequent, hybridized generations spawned from a time when one
culture dominated the other, which is the case for Wales and Ireland in contact with
Anglo-Norman England. The specific frontier space of hybridity in the case of subjugated
twelfth century Wales is the Marches. Edward Said suggested that postcolonial structures
were not just patterns through which to read myth, but that the elements of the product
are valuable for examining the signs of hegemony (6-7). In the case of Gerald,
positioning himself as an authority within the Welsh texts reveals Gerald’s anxieties
about hybridity, not only for his own heritage but also the subjugated position of St.
David's and its variances of religious custom. Said's term 'flexible positional superiority'\textsuperscript{10} is relevant to a discussion of Gerald because it allows for consideration of many possible relationship constructions with Wales as the Orient and his position as Norman authority. Gerald's power relationships with both the Normans and the Welsh shift often and seemingly effortlessly. For example, when Gerald describes himself as Henry II's "Silvester" in *Topography*, he establishes his position as a colonizing person of power in Ireland. Reconfiguring that identity in the Welsh texts presents a unique problem in which Gerald must strategically identify with both colonizer and colonized. Cohen considers Gerald's position and approach within this liminal space of the Marches by analyzing Gerald as a product of sociopolitical hybridity. This issue will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 2.

The scholars discussed above all argue that Gerald was an influential and prolific writer worthy of continued study. There is still much to be explored, including his collection of Welsh folklore, which should be compared more extensively against his collection of Irish material. Postcolonial theory is an appropriate method for this comparative analysis because it provides a framework for considering the relationship between subjugated peoples and their oppressors. As Bartlett points out, Gerald's attempts at ecclesiastical reform made him unpopular both with Canterbury and with many of the Welsh clergymen, which left him somewhere between the subjugated and the oppressors (36). Gerald had many reasons to seek the bishopric of St. David's, including

\textsuperscript{10} Said describes 'flexible positional superiority' as a strategy in Orientalism "which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upperhand." (7)
the desire for ecclesiastical independence from lay authority, the Welsh church’s independence from Canterbury, and the moral reform of the church. This study of Gerald’s collections of folklore and his relationships to them asserts that his orientalizing of the Welsh which positions him with Norman hegemony nevertheless further connected him to his subject and thus “orientalized” Gerald in the process.

This study employs the terms ‘oriental’ and ‘occidental’ to address the positions of the Welsh (and Irish) and Anglo-Norman England. Edward Said wrote that the ‘Orient’ was a creation of the European imagination as a “place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (1). During the Norman invasions and subsequent colonization of Wales, border territories were established and tied to insular spaces with quickly-erected castles and forts. The slow and spatially erratic encroachment of Norman forces caused the cultural borders of England and Wales to meet and enmesh. That liminal space separated the native Welsh from their English oppressors and blurred the boundaries of oriental and occidental. The border region became known as the ‘marches’ and was over time characterized by its hybridity. Rees Davies describes the marches as “an extensive frontier zone shaped by the character and chronology of the Anglo-Norman penetration and conquest of Wales” (81). The twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw major fluctuation of this border as the Anglo-Normans gained and lost ground in their conquest. Gerald tells us that this fluctuation was significantly influenced by the character of the Welsh people, who were “passionately devoted to their freedom” and “the entire nation [was] trained in war” (Description 233). In Book II of his Description, Gerald writes two chapters titled “How
the Welsh Can be Conquered" (Ch. 8) and "How Wales Should be Governed Once It has been Conquered" (Ch. 9). Just these chapter titles alone suggest that a contested frontier zone appeared in the marches; Gerald's position there is highly ambiguous because he attempted to define Wales within the framework of familiarity set by Anglo-Norman England.

In both the *Journey* and the *Description* Gerald catalogs folklore, miracles, superstitions, and bestiary records surrounding the history and eminence of the Welsh church. While his ambition is a driving mechanism, Gerald's prose also reflects his genuine intellectual curiosity about natural and miraculous subjects. Many of these narratives of miracles and divine justice are linked to such particular sins as bestiality, lechery, thievery, and murder. This connection causes these particular items to function as morality tales, which thus points to Gerald's other driving motivation. Moral and ecclesiastical reforms were an ongoing cause for Gerald throughout his life, and the included miracles offer clues aside from the obvious preface dedications as to the intended audience for his collection. This targeted audience includes fellow clergymen and academics, hence the readings at Oxford, as well as the archbishops, king, and princes. Gerald hints in the Welsh texts that he would use an appointment to a bishopric to further the aims of ecclesiastical reform. Julia M.H. Smith writes that "through skillful appeal to saintly vengeance, divine justice could be used to constrain violence towards the church in this politically unstable society" (340). Each group potentially has something to offer in response to Gerald's works, such as a renewed interest in
ecclesiastical reform, granting Gerald his bishopric, or a new perspective on the Welsh church to remove or greatly reduce its ties to the perceived barbarity of the Welsh people.

Content comparisons between the Welsh and Irish texts suggest that Gerald had a more intimate knowledge of the Welsh folklore and saints than of Irish folklore and was able to narrate those stories first hand whereas the Irish texts are treated in secondary translation. It is important to consider the content of Gerald’s collected folklore in relation to the weight it held for his relationship to ecclesiastical authority. When compiling anecdotes that include bestiality, demons, and even fairy folk, Gerald attests to the existence of a certain indigenous Christianity that inevitably reflects back upon himself as a Welshman. This position is particularly risky for his project of self-promotion. Evidence for this indigenous religious practice can be found by comparing Gerald’s folklore with native Celtic beliefs and texts such as The Black Book of Caermarthen, which was compiled in the twelfth century, and the Lebor Gabála, an earlier Irish text about invasion. While Gerald may not have been aware of these texts, their contents reveal folklore that may have been in circulation.\footnote{The copies of these texts that are currently known to exist are later and could therefore greatly vary from the versions compiled in the twelfth century.} This relationship to Gerald’s Welsh heritage is key to considering the content of the folklore.

A significant portion of the text is dedicated to the folklore centering on the false history of St. David’s, as propagated by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who was active about fifty years before Gerald. Gerald gives the impression that he abhorred and distrusted the work of Geoffrey’s Historia Regum Brittaniae; however, Gerald relied upon the Historia as both a hagiographical and historical authority (Journey 117-8). This complex textual
relationship reflects Gerald’s peculiar struggle with Cambrian identity as he attempts to situate the see of St. David’s strategically as a church independent of Canterbury. The former independence of St. David’s is a major theme of the Welsh texts because Gerald argues that it deserves to resume the independence it held prior to being conquered by Anglo-Norman authorities. Gerald regretfully states in Journey that “Once [St. David’s] was our venerable and unchallenged mother-church” (159). Gerald superficially and prominently objects to Geoffrey and his Historia, but finds the elements of native folklore he needs in the Historia to emphasize the relevance and importance of the see of St. David’s.

Although the lay and ecclesiastical powers of England are somewhat intertwined\textsuperscript{12}, this study focuses on Gerald’s ecclesiastical relationships and goals in order to contextualize the discussion of his folklore material. Gerald’s collection of Welsh saints’ tales, miracles, and folktales connect him to his subject matter. Lewis Thorpe suggests that Gerald never attained his desired bishopric because of his Welsh lineage (18). Gerald also asserts this in his Symbolum electorum, as discussed below. However, his uncle David, the earlier bishop of St. David’s discussed above, was half-Welsh whereas Gerald was only a quarter. This calls that assumption into question. What caused Gerald to stand out as more Welsh than his uncle? How did that prevent him from obtaining his desired bishopric? This study seeks to address these questions and offer

\textsuperscript{12} The Concordat of London of 1107 officially severed the power of lay investiture, thus preventing the king from appointing bishops and clergymen. However, these authorities were still closely linked since the king required the fealty and allegiance of the church in return for the gift of lands and property. Gerald’s case was particularly crossed since he worked as a clerk for Henry II and tutored the princes Richard and John.
some potential answers using the lens of postcolonial theory. Gerald’s Welsh texts drew attention to his powerful Welsh connections in a way that may not have been associated with his uncle. Textual analysis shows that, unlike the Irish texts, Gerald is at times recalling Welsh folktales and miracles rather than relating secondary knowledge, which demonstrates Gerald’s own ‘Welsh-ness’. As is evident from Gerald’s quotation from the beginning of this chapter, publicity was key; Gerald very publicly connected himself to the Welsh church.

Said states in his seminal work *Orientalism* that “orientalism” is a means of “having authority over the Orient” by “authorizing a view of it, describing it, teaching it” to the West (3). Similarly, Gerald exoticizes the Welsh people, land, and customs, thereby contributing to the ambivalent Norman perception of Wales for the purpose of social control. Gerald authorizes a perspective of Welsh people, customs, and religion, thereby orientalizing the Welsh for his audience. This form of collection and portrayal is not revolutionary; what is provocative about this is that Gerald, in performing a systematic construction of the Welsh for his Norman and ecclesiastical audiences, functionally exoticizes himself in the process. By so doing, Gerald effectively catalogs the folklore (much of which appears to exist only in the oral tradition prior to his activity) from the colonialist’s perspective while operating not just as the agent of, but also an object of subjugation to Canterbury. In the first preface to his *Symbolum electorum*, Gerald expresses his frustration with his position as hybrid:

> Although I am by descent three-quarters English and Norman, a hostile people assumes that I am totally corrupted by the fourth part of my heritage ...Even though my upbringing and association were among the English, my descent and
family connections were in Wales... Both peoples regard me as a strange ...one suspects me, the other hates me.\textsuperscript{13}

This ambivalence Gerald experienced from both the Anglo-Normans and the native Welsh would haunt and hinder his entire career.

\textsuperscript{13} Cited by Max Lieberman in his essay “The Frontier of Peoples, 1067-1300” on page 57.
CHAPTER TWO: THE WELSH FRONTIER

Gerald’s life, the Welsh Marches, and the Welsh Church are all points of cultures in contact, each with its own ramifications of hybridity. Postcolonial theory is an appropriate method for analysis of this hybridity because it provides a framework for considering the relationship between subjugated peoples and their oppressors. Just as the Irish are presented as monstrous, it is worthwhile to consider the ways in which the Welsh are depicted as monstrous. The Latin terms monere and demonstrare, pointed to by Cohen, are defined as “that which warns” and “that which reveals” (85). Journey doubles these meanings to identify the Welsh as monstrous in such a way that reveals a unique people with a see that should be independent, while also warning the ecclesiastical audience about their ecclesiastical alterity. The Anglo-Norman encounter proposed by Gerald as a character in the text is one of distortion by which the native is conflated with barbarity as a means of dehumanizing the colonized. This is actually a common tool in colonial oppression, though Gerald subverts that distortion in his role as the narrator of the travel narrative. Gerald existed somewhere between the subjugated and the oppressor in terms of culture and ecclesiastical power. Gerald acknowledged his uneasy situation in Symbolum electorum when he stated that “Both peoples regard me as strange ...one suspects me, the other hates me” (Lieberman 57). Gerald was three quarters Anglo-
Norman and one-quarter Welsh, which prevented him from adequately achieving his goals in either direction.

In order to discuss adequately Gerald as Welsh, it is appropriate to consider the space of the Welsh frontier, which, in many ways, was as much of a hybrid as Gerald. This project seeks to address the Welsh native as orientalized and the Welsh church as Other in Gerald's Welsh texts because Gerald as the author configures these texts within a framework containing Canterbury as the center of ecclesiastical power. By placing Canterbury at the center of the ecclesiastical space, the Welsh church is definitively decentered and made into the Other. Within that framework, Canterbury as the powerbroker colonizes the Welsh church and accepts its subjugation. Gerald as a character in the Journey text operates as a conduit of the colonizing power, which comes into sharp relief against the context of the Irish texts. These issues cause multiple tensions in both Journey and Description by producing conflicts between colonizer and colonized.

Further tension is created between Gerald as author and Gerald as character in Journey; their functions within the text are at odds as one summarily establishes the eminence and independence of the Welsh church (Gerald as author) while the other functions as an emissary for Canterbury (Gerald as character). Contrasting the Welsh texts against the Irish ones reveals that in the latter this position of contemplating the Other as a candidate for independence is missing; what remains is Gerald as a participant in the overarching colonizing power. In both cases, the Other as exotic is developed voyeuristically as a collection of marvels.
As stated in Chapter 1, Said described the Western construction of the Orient as a "place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" for the European imagination (1). In the frontier space between Anglo-Norman England and the Celtic spaces of Wales and Ireland, writers such as Gerald developed a version of the 'Marvels of the East' literary trope and applied it to the marvels of these far Western cultures. Applying exoticism to the folklore of the Welsh cultivates voyeuristic interest for his audience because of this 'marvels' frame, which had already been established. In terms of ecclesiastical power, Gerald authorizes a narrative of the miracles of the Welsh saints and their relics as well as of the local folklore and trivia. This kind of control puts Gerald in a position of power because he is introducing these topics to his audience. The archbishops of Canterbury had no interest in crossing the border into the native territory; Gerald states that Archbishop Baldwin is the first Anglo-Norman archbishop to actually enter Wales "either before the subjugation or after it" (Journey 164). Baldwin only traverses that border to recruit men for the Third Crusade. When he does, Gerald hastily supplies him with a copy of the Topography, another such voyeuristic collection of marvels.

The fluctuation of that border zone, which Gerald attributes to the character of the Welsh people, who were "passionately devoted to their freedom," caused major instances of contact between cultures and cultivated the hybridity discussed by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. Cohen's discussion of hybridity pays particular attention to the colonizing act of intermarriage, which led to a new group of Cambro-Norman people such as Gerald.

\[14\] Description 233.
This functions as an act of colonization because that intermarriage reconfigures cultural values for the Welsh native participants, especially the royalty such as the princes.

What Cohen and Rees Davies do not discuss is the ecclesiastical hybridity that was in operation in medieval Wales. In this context, ‘hybrid’ may be used to discuss the position of the Welsh church between Canterbury and Rome, Gerald’s personal concerns with the moral health of the church (Canterbury and the Welsh church) and the need for reform, and the particular character of the Welsh Church which, like the Irish Church, did not necessarily adhere to all the precepts of the traditional Roman ecclesiastical practice employed in the rest of Western Europe. The position of the Welsh church at this time of great flux is similar to that which occurred with the bishops of Alet in the ninth century (Smith 332). See, also, the discussion in Chapter 3 regarding the meeting between the Breton bishops and Archbishop Augustine for additional discussion of this conflict.

The bishopric of Dol sought archiepiscopal control over the Breton church in the same way that Canterbury exerts control over the Welsh church. In direct response to Dol’s petition for control, the bishops of Alet developed a saint’s cult for Malo to counter the popularity of Samson of Dol. While Gerald did not initiate a saint’s cult, he did record and elevate the miracles and marvels of Wales for ecclesiastical recognition, with the more subversive goal of achieving an archbishopric for St. David’s. The bishops of Alet further showed their disdain for Dol by depicting Malo “being consecrated in the Basilica of St. Martin at Tours” instead of Dol (Smith 333). Gerald performs a similar editing of history by presenting St. David as the uncle of King Arthur who becomes archbishop of Caerleon-on-Usk and then moves it to the remote space near the sea that is to become the
see of St. David’s (*Journey* 160-161). Gerald makes this political fiction serve his needs in the same way that the clerics of Alet used their religious fiction. Samson is the one who moves the archbishopric to Dol. “Until the final subjugation of Wales by Henry I, King of the English, the Welsh bishops continued to be consecrated by the Bishop of St. David’s […] without profession or submission to be made to any other church” (*Journey* 162). Gerald’s revisionist history, which relies on the foundation of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*, redefines the Welsh church as an entity separate from the English church by invoking its independence throughout history.

A self-institutionalized barrier arose between these separate cultures and the attempts to “deepen or bridge that fissure were one leading motif in the histories” of Wales and Ireland (Davies 79). The Welsh are further separated from the Anglo-Norman religious practice in *Journey*. Gerald hints at the commingling of superstition and Christianity in the churches of the entire Celtic fringe, “The common people, and the clergy, too, not only in Ireland and Scotland, but also in Wales, have such a reverence for [relics of saints], that they are more afraid of swearing oaths upon them and then breaking their word than they are upon the Gospels” (*Journey* 87). Both in Gerald’s Irish texts and his Welsh texts the anecdotes show a common commingling of superstition and Christianity, which reveals a version of that religion which is highly influenced by Celtic myth and superstition. In both cases, Gerald treats this alterity as exotic, though he sets out a defense of that alterity in the Welsh texts since it serves his greater purpose to be accommodating to the native Welsh people in the short term. Aligning himself with the
Welsh church further asserts Gerald’s position that he should be a Welsh bishop. Of course, the Archbishop of Canterbury perceives this connection as a negative one.

This difference in treatment of the exotic between his treatment of the Irish and of the Welsh texts reveals Gerald’s relationship as hybrid in Wales. Gerald negotiates a textual space for St. David’s that is between the subjugatory power of Canterbury and the influence of native superstition. This is a hybrid space specifically in the context of ecclesiastical power and has no bearing on Gerald’s textual treatment of the Welsh people as subjugated by the Anglo-Norman monarchy. He may address that secular power in similar terms, but not to the same extent to which he carefully constructs the ecclesiastical power relationships of St. David’s. So much focus on an independent Welsh church points to Gerald’s chief motivation and all-consuming struggle: an appointment to the bishopric of St. David’s.

James F. Dimock writes in his Preface to Volume V of the Giraldi Cambrensis Opera that “One cannot read the history of [Gerald’s] long and gallant struggle in the cause of St. David’s, without admiring the indomitable pluck of the man whom no opposition or persecutions or danger could deter” (lxv). Gerald’s struggle mentioned in this quotation is specifically the attainment of the bishopric of St. David’s. This is Gerald’s life goal for which he was specifically groomed by his father and uncle David, who was the bishop of St. David’s for a number of years. Readings of Gerald’s Welsh texts yield a clear reasoning behind the ways in which he sets out to achieve this goal. Producing the Welsh texts and dedicating them to men in positions of ecclesiastical power could produce some tangible benefit for Gerald. Smith writes in regards to many
hagiographic texts that “Only when the saints’ healing powers resulted in donations of property were his curative miracles documented” (Smith 329). In other words, recording miracles is a useful tool when there is a tangible benefit to be sought. Of course the Welsh texts yield more than just saints’ miracles. Gerald collected all manner of native folklore and miracles. Lewis Thorpe writes in his Introduction to Journey and Description that “If you were with [Gerald] for more than two or three days and he thought that your interest was worth cultivating, he would present you with copies of his books” (28). Thorpe further suggested that Gerald would write down any curiosity just for the sake of having it on paper (29). Gerald wished to obtain this bishopric so that he might restore St. David’s to a glory he perceived as having long since past by the twelfth century, which would then establish his authority to institute ecclesiastical reform in the position for which he had been groomed.

However, this unusual hybridity, a result of colonial contact, affords Gerald one strength. As an academic authority, Gerald is able to have “authority over the Orient” by “authorizing a view of it, describing it, teaching it” (Said 3). Edward Said’s definition here of authority over the Orient is fitting for Gerald’s work in both the Welsh and Irish texts since this authority contributes to his efforts at social control. Gerald establishes his authority and then commands a perspective as a translator of Welsh and Irish culture, customs, and religion. Smith identifies a “clash between the written, Latin culture of the clerical hierarchy and the oral, folkloric world of the peasantry” (310). That clash contributes to the Anglo-Norman anxiety to be found in Gerald’s texts. Of course, Gerald is strictly an emissary of the colonizer in the case of Ireland. Gerald diligently recorded
(and in some cases manufactured) the conquest of Ireland and the marvels he found there. On the other hand, he has a personal stake in how the Norman authorities treat Wales and the Welsh church because that treatment will affect his stated project of seeking the bishopric of St. David’s. The Anglo-Norman perception of Gerald and of his Welsh church is what must be carefully tended to by Gerald.

Gerald’s appeals for the Welsh Church knew no national borders; in other words, he was willing to textually attack ‘enemies’ of the Church no matter their nationality. Gerald admonishes all who withhold power that he perceives as due to the Church. It is clear that Gerald attempts to take a stand for the Church in general, but his written conflicts with Anglo-Normans probably only made him appear more dangerous and therefore a less likely candidate for any bishopric.

For example, in Book I, Chapter 2 of Journey, Gerald records a miracle in which Saint Augustine, bishop of Hippo, appears to a Welsh priest in a dream to criticize William de Braose for taking land from a chapel of Saint Nicholas. Saint Augustine tells the priest, “What is not surrendered to Christ is removed by taxation. What you refuse to a priest you will hand over to a godless soldier” (Journey 81). The priest came to Gerald and told him of what had transpired; Gerald concludes that Saint Augustine was “criticizing those who refused to pay tithes and rents and other church dues.” (Journey 82). So, he claims to be recording this from first hand knowledge of the events that occurred as a message for his audience. Gerald then decides to extend this criticism to Henry II, “Who has indulged in this malpractice more than most people, showing that a

15 A lord from southern Normandy who held Pembroke castle, which was disputed between the Braose family and the Welsh for several generations (Lieberman 17).
little leaven leaveneth the whole lump and that worse evils always follow when this sort of thing is done” (Journey 82). It is quite a bold statement to make about the king to the Archbishop of Canterbury or any other Anglo-Norman authority figure, even if that king was dead by the time Gerald wrote Journey.

The judgments Gerald reserves for the Welsh are of a different nature. For all their sins, Gerald does not give any indication that the Welsh abuse and steal from their own churches; instead, the native Welsh are accused of baser crimes such as incest and “savage acts of violence” (Journey 96). This division of types of crimes is multilayered. Both types of sins are truly awful in the eyes of Gerald, but they are clearly leveled by degrees of civilization. The Anglo-Norman, “civilized,” group embezzles land and money from the churches; the Welsh, native and “less civilized,” commit sins of the body. Gerald actually commends the people of Wales for their dedication to the churches and devotion to Christianity (Description 253-4).

Asa Simon Mittman identifies a comparable state of barbarous civilization in Gerald’s characterizations of the Irish. Several other critics, including Michelle Brown and John Brannigan, are committed to an analysis of Gerald’s construction of the Irish as monstrous, but few have looked to Gerald’s considerations of the Welsh as earthly and base monstrous sinners. Gerald’s treatment of the Welsh as monstrous is a complex one that is perplexing for the reader in light of his desire to restore the Welsh bishopric of St. David’s to the glory he believes it once held. Gerald writes in his Description that the Welsh are descended from the ancient Trojans and that they were “punished by God” for

16 I Corinthians 5:6.
their “wicked and detestable vice of homosexuality” (264). As with many of the
descriptions in the Welsh texts, this presentation of the barbarous works because of the
author/character dichotomy, but ultimately defeats Gerald’s greater cause.

Although Gerald describes additional sins of the body in Book II, in Book I of
Description he demonstrates the virtues of the Welsh and suggests that they might be
more devout than their Anglo-Norman counterparts. In contrast to the Norman nobles’
theft from the church of lands, Gerald writes that the Welsh “give a donation of one tenth
of all their worldly goods” of which they “give two thirds of [their property] to the church
in which they were baptized and the remaining third to the bishop of their diocese” (253).
He continues, “they pay greater respect than any other people to their churches, to men in
orders, the relics of saints, bishops’ crooks, bells, holy books and the Cross itself, for
which they show great reverence. This is the reason why the churches in Wales are more
quiet and tranquil than those elsewhere” (253-4). Gerald’s definitive statement in defense
of the Welsh is this: “You may never find anyone worse than a bad Welshman, but you
will certainly never find any better than a good one” (254).

Thus, Gerald sets the Welsh up to be sinners of the crude, earthly body with great
respect for their churches and a reverence for the spiritual realm. Could it be that he is
setting up the Welsh for a redemption in the form of a renewed archbishopric for St.
David’s? Gerald wrote in the last chapter of Journey that while the Church had lost its
freedom to the line of English kings, there was a chance for its redemption: “We have
thrown it away deliberately, but God in His wisdom has already planned, or so I believe,
for it to flower again in the future: so that in the end this freedom by miracles may be
reborn” (208). A similar prophecy of redemption is made to Cadwallader in Geoffrey’s *Historia Regum Britannie*: “the British people would occupy this island again at some time in the future, once the appointed moment should come” (283). Gerald then calls for a new saint to lead the church back to its prior place of glory in the manner of Thomas Becket’s attempts. However, one must recall that Gerald states the Welsh were entertaining an “illusion” by believing they had performed the penance required to be restored to the former glory of Troy (265). Gerald specifically attacks a prophecy of Merlin recorded in Geoffrey’s *Historia Regum Britannie* which suggests that upon the completion and subsequent termination of the period of penance the “foreign occupation of the island will come to an end and the foreigners themselves will be destroyed” (265). Gerald does not rule out an ecclesiastical redemption; he merely rules out the possibility of national freedom for the kingdom (or principalities) of Wales.

Gerald’s role in Wales in the text of *Journey* reveals his tension with the hegemony as the “orientalized” colonizer within his own native space. In the prefatory dedication to Archbishop Stephen in *Description*, Gerald takes pains to exoticize the Welsh and his role within their culture. He writes, “I have been inspired to think that it may be a useful and praiseworthy service to those who come after me if I can set down in full some of the secrets of my own native land. […] It is a tale yet untold” (212-3). Gerald actively chooses to paint an image of romanticized secrecy that sets Wales in a position of the mysterious unknown, just as the “Marvels of the East” theme sets the Orient as an exoticized unknown. Additionally, Gerald makes the syntactical choice to write “my own native land”; therefore Gerald places himself within the orientalized
landscape. Yet, his function as a member of the Anglo-Norman church is one of colonization. He performs his role as a conduit of the Church’s power both through his journey with Archbishop Baldwin and through his presentation of these texts (Journey and Description) to persons of power within the Church. However, Gerald’s efforts at developing a noble depiction of the Welsh Church are seemingly at cross-purposes with that orientalized mystique he sets for the Welsh. In the same passage cited above, Gerald writes, “By writing about such humdrum matters, I can rescue from oblivion those deeds so nobly done which have not yet been fully recorded” (212). Gerald is preserving material that would otherwise fall to “oblivion” simply for not being part of the wider written culture.

Pursuing his anti-colonial argument here, Gerald examines the problem of Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical rule. Paralleling the “base” sinning of the Welsh, Gerald points to the negligence and complacency of the Archbishops of Canterbury who took the position subsequent to Thomas Becket. Book II, Chapter 14 of Gerald’s Journey is dedicated to a description of Archbishop Baldwin, which leads to his examination of the decline of ecclesiastical authority and its weakening beneath the rule of the monarchy after the martyrdom of Becket. He describes this weakening as a “malady” which “gathered new strength” upon its return (207). Gerald argues that everything Becket achieved by ending the “innumerable malpractices inflicted by the throne upon the Church of God” was “allowed to be wasted” through complacency and cowardice (207). Much in the same way that the sins of the Welsh caused a great decline in their strength as a country, Gerald finds great fault in the weakening of the Church after Becket’s death. Henry II used “all
available resources, human no less than material, spiritual as well as secular, to preserve the whole of the inheritance that he wished (but ultimately failed) to transmit intact to his heirs” (Chibnall, “Changing Expectations” 21). That “inheritance” included a modicum of control over the churches by means of property. The Anglo-Norman churches sought the patronage of Henry II, to (according to Gerald) their great detriment.

For Gerald, these parallel causes of preserving Welsh folklore and setting out a critique of the lay treatment of the Church meet at the issue of the see of St. David’s. St. David’s represents not just the strength of the Church and ecclesiastical reform, but also a centralized rallying point for the ecclesiastical independence and the strengthening of the Welsh church. “The tensions between the schools and the world, the classical and the Christian, the clerk and the court, had persisted through much of the previous millennium of ecclesiastical history. In the twelfth century, however, the stakes were higher for the European cleric who was in the process of taking on a new significance in the way European society was organized” (Cotts 4). Gerald witnessed these changes and seemed hopeful (at least in the earlier years of his active career) that greater reform would occur in England and Wales such that the church might gain its proper independence from the monarchy and renewed eminence. His hopes were perhaps especially so lifted since he tutored both Richard and John, participated in the conquest of Ireland, and recruited soldiers for the Third Crusade. Gerald was very much visible in the world of late twelfth century England. This is, of course, just one facet in the sweeping reformed envisioned by Gerald, but is a component to the independence of the Welsh church.
Gerald specifically identifies the relationship between England and Wales as one of “subjugation” (*Journey* 163). He provides this exact word in his description of the see of St. David’s downfall from archbishopric to its “final subjugation” to the position of bishopric beneath the see of Canterbury (*Journey* 162). He also notes that the three bishops to hold this appointment during Henry II’s reign were all “consecrated in Canterbury” (*Journey* 163). It is important that Gerald makes these syntactical distinctions because he actively sets up the political tension between the bishops of Wales and the Archbishop of Canterbury by using such politically charged terminology. If we again consider his audience as set out in the prefatory dedications, Gerald is making an accusatory case for the independence of the Welsh church, if not Wales itself as a country. His narrative is heavily charged with statements and culled fragments from histories written by (relative) contemporaries. Gerald develops in the text itself a protracted argument for his case. He describes his own efforts in accompaniment of Archbishop Baldwin to seek out men for the greater Christian cause of the Crusade. This indicates that Gerald utilizes the placating gesture of assistance and greater allegiance to the Church to develop a benevolent and intelligent identity for his own cause in seeking the bishopric of St. David’s.

Part of the narrative tactic employed by Gerald includes an attack on the king’s control over ecclesiastical matters. This would be a common concern that extends beyond the Welsh Church to Canterbury too. In his introduction, John D. Cotts identifies Henry

17 Thorpe notes that Bishop Bernard was actually consecrated at Westminster by Archbishop Ralph, however this amounts to the same subjugation, which concerned Gerald (*Journey* 163, note 277).
II as “one of medieval Europe’s greatest champions of literate administration” (Cotts 1). It is curious that Marjorie Chibnall and Cotts both label Henry II as a champion of monasteries and literacy, yet Gerald ceaselessly attacks him in both Journey and Description for these issues. Gerald sets up the problem during his discussion of Thomas Becket in Journey: “The quarrel between the throne and the priesthood over the Church in England seems never-ending, and tyranny in the island is becoming worse and worse” (206-7). In support of the Welsh and in chastisement of their treatment as the colonized, Gerald writes, “They would be strong and contented, if only Wales could find the place which it deserves in the heart of its rulers, or at least if those put in charge locally would stop behaving so vindictively and submitting the Welsh to such shameful ill-treatment” (Journey 142).

Of course, to an Anglo-Norman reader in a position of power, the text is saturated with radical defiance of both the throne and Canterbury as an ecclesiastical seat of power. He overwhelmingly defends the native Welsh people as repentant, despite their obvious sins (so obvious as to be overtly of the tangible body), and expresses his concern for the welfare of their churches. However, Gerald’s apparent pleasure in cataloging and considering Welsh folklore detracts from his underlying goal of reform (and appointment to St. David’s) by taking such a focus on seemingly random anecdotes that have nothing to do with saints’ miracles or the inherent goodness of the Welsh people. This issue will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4. It seems as though Gerald simply cannot help himself at the exposure of Welsh folklore. His Welsh texts are also laden with an abundance of folklore centering on Welsh saints and relics. As Archbishop Augustine
makes clear for the subsequent archbishops of Canterbury, there are flaws in the Welsh Church’s practices because they do not conform to the standards of the wider ecclesiastical community. These stories highlight some of the Welsh Church’s deviations from the Anglo-Norman Church.

If the Welsh do not conform (and are specifically resistant to that conformity) then they must be characterized as Other. The Other, in postcolonial terms, must be colonized in order to “help” them see the correct path. Souls are at stake, which gives the Archbishop of Canterbury all the permission he needs for this hegemonic act of re-educating the native. Herein, however, lies the very reasoning for not allowing Gerald to become a bishop in Wales. If this incendiary and outrageous material overly charms him, his judgment must be clouded. Gerald valiantly rallies a defense in his display of ignorance regarding the Welsh language, claiming that he is only one-quarter Welsh, after all. Nevertheless, as much as he defends his Norman heritage, the work Gerald performs in Journey and Description subverts his actual intentions.
CHAPTER THREE: GERALD & GEOFFREY

The previous chapter laid the groundwork for analysis of Gerald’s mobilization of his arguments for the independence of the Welsh Church by considering the ways in which he strategically situates both the Welsh Church and his role within the wider framework of ecclesiastical power structures in the narrative of his Welsh texts. To that end, it is important to consider Gerald’s textual relationship to Geoffrey of Monmouth. Gerald seeks to discredit the messianic myths in both Geoffrey’s Historia Regum Brittaniae and Vita Merlini because they reveal neither a passively subjugated people nor a religious space for marvels and saints’ miracles. In other words, it is not beneficial to Gerald’s cause to suggest that the Welsh are waiting for the return of the historical Arthur to liberate them from Anglo-Norman rule. Gerald prefers instead to focus his energies on setting out a description of a land rife with miracles to emphasize a miraculous Wales prepared for ecclesiastical reform.

Gerald’s textual relationship with Geoffrey of Monmouth demonstrates the difficulty of setting the Welsh texts to the task of making a case for an independent Welsh church. This relationship is a common problem in Gerald of Wales criticism because Gerald prominently discounts Geoffrey’s work while also relying on it as a source for British history. This chapter will address the theories and methods other critics have used to mitigate this glaring contradiction, and will consider Gerald’s use of
Geoffrey’s histories through the lens of postcolonial theory. In terms of the ecclesiastical space within the texts, Canterbury is central to the Anglo-Norman frame and decenters the Welsh church. Gerald mitigates the placement of the Welsh as Other by modifying history and prophecy found in Geoffrey’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* and *Vita Merlini*.

Gerald’s apparently negative attitude towards Geoffrey’s *Historia Regum Britanniæ* is widely accepted in scholarship; however there is not one consistent theory to explain this literary dispute. J.C. Crick describes Gerald as launching a “devastating rhetorical attack on a compatriot and fellow writer” (60). While the qualifiers "compatriot" and "fellow" are technically true, Gerald was writing many years after Geoffrey, and Gerald’s ostensible motivations were such that he was not an easy compatriot of his predecessor. Crick follows that statement with one of the most widely quoted anecdotes supporting Gerald’s sentiments on the subject of the *Historia*:

A Welshman from the neighborhood of Caerleon was endowed with occult and prophetic gifts. Most notable among them was his ability to detect lies, whether written, spoken, or merely thought, a process facilitated by devils who indicated to him the offending person or passage (the man himself was illiterate).

When he was harassed beyond endurance by these unclean spirits, Saint John's Gospel was placed on his lap, and then they all vanished immediately, flying away like so many birds. If the Gospels were afterwards removed and the *History of the Kings of Britain* by Geoffrey of Monmouth put there in its place, just to see what would happen, the demons would alight all over his body, and on the book, too, staying there longer than usual and being even more demanding (Crick 60, Thorpe (trans.) 116-8).

This anecdote does not necessarily reveal much of Gerald’s personal attitude towards Geoffrey; however it does make plain Gerald’s distinctive distaste for his work, the *Historia Regum Britanniae*. One might even suggest a propagandist agenda for this
attack in a widely circulated text.

Crick continues in her essay to point out that this "passion with which Gerald impugned Geoffrey's 'History' seems misplaced in an author who at various stages of his career used Geoffrey's version of the British past for his own purposes" (61). Crick is spot on in identifying this major discrepancy that continues to be unresolved by current scholarship. This contradictory and conflicting relationship between Gerald and Geoffrey may offer clues to understanding Gerald's particular struggle with hybridity and his strategic positioning of the see of St. David’s as a church independent of Canterbury.

Kellie Robertson suggested that Gerald's fable about the Welshman in Caerleon points to his "fears about using 'false' Latin sources" (52). Robertson's article addresses the oddity of Historia because Geoffrey claims to be translating a supposedly pre-existing, non-Latin text. Robertson states that there was an "increasing anxiety over the proper relation between vernacular and Latin in the realm of rhetorical historiography" (52). Perhaps Geoffrey's greatest sins, according to Gerald, are his secular and vernacular fables and histories that supported both the crown and lay investiture (Robertson 50, 52). Robertson additionally writes about William of Newburgh, a contemporary of Gerald's, who was also opposed to Geoffrey's Historia for a variety of reasons. William was particularly against Geoffrey's translation of Merlin's prophecies because "in translating them into Latin, he has published them as though they were authentic prophecies resting on unshakeable truth" (William of Newburgh 1:12, quoted by Robertson, 51-2).¹⁸ Gerald, on the other hand, confuses critics by relying on Geoffrey's Merlin prophecies. Michael

¹⁸ Latin was a trusted language for elevated men of education. To translate an unverified, potentially false, text into Latin would be a form of poor scholarly practice.
Richter suggests that Gerald's treatment of Merlin was primarily that of an antiquarian (77).

Crick pointed out that some of the Merlinian prophecies cited by Gerald, the ones attributed to Merlin Sylvester, are identified in known Welsh tradition (66). Crick specifically identifies the 'Prophecy of the Eagle of Shaftesbury' (66) as one such. Additionally, the prophecy, attributed to Merlin in Journey, of an English king dying while crossing a stone called Llech Lafar does not appear in Geoffrey's works and thus could be part of local Welsh folklore.\(^\text{19}\) Gerald's treatment of Welsh soothsayers in Journey suggests that using Geoffrey's Merlins legitimizes aspects of the indigenous Celtic Christian tradition.

Gerald uses a discussion of two Merlins in Book I, Chapter 16 of Description in order to justify the miraculous qualities of Welsh soothsayers. Gerald begins with an explanation of what his Anglo-Norman, ecclesiastical audiences would see superficially when a soothsayer's prophesizing occurs: "[they] behave as if they are possessed by devils" and when they are consulted, these soothsayers "go into a trance and lose control of their senses as if they are possessed" (246). Gerald promptly exoticizes these individuals by invoking a reference to "devils" and suggesting that they are no longer in control of their own bodies. He also uses (whether or not he is aware of it) a Jewish mythological trope by stating that some of these soothsayers feel as though "a sheet of paper with words written on it is pressed against his lips" (247). This is, according to Jewish tradition, the method for animating a Golem. A Hebrew signifier such as the

\(^{19}\) See Chapter 4, page 73 for analysis of the Llech Lafar prophecy.
Golem would certainly set the subject apart from Gerald’s audience by placing the soothsayer in the realm of Other and foreign. As much as Gerald exoticizes these soothsayers, he then scales back from this classification of Other by carefully weaving Christian symbols into these accounts of the Welsh soothsayers. He writes that when these people are caught in a trance, they “invoke the true and living God, and the Holy Trinity, and they pray that they may not be prevented by their sins from revealing the truth” (247). So, these soothsayers are not demonic or necessarily pagan. Gerald specifically qualifies their actions within a Christian context, which shifts the focus away from alterity to an approximation of familiarity. The result is a Christian Welshman, in other words, a Welsh person abiding by the particular customs of Welsh Christianity, which may or may not be in alignment with Anglo-Norman religious practices. Gerald further emphasizes the alternative, indigenous Christian practices by stating that these soothsayers are primarily Britons, and therefore Trojans by descent. Gerald cites two famous Trojan soothsayers\(^\text{20}\), which then establishes a lineage.

The two Merlins follow in the footsteps of these Trojan/Briton soothsayers. Gerald writes that Merlin Celidonius and Merlin Ambrosius each foretold the destruction of the “kingdom of Britain” at the hands of the Saxons and then the Normans \((\text{Description} \ 248)\). To match the possessed trance of these Welsh soothsayers, Gerald points out that when Merlin Silvester\(^\text{21}\) “made his prophecies he was in a frenzy” (250). Gerald’s descriptions of the actions of Merlin Ambrosius are lifted directly from the text of Geoffrey’s \textit{Historia}. Gerald then addresses Anglo-Norman criticisms that Merlin

\(^{20}\) Calchas and Cassandra, both of whom predicted the fall of Troy.

\(^{21}\) Merlin ‘Silvester’ is another name for Merlin Celidonious \((\text{Journey} \ 192)\).
might be a sorcerer or that his prophecies are a product of demons by stating “the spirit of prophecy was given not only to the holy but sometimes to unbelievers and Gentiles” (249). In other words, Merlin did not have to be a proper Christian for a divine voice to prophesy through him. Merlin Ambrosius was the son of an incubus (Journey 192). Merlin Celidonius went mad and “fled to the forest where he passed the remainder of his life as a wild man of the woods” (Journey 193). Merlin Celidonius made prophecies for Arthur, which functions as a bit of literary sanitizing of the “wild man” (193). While Gerald does not make a direct reference or quotation from Geoffrey’s Historia, the primary descriptions he uses for Merlin resemble those in Historia as well resembling sources available to Geoffrey, such as the Historia Brittonum of Nennius. Gerald’s use of the Merlin figure contextualizes Welsh Christianity and both sanitizes and historicizes this potentially frightening act. If divine prophecy can spill from the lips of anyone (insane or not, good or not, Christian or not, etc.), then these Welsh soothsayers are revealed as non-threatening mouthpieces of God.

So, was Gerald using the Merlinian prophecies he found in Geoffrey's Historia or can all of his prophecies be found in common folk tradition? Crick argues that Gerald is content to use Geoffrey's history, but not the future in Geoffrey’s Merlinian prophecies that pertain to the messianic return of King Arthur because this future does not square with Gerald’s interests in gaining the bishopric of St. David's; further, it is more specifically contrary to the Anglo-Norman interests of control over Wales. Those who were in power (the “dominant majority”\textsuperscript{22}) were not completely convinced that Arthur

\textsuperscript{22} Chibnall, “Minorities and barbarians” 52.
was fictional. The Normans perceived his return as a real and threatening possibility. Crick writes that “Anglo-Norman fears that the Celts were attaching messianic hopes to the figure of Arthur were well documented” (72). Crick cites several sources in support of this statement, including William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta regum Anglorum* which states that Arthur had “long sustained his failing country and urged the unbroken spirit of his fellow countrymen to war” (Crick, citing William of Malmesbury, 72). So, if Canterbury and the crown (despite the revocation of lay investiture in 1107) held the power to bestow bishoprics, then it would be in Gerald’s best interests to establish in a propagandist fashion that either Arthur never existed or that he was affirmatively dead.

In the 1190s, Gerald opted for the latter of these two methods. Gerald writes in *Liber de principis instructione* and *Speculum Ecclesiae*\(^\text{23}\) about the exhumation of Arthur’s remains at Camlann. As Crick writes, two parties stood to profit from this staged discovery: the monks of Glastonbury\(^\text{24}\) and the king (72). See Geoffrey’s account of where Arthur should be, if he were to be buried:

> Arthur himself, our renowned King, was mortally wounded and was carried off to the Isle of Avalon, so that his wounds might be attended to. He handed the crown of Britain over to his cousin Constantine, the son of Cador Duke of Cornwall: this in the year 542 after our Lord’s incarnation (Geoffrey of Monmouth, trans. Thorpe 261).

Note that Geoffrey’s Arthur does not die. Geoffrey gives the impression that Arthur will

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\(^\text{24}\) It should be noted that the monks of Glastonbury stood to gain in materialistic ways for the short term, but in the long term this should be against their interests because it quells general Welsh morale. The same could be said for Gerald’s potential benefits in writing this account.
return once he has healed, a supernatural feat that would have to be a miracle of God, if we are to follow the definitions laid out by Augustine of Hippo (Ward 4). A leader of the subjugated minority, risen with God on his side (very much a messianic figure), is not a man with whom the Normans would want to have to deal. Nor is this figure someone the Normans would wish to have ruminating in the consciousness of the Bretons. So, by producing Arthur's bones, Gerald not only confirms his existence, as purported by Geoffrey, but also effectively stamps out any hopes of his return. Gerald states that the "legends have finally been extinguished" in Speculum Ecclesiae (Cap. IX). Of course, this written attitude says nothing of Gerald's own views on Arthur and Merlin. Perhaps a cleric who was in favor of Welsh ecclesiastical independence might support the return of this messianic figure. Maybe he would not care. (Or maybe Gerald's insatiable curiosity would inspire interest.) However, his agenda can only be directly furthered by appeasing his Norman superiors.

Instead of emphasizing Arthur's return, Gerald uses his account of Arthur in Liber de principis instructione to teach the monarchy how to respect and properly treat the Church. If the Normans can appropriate Arthur's lineage through colonial assimilation, then Gerald, writing for an Anglo-Norman audience, can deploy Arthur as a role model for the proper relationship between monarchy and church. Gerald writes in Principis:

In [Arthur's] day, he was a distinguished patron, generous donor, and a splendid supporter of the renowned monastery of Glastonbury, they praise him greatly in their annals. Indeed, more than all other churches of his realm he prized the Glastonbury church of Holy Mary, mother of God, and sponsored it with greater devotion by far than he did for the rest. When that man went forth for war,

25 Augustine's definitions of miracles are discussed in Chapter 4 of this study.
26 All further references will be made as: Principis.

43
depicted on the inside part of his shield was the image of the Blessed Virgin, so that he could always have her before his eyes in battle, and whenever he found himself in a dangerous encounter he was accustomed to kiss her feet with great devotion.

Gerald situates Arthur as a king who both maintains a distance from the church while also offering it both a healthy respect and financial support. This type of monarch would hold the capacity to serve the function of facilitating Gerald’s great fantasy. So, it is in his interests to make sure these passages are read to the Anglo-Norman secular rulers. N. J. Higham writes of this recovery of Arthur’s remains, “The Glastonbury ‘recovery’ was part of an appropriation of the idea of Arthur from its Welsh origins by the Anglo-Norman elite” (232). This idea is challenging since Gerald is the recorder of this recovery. Instructing secular rulers is in fact the principal apparent motive of the text. It was dedicated to John. Arthur not only offers financial support, but appears willing to fight for the church (not unlike the Crusade for which Gerald went on the mission in Wales with Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury). He writes in *Speculum Ecclesiae*\(^{27}\) that Arthur had “prized that church more than all the rest in his kingdom, and had enriched it with large and innumerable lands” (*Speculum* Cap. X). The chapter heading specifically states “The renowned King Arthur was a patron of Glastonbury Abbey” (*Speculum* Cap. X).

An analysis of the two accounts shows that Gerald highlighted different aspects of King Arthur for two different audiences. For the monarchy, Gerald presents a British king who respected and endowed the Church financially. The account for his ecclesiastical audience highlights the treatment of the remains and takes a moment to

\(^{27}\) All further references will be made as: *Speculum.*
discuss the linguistic and mythological aspects of Arthur’s death. Gerald’s liminal position (caught between monarchy and church, Canterbury and St. David’s, England and Wales, etc.) forces upon him the imperative to disseminate different lessons here. For the monarchy, he provides a role model and demonstrates the appropriate way for a king to treat the church. For the church, Gerald is sanitizing legendary material while also hinting at ecclesiastical reform.

Gerald further supports the exhumation of Arthur’s remains and opposition to Merlilian prophecies espoused by Geoffrey in the Description. Book II, Chapter 7 describes the history and “sins” of the Welsh, asserting that they are of Trojan descent. Thus far, this follows Geoffrey’s Historia. However, Gerald argues that the return of a leader to facilitate the eradication of the Normans will not happen and that this particular prophecy will not occur.28 Gerald scoffs “It is remarkable how everyone in Wales entertains this illusion” (265). Gerald further asserts “In my own opinion this is completely wrong” (265). Gerald argues that the Welsh are still steeped in the “abyss of every vice” and supports that statement with the following quote from Ovid: “Where means are lacking libido can never thrive: / Lust is luxurious and needs wealth to survive” (265). So, practically all in the same breath Gerald negates a Merlilian prophecy and degrades the indigenous Welsh people. He suggests that the Welsh are wrong in thinking that they have nearly completed their penance of subjugation because they have simply not had the means for major vice. He suggests instead that the upturn in their

28 The exact prophecy in question is from Geoffrey’s Historia: “Kambria shall be filled with joy and the Cornish oaks shall flourish. The island shall be called by the name of Brutus and the title given to it by the foreigners shall be done away with” (Thorpe’s footnote 607, Description 265)
fourtunes felt by the Welsh is wholly due to the influence of the Anglo-Normans (267).
This is again evidence of Gerald’s desire to placate his Anglo-Norman audience while also demonstrating the need for reform of the Welsh church in order to more adequately address the sins of its people.

Part II, Caption 51 of the *Topography* demonstrates another occurrence of Gerald referring to Geoffrey’s *Historia* as a critical historiographic text. This section pertains to Merlin transferring the “Giants’ Dance”\(^{29}\) from Ireland to Britain. This would seem to be an important part of Irish history and is useful to Gerald. Geoffrey describes Merlin as re-erecting the stones in Britain as a form of altar or memorial space for the “spot where the heroes had been buried” (*Historia* 198). The participants held a ceremony to “re-dedicate the burial-place” (198). Gerald repurposes this history into a resolution of metaphorical castration:

> [Merlin] got them put in exactly the same order and with the same skill as before – so as to leave behind some memorial of a great crime committed when the flower of Britain’s manhood was cut to pieces by the concealed daggers of the Saxons (*Topographia* 69).

So Gerald recycles this translation of stones from the *Historia* into a commentary on the loss of the Britons’ masculinity as they lost Britain to the Saxons. While this was not an act of military subjugation, the Saxon mercenaries treacherously murdered the Welsh leaders at a “peace conference” called by Vortigern, the king who had invited the Saxons as defenders of Britain. This statement could also reflect the Anglo-Norman invasion of the Celtic spaces. Here he does not question the authenticity of the *Historia* as a source, nor does he refer to it by name. Gerald addresses the British loss to the Saxons more

\(^{29}\) Stonehenge.
directly when he borrows from both Geoffrey and Bede the story of the seven Welsh bishops and Archbishop Augustine. Not only is the subjugation to the Saxons clearly a parallel to the Welsh subjugation to Anglo-Norman England, but Gerald develops the ecclesiastical power relationship of colonizer and colonized more directly with Augustine.

Gerald employs this brief passage of ecclesiastical history from the Venerable Bede and Geoffrey as a means of asserting a standing Welsh desire for independence that stretches back before the conquest of the Normans. Bede and Geoffrey offer different versions of an anecdote in which Archbishop Augustine meets with the Welsh bishops to seek their allegiance, which includes a few key policy changes (such as an adjustment to their calculations for Easter). The authors' differing political aims are suggestive of their diverging presentations of this story. For example, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* sets for itself the task of legitimizing the English ecclesiastical authority over the Britons. Geoffrey similarly aims to legitimize the authority of the Anglo-Normans over the Britons. Bede's tale demonstrates that the British bishops "realized [Augustine's suggested reforms were] the true way of righteousness" but that they would need the "consent and approval of their own people" (72). This presentation suggests that the Britons are aware of their sacrilegious and nonconforming ways and that the bishops have very little actual control over their people.

The seven bishops, following the advice of an anchorite, test Augustine. If he rises to his feet when they arrive, Augustine will have demonstrated the respect and obedience of a "servant of Christ" (Bede 73). When the bishops arrive, Augustine
remains seated. However, he does offer to let them continue to do the “many things” which are contrary to the universal church’s customs if they conform to three items (the date of Easter, baptism, and proselytizing to the English). The Welsh bishops reject his offer out of hand because he did not rise when the bishops arrived. Augustine then warns that the British will suffer war and destruction for this decision. Bede concludes with this passage: “Thus the prophecy of the holy Bishop Augustine was fulfilled, although he had long been translated to the heavenly kingdom, namely that those heretics would also suffer the vengeance of temporal death because they despised the offer of everlasting salvation” (Bede 74). It is rather a strong judgment to proclaim that the seven bishops despised the offer of salvation, though it sets the superiority of the English church for Bede’s text.

Geoffrey’s story emphasizes the legitimacy of the Welsh church’s independence. First, Geoffrey suggests that an eighth ecclesiastical leader was present – an archbishop (266). Geoffrey does not state who the archbishop is, but does make reference to him twice. Additionally, Geoffrey does not make reference to the seemingly petty anecdote about Augustine rising in the presence of the bishops. This does not appear to play any role in their refusal of Augustine. Instead, Abbot Dinoot30 “proved to him on a whole series of grounds that they owed him no allegiance at all” (Historia 266). Geoffrey further states “They had their own Archbishop and what is more these Saxons were the very people who persisted in depriving them of their own fatherland” (266). It is particularly important to note that these bishops used reason to defend their case, even if

30 Dinoot presided over the monastery of Bancornabury, according to Bede (Bk. 2, Ch. 2, pg. 72)
Geoffrey does not reveal that reasoning.

The passage is remarkably similar to Bede’s, and thus points either to Bede as a source or that a common source existed for the anecdote which has been utilized for two different ecclesiastical/political positions. Bede emphasizes the Welsh Christianity as “Other” and foreign in practice to the “unity of the Church” (Bede 71). Augustine is presented as pious, normative Roman Christian, and primarily interested in proselytizing and peace for the unity of the English and British; Geoffrey positions the Britons’ Christianity and its autonomous customs as comfortably Other. Rather than an aberrant existence, which must be normalized, Geoffrey’s telling suggests that their variant is acceptable and not in any need of change. In fact, he cites the Welsh Christian customs as dating back to the conversions performed by Pope Eleutherius and therefore as being canonical (Historia 266). Geoffrey faithfully recounts the subsequent attacks on Abbot Dinoth and other Welsh monks and ecclesiastical men by the Saxon kings for “refusing to accept the authority of Augustine” (266).

Gerald’s reading and presentation of this same event appears to rely more on Bede than Geoffrey, which is curious since one would imagine that Geoffrey’s version of events would more aptly agree with Gerald’s presentation of an independent Welsh church. Gerald more stringently renders the event into confrontational signifiers. He identifies Augustine as “Archbishop of the English” whereas Bede offers no title and Geoffrey loosely identifies August as being “sent to Britain by Pope Gregory” (Historia 265). Both Geoffrey and Bede are textually vague whereas Gerald specifically pins Augustine to a political identity which immediately creates a textual tension. He makes
the same distinction for the seven bishops by specifically calling them “Welsh” rather than “Briton” (*Journey* 164). So the conflict of an English Archbishop imposing a colonizing force over Welsh bishops is strategically set. He describes the Archbishop’s “arrogance” as “typical” (*Journey* 164). When Augustine does not rise to greet the bishops, Gerald writes that the bishops are deterred by the Archbishop’s pride. Gerald’s bishops do not bother to assert their case to Augustine, instead they tell their people “If he will not stand up to meet us now, he will have an even poorer opinion of us if we swear allegiance to him” (164).

Gerald uses this passage to set up a case for colonized ecclesiastical power. When Bernard, Bishop of St. David’s, later makes an appeal to the Roman curia, we are told that his efforts “would have been successful” except that witnesses “rightly or wrongly” swore that Bernard had “made profession and submission to the see of Canterbury” (*Journey* 165). The trouble identified by Gerald is that Bernard was St. David’s first Anglo-Norman bishop and he “alienated much of the land held by his church without either advantage to himself or profit to anyone else” (*Journey* 165). Bernard is the kind of bishop Gerald would not wish to be and, in Gerald’s eyes, one who degrades the position. Bernard accepted the hegemonic practice of Canterbury and only made an attempt for independence when it was beneficial to his interests. Gerald chastises Bernard’s performance as a bishop and identifies in his behavior the need for reform.

Criticizing an Anglo-Norman bishop would appear to be a strategic misfire given Gerald’s particular goals, but his reasoning for doing so points to the possible wisdom in it. Gerald’s point here is that the bishoprics of Wales should be Welsh – or at least
partially Welsh because the native people are more likely to respond favorably to Canterbury’s colonization of their Churches if the local authorities are also members of the colonized population. So, Gerald weaves a careful thread through the colonizer/colonized system that would mobilize a space for a hybrid person such as himself. This hybrid person must be able to accept a subjugated position for the Welsh Church while adequately appealing to the native Welsh people. Of course, this argument does not produce favorable results for Gerald because the Archbishop of Canterbury does not want a Welshman in a position of ecclesiastical power nor do the Welsh desire an Anglo-Norman bishop. Gerald had the misfortune of being disqualified at both ends due to his heritage, of which he was too outspoken.

While Bernard is not referred to directly, Geoffrey also laments the fall of bishops in *Vita Merlini*. His Merlin foretells the arrival of the Normans and a loss of sanctity. Merlin states that “There shall be no honor kept for the church and the order shall perish” because “they shall give to the soldiers what should belong to the needy” (10). It is unclear whether Gerald read *Vita Merlini* since he does not make any direct references to this text, but it seems likely, especially given his statement in *Journey*: “[At Nefyn] I myself, Archdeacon of St. David’s, discovered the works of Merlin Silvester, which I had long been looking for, or so I would like you to think” (183). This statement is peculiar for a couple reasons. First, Gerald identifies himself as a Silvester to Henry II in the *Topography* preface, which was written prior to his tour of Wales with Archbishop Baldwin. It is possible that Gerald had access to a wider spread of legendary texts, though that is impossible to confirm given what has survived or what is known by current
scholars. Either way, Gerald clearly thought it would be beneficial to identify himself as ‘Silvester’ to Henry II, which suggests broader familiarity with the legendary material. The comparison of relationships suggested here is not really accurate to Gerald’s relationship to Henry II but is useful for his purpose of gaining recognition.

Second, his phrase “or so I would like you to think” reveals the author to his audience. What purpose would exist in making this kind of subversive statement? It is difficult to offer a real answer since we cannot know Gerald’s intentions and this statement could be read different ways. Considering contemporary anxieties regarding textual sources, this statement could suggest Gerald’s devotion to setting down to paper only that which is verifiable. He states that he had been looking for sources of Merlin material. This lends legitimacy to his use of Merlin folklore in the Welsh texts, though it would raise questions about his use of folklore in the Irish texts. However, that “or so” is a nagging problem not yet resolved. Those two words remove the certainty of the previous clause and suggest that Gerald is representing to the reader that he is playing along with the notion of Latin textual sources. This statement could revive anxieties about Geoffrey’s sources since he never fully revealed them. By suggesting transparency of sources, Gerald’s statement here calls into question a lack of transparency from Geoffrey, thereby further discrediting Geoffrey’s texts.

Perhaps the most critical appropriation of Geoffrey’s Historia occurs in Book II of Gerald’s Journey. Despite his superficial scorn of Geoffrey, Gerald repurposes Geoffrey’s history of St. David’s and its principal characters to fit his own vision of the diocese’s glory. First, it is important to note that Gerald maintains the conversion of
Wales as occurring in the time of King Lucius and Pope Eleutheris “long before the fall of Britain” (Description 253, Historia 124-5). So, there was already a solid Christian foundation before the subjugation to Canterbury. “Nowhere can you see hermits and anchorites more abstinent and more spiritually committed than in Wales” (Description 254).

Gerald’s emphatic insistence that St. David’s was an archbishopric originally seated at Caerleon is founded on Geoffrey’s description of the conversion of Britain, during which “the temples which had been founded in honor of a multiplicity of gods” were reassigned to “various categories of men in orders” (Historia 125). “At the Pope’s bidding” the pagan districts of worship were replaced with bishoprics and three archbishoprics, which were located in the “noble cities, London, York and the City of Legions” (Historia 125). Gerald’s assertion that “Saint Dyfrig […] handed his high functions [the archbishopric] over to David” who then had “the archbishopric moved to St. David’s” mostly follows the narrative of Historia except there is no mention of a translation of the archiepiscopal seat (Journey 160). Instead, Geoffrey writes that St. David, “the most holy Archbishop of the City of Legions, died in the town of Menevia” inside the abbey founded by Saint Patrick (Historia 262). Geoffrey records David “died while on a visit to his friars there.” (262). Therefore, there are already hints here of a textual reconstruction by Gerald to validate the eminence of St. David’s. Although Gerald made a display early in the text of Journey by participating in Baldwin’s resistance to the monks of St. David’s, it is key to note his textual reason for doing so. Gerald’s desire to validate St. David’s can only be achieved by placating Canterbury as the subjugator.
Therefore, his textual opposition to the monks of St. David’s is actually a subversive method of validating St. David’s.

Gerald embellishes his claim by stating that “these saintly men deliberately chose to establish the archbishopric there” because it was so remote “that they might enjoy a spiritual life which no one could take away from them. David was extremely devout and lived a most saintly life” (Journey 161). Gerald utilizes all the appropriate terms, ‘saintly,’ ‘spiritual,’ and ‘devout.’ At this point, Gerald has moved away from his source text in order better to authorize an unblemished image of the Welsh saint. The next point of divergence strengthens Gerald’s argument.

Geoffrey states that when Aurelius Ambrosius appointed the archbishopric of the City of Legions to Dubricius (Gerald’s Dyfrig), he “gave York to Samson” (Historia 198). Samson was later “driven out” of his diocese by pagans who had “razed to the ground” all the churches in York (Historia 221). While Geoffrey does not refer to Samson’s escaping to Dol, he later refers to Samson as “Archbishop of Dol” (Historia 230). Gerald fills in the narrative as he rewrites it. According to Journey, Samson was the last of the “twenty-five Archbishops” who “occupied the see of St. David’s down the years” (161-162). Instead of being driven out by pagans, Gerald writes that Samson left Wales during a yellow plague. Samson was “persuaded to go on board a boat” which carried him off to Brittany (162). Conveniently, the see of Dol was unoccupied, so Samson was “immediately elected as Bishop” (162). Unfortunately, he took the pallium with him because he thought he would return. However, Samson never did return to Wales and “through indolence or poverty, or probably as the result of the coming of the
English to our island and the never-ending wars with the Saxons [...] we Welshmen\textsuperscript{31} lost for all time the honor, which we had once enjoyed” (162). The conclusion of this loss was “the final subjugation of Wales by Henry I” (162). Gerald’s choice to have the archbishopric lost to Dol leaves open the possibility of later getting the pallium back for an independent archiepiscopal seat at St. David’s.

Geoffrey’s Merlinian prophecies predict a return to eminence for St. David’s, which again, Gerald uses without directly referring to it. The \textit{Vita Merlini} proposes that a king “shall rebuild the walls of St. David’s and shall bring back to her the pall lost for many years” (9). Gerald’s Welsh texts clearly express this desire and possibility, but that it will be “extremely difficult for it ever to recover its former position, except perhaps by some fundamental upheaval and revolution in human affairs” (\textit{Journey} 166). Even without the archbishopric, Gerald notes that Welsh bishops continued to be consecrated at St. David’s until “the final subjugation of Wales by Henry I” (162). So, these Merlinian prophecies are powerful for Gerald’s message that St. David’s should or will rise to power again. The statement of ecclesiastical subjugation by the Anglo-Normans is presented through the sociopolitical colonization of Henry I over Wales and its people, which is entirely problematic for Gerald, though his particular concern is clearly the fall of St. David’s independence.

The result of Gerald’s modifications is the presentation of a tragedy of the loss of independence. His ambitions are revealed in light of his rewriting of an already false history. It is unclear whether or not Gerald actually believes in the history purported by\textsuperscript{31} Note that Gerald specifically writes here “we Welshmen” instead of “the Welshmen” (\textit{Journey} 162).
Geoffrey, but he apparently has no qualms about further modifying it for his own purposes.
CHAPTER FOUR: ANATOMY OF THE TALE

Just as a textual comparison between Gerald and Geoffrey’s texts demonstrated Gerald’s subtle manipulation of histories to develop a position for the Welsh church, so a textual analysis of the collected folklore can reveal Gerald’s struggle with the problem of Welsh identity and the seemingly irresolvable conflict of ecclesiastical power. Chapter 2 discussed the complexities of Gerald as author and Gerald as a character within the text of Journey. This conflict can be revealed in sharper focus with a discussion of the anecdotes in that text as well as a comparison of treatments of subject matter between the Welsh and Irish texts. There exists an inescapable similarity between the exoticizing of native people in both the Irish and the Welsh texts, but Gerald’s function as author changes significantly between them. While both reveal subjects perverted by bodily sin, which stimulates alienation and creates a strategic formation of the author as voyeur, Gerald also reveals himself as sympathetic to the Welsh and suggests potential redemption through ecclesiastical reform. Gerald’s choices of prefatory dedication are particularly revealing in this case.

Unlike the Irish texts, which have dedications to political leaders, the Welsh texts are dedicated entirely to ecclesiastical authorities including Archbishop Stephen of Canterbury and two other bishops. Gerald declares his dedication to Henry II for Topography to have “completely wasted my time” (Journey 67). Gerald clearly hopes for
some gain by this dedication: “when you have rewards to distribute [...] you can remember the men who are really worth encouragement, because they have served the cause of literature” (68-9). If the archbishop reads his account of “Wild Wales” then Gerald seems to think he will learn that Wales deserves Gerald as a worthy candidate for the bishopric of St. David’s.

In Book II, Chapter 11 of Journey, Gerald tells a local folktale of a woman who was born without hands.\(^{32}\) Rather than permitting her to suffer for her malady, “Nature in some sense compensated her for the defect” (Journey. 200). The woman was able to use her feet just as well as any other woman used her hands. Gerald writes that she could even sew and use a pair of scissors. What is interesting about this tale of a native Welsh woman is that there is no direct intervention from God or a saint. This is what Benedicta Ward would describe as a regular, natural miracle (3). The natural wonder of this tale highlights the humanism we might ascribe to Gerald’s collection. His genuine intellectual curiosity runs rampant throughout both the Welsh and Irish texts.

There were many written attempts in the twelfth century to examine and understand the mysteries of nature, since examining nature was a means of considering the miraculous. Gerald’s descriptions of nature in both Wales and Ireland afford the possibility of the miraculous in these orientalized spaces. Gerald quotes Saint Augustine in Journey as saying “miracles sent by Heaven are there to be wondered at, not argued about or discussed” (136). He follows this with a quote from Jerome: “You will find many things quite incredible and beyond the bounds of possibility which are true for all

\(^{32}\) Journey, 200
that. Nature never exceeds the limits set by God who created it” (136). So, Gerald is arguing that the study of nature’s wonders is not a secular activity, but an examination of the powers of God. Benedicta Ward pointed out in her book *Miracles and the Medieval Mind* that Gerald’s texts are in fact primarily concerned with miracles and that they are divided into three sections: marvels of nature, works of man, and the miracles of saints (8). Indeed, where Gerald exoticizes his subject, he does so with a sense of wonder. His contemporaries are right to suggest that Gerald will write down anything that captures his attention and that he was just as willing to hand out copies of his manuscripts to anyone considered potentially useful but that attitude does not necessarily point to triviality.

Encapsulated within a discussion of the folklore as problematic in the division between Welsh identity and ecclesiastical power is the development of Gerald’s understanding of the miraculous and the importance of marvel to that context. Augustine of Hippo classified the division of types of miracles. The logic that led to these divisions is as follows: the first miracle was God’s creation of the world, the second was the resurrection of Christ. If the creation of the world is a miracle, then all subsequent natural events within that world are also miraculous by virtue of being a part of the initial miracle. As man developed and matured, he grew accustomed to the daily miracle of life and therefore needed something more startling and awe inspiring to reinvigorate his reverence for God’s powers. If nature is mundane, then these new, provoking miracles must be contrary to nature. Gerald describes this phenomenon in his *Topography*: “For human nature is so made that only what is unusual and infrequent excites wonder or is regarded as of value” (42). Gerald posits the example of the rising and setting sun, which
he describes as beautiful and “worthy of wonder,” but it is a phenomenon of the every day. “When, however, an eclipse of the sun takes place, everyone is amazed – because it happens rarely” (Topography 42). These new miracles are often manifest in the presence of saints or the relics of saints. Therefore, Augustine stated that there were three levels of wonder:

1) wonder provoked by the acts of God that are visible daily and discerned by the wise men as signs of God’s goodness;

2) wonder provoked in the ignorant; and

3) wonder provoked by the genuine miracles, unusual manifestations of the power of God, not contra naturam, but praeter naturam or supra naturam.

Anselm of Canterbury built upon this foundation laid by Augustine of Hippo in his De Conceptu Virginis. Anselm identified the categories produced by Augustine and further narrowed them by considering the differences in God causing marvels and miracles within nature intentionally and the incidental occurrence of voluntary miracles of saints and men or even certain spiritual creatures. The newly defined categories set by Anselm are mirabilis, the miraculous (of God alone), and voluntarius, the voluntary (by the will of a creature according to the power of God).

The renewed interest in Aristotle further narrowed the medieval criteria for mirabilia. Aristotle’s scientific work suggested the analysis of secondary causes for events previously considered miraculous. Writers such as Adelard of Bath utilized this

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33 This breakdown was listed in Benedicta Ward’s Miracle and the Medieval Mind, p. 4.
analysis to explain away many natural phenomena such as thunder in his text

*Quaestiones Naturalis*. Ward writes that Adelard was “convinced that recourse to miracle as an explanation was a last resort” (7). However, if we hold Augustine of Hippo’s qualifying standards for mirabilia, then Gerald holds sufficient defense for his study of the animals and natural phenomena of Wales and Ireland. It could be said that Gerald was simply studying and memorializing that which was a part of God’s great miracle.

Gerald authorizes a perspective of the miraculous, which allows him to both preserve these superstitions, bestiary records, and miracles and utilize them for potential gain. Julia M.H. Smith’s description of Wrdisten’s writings\(^\text{34}\) is surprisingly applicable to a discussion of Gerald’s texts. Smith writes that the work was a “web of self-conscious literary artifice” which functions like a patchwork quilt, “a traditional pattern constructed out of fragments of older cloth, each with its own particular history and resonances” which compounds into a new, unique work (318). As stated in earlier chapters, Gerald was significantly preoccupied with the eminence and independence of the see of St. David’s. St. David’s means many things for Gerald; it represents a family heritage, the potential for ecclesiastical reform, the possibility of an independent Welsh church, and an identification of the unique indigenous Christian tradition that could be categorized as Welsh. In order to achieve independence and a realization of his reformatory goals, Gerald had to exoticize his subject matter. So, he must situate himself as a character in

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\(^\text{34}\) Wrdisten was a ninth century Breton abbot who collected and composed hagiographic texts such as the *Vita Winwaloei*. Smith cites in her footnote 30: Wrdisten, *Vita Winwaloei*. 2.13, ed. C. D. S. [Charles de Smedt], “Vita S. Winwaloei primi abbatis Landevenecensis auctore Wurdestino nunc primum integra edita,” *Analecta Balladiana* 7 (1888), 167-264.
_Journey_ as a part of the Anglo-Norman entourage into Wales, which gives way to an artificially voyeuristic narrative through which he collects and shares the folklore. Gerald applies sly civility by aligning himself with his Anglo-Norman audience in order to qualify himself for the bishopric of St. David’s. There may have been a clash between the traditional Welsh values and Gregorian reforms, “as well as Welsh unease about Norman efforts to subdivide and move the bodies of Welsh saints” (Smith 339).^{35} Gerald often complains in his texts of the trouble he had as a Welshman because Canterbury would not appoint him for that reason. (And conversely, he had trouble schooling the Welsh clergy towards reform because he was too Norman.) However, Gerald as author irredeemably reveals himself as sympathetically Welsh, which hinders his entire effort.

As stated in the introduction, previous analysis has suggested that Gerald was ‘too Welsh’ to ever be appointed bishop of St. David’s. This was even Gerald’s rationalization of his predicament. Gerald’s uncle David, an earlier bishop of St. David’s, was half-Welsh and therefore genetically more Welsh than Gerald, yet he was the bishop of St. David’s for many years and was appointed by the Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical authority. Analysis of the folklore discussed in this chapter shows that Gerald inadvertently connected himself closely to his subject matter and tapped into the xenophobia of the subjugator, thus inciting further alienation and subjugation of both Gerald and the Welsh

^{35} Note in Bede’s account of the seven Welsh bishops and Augustine the resistance of the Welsh bishops to acquiesce to such reforms as “to keep Easter at the proper time; to perform the sacrament of baptism, whereby we are born again to God, according to the rites of the holy Roman apostolic Church; and to preach the word of the Lord to the English people” (73). Bede’s Augustine specifically tells the Welsh bishops, “You do many things which are contrary to our customs or rather the customs of the universal Church” (73).
people. Gerald reconfigures boundaries of language, religion, and culture between Canterbury and the Welsh Church, as well as negotiating the ethnic boundaries of the Anglo-Normans and the Welsh ultimately to no advantage for himself.

The Welsh texts can be difficult to pin down in terms of Gerald’s definitive stance between the Anglo-Normans and the Welsh because a multitude of relationships and interactions are at play. The frame of Anglo-Norman voyeurism imposed on the folklore itself, particularly in *Journey*, alienates the Welsh Church by revealing what is inherently different and non-conformist about the practice and their treatment of saints. Gerald centers himself by his alignment with the ecclesiastical authority through the foray into descriptions of Welsh marvels. This positions the Welsh people as Other and their treatment of relics as foreign.

It is well known and recorded that Celtic saints’ miracles revolve around secondary relics such as bells, staffs, and psalters (Smith 326). A Celtic ambivalence toward corporeal relics attested by the non-Latin oral tradition demonstrates a key difference from the saints’ cults of other contemporary societies and points to an indigenous Christianity that differs from the others. Robert Bartlett defines a secondary relic such as a saint’s bell, staff, or psalter as “a physical object which encapsulated both the past event and the present power” (119). Analysis of reliquary miracles in Gerald’s Welsh texts points to that indigenous Christian custom which was in place before the arrival of the Normans and still persisted in the oral folkloric tradition. Gerald’s discomfort with the pagan qualities of this Welsh Christianity is apparent through his quest for reform and his Anglo-Norman-styled voyeurism.
This native Celtic ambivalence toward discomfort regarding corporal relics extends to any sort of separation of the body. Notice that Gerald does not provide for any accounts of saints' body parts, which have been separated from the rest of their body. Andrew Evans suggests that this is a common concern of the Celtic people, including the Bretons, Irish, Scottish, and Welsh. In Book II, Chapter 8 of Gerald's Journey he describes Baldwin's entourage's encounter with the tombs of Owain Gwynedd, a Welsh king, and Cadwaladr at the Cathedral of Bangor (192). Thomas Becket had excommunicated Owain Gwynedd for public incest. Gerald writes that the "Bishop of Bangor was therefore ordered to watch for an opportunity of removing his body from the cathedral and to do this as quickly as possible." (192). This statement suggests timidity on the part of the ecclesiastical authority at the possibility of crossing a powerful native family (Gwynedd). This anecdote can be read multiple ways. First, there is an ambivalence about the body. One concern is to remove the whole of the body from its tomb in the double vault, which is situated "by the high altar" in the cathedral (192). In terms of physical space, the Welsh vice pertaining to superstitious regard for corporeal relics is tied into the spiritual space and is close to the altar itself. Then there is the fact that the ecclesiastical authority appears afraid or anxious about removing the body. Owain Gwynedd was one of the chief Welsh kings forced to do fealty to the Anglo-

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36 See also the account of unearthing King Arthur's remains in Speculum Ecclesiae. Gerald hints in that narrative that the Bretons feared the Saxons would disturb the corpse. He writes, "Remarkable indeed was the industry and exquisite prudence of the men of that era, who, by all their exertions, wished to hide forever the body of so great a man, their lord, and the patron of that region, from the danger of sudden disturbance." He also describes the space as a "holy burial-ground" (Speculum Cap. IX).

37 Gerald refers to him as "the blessed martyr Thomas" (192).
Norman crown and yield territory (Lieberman 25). So, politically, the Bishop of Bangor would be in a difficult position if he carelessly removed the body. It is also interesting that it was Thomas Becket, not the pope, who excommunicated Owain. An Archbishop of Canterbury was the one to excommunicate this native Welsh lord, so there is evidence here of ecclesiastical subjugation. Canterbury as an authority ousted Owain from the realm of heaven and now the Bishop of Bangor, Gwion, must complete this act of colonial eradication. This act functions as transgressive both ecclesiastically and politically; no wonder the bishop must do it “as quickly as possible” (192).

Gerald participates in this form of transgression during his journey with the Archbishop Baldwin. At Shrewsbury, Gerald states “We also excommunicated Owain Cyfeiliog, because he alone of all the Welsh princes had made no move to come with his people to meet the Archbishop” (Journey 202). Gerald further states that Owain was “much more fluent in speech than the other Welsh princes” and that he had often “espoused the cause of Henry II, King of the English, so that he had become a close friend of that King” (Journey 202-3). By “speech,” Gerald of course means Norman French. So, Owain Cyfeiliog was a Welsh native who willingly subjugated himself and his lands to the rule of Henry II. Those actions parallel Gerald’s participation in the oppression of Wales by both Canterbury and Henry II. That makes it even more interesting that Gerald participates in the excommunication of Owain. Note that it is not just Baldwin doing the excommunication. Gerald specifically writes “We” (202). Here Gerald performs the role of colonizer and ousts, curiously, a Welsh lord already subservient to the rule of Henry II. Therefore, Gerald is participating in the alterity of the
secular rule by asserting the overarching dominance of ecclesiastical power. Gerald further hammers home this point with an anecdote about a conversation between Henry II and Owain:

With the King’s eyes on him, Owain immediately broke the loaf into portions, as if it were Communion bread. He spread the pieces out in a row [...] picked them up one at a time and went on eating until they were all finished. Henry asked him what he thought he was doing. ‘I am imitating you, my lord,’ answered Owain. In this subtle and witty way, he was alluding to the well-known avariciousness of the King, who had the habit of keeping church benefices vacant for as long as possible so that he could enjoy the revenues (Journey 203).

Gerald hints here that Henry II is manipulating his power over the churches for profit. This just strengthens his point in excommunicating a willing Welsh follower of Henry II; the king might have control over earthly riches, but Gerald holds the power to oust men from the realm of heavenly riches.

Gerald contrasts Henry II’s irreverence toward the role of ecclesiastical power with a quotation from Owain Gwynedd: “By what [the English] have done they have alienated him. [...] Let us accordingly promise God devoutly that from this moment on we will pay greater reverence and honour than ever before to all churches and holy places” (202). Here Gerald is establishing the Welsh treatment of their churches in contrast to the Anglo-Norman treatment of not only the Welsh churches, but also the ecclesiastical power. Remember that a key goal for Gerald was ecclesiastical reform, a part of which included removing the secular authority from the realm of God. While the Concordat of London (1107) officially revoked lay investiture, the king could still give to and take away from the Church both land and properties. So, in a text where Gerald often
depicts the Welsh as a sinful people, it is meaningful to note his decision to have a sinful Welsh king\textsuperscript{38} state the Welsh intent to treat the churches with respect and devotion.

An unusual example of the commingling of native Welsh folklore with Christianity occurs in Book I, Chapter 8 of \textit{Journey}. Most of the folktale in the collection of \textit{Journey} are short and pertain specifically to either saints or relics or more malevolent creatures such as demons or sinning humans. This particular folktale reads more like a benevolent fairytale. It concerns the boyhood of a Welsh priest named Elidyr and his unusual encounter with another world populated by "tiny men [...] not bigger than pigmies" (133). Elidyr frequents their world through a "dark underground tunnel" (134). Elidyr makes the mistake of stealing a golden ball from their world to take to his mother, so the tiny men follow him and take back the ball. Elidyr felt so ashamed that he wished to make amends, but "when he came to where the underground passage had been there was no entry to be found" (135). Gerald chooses to not question the authenticity of this story, stating "If I reject it, I place a limit on God’s power, and that I will never do" (136). He does suggest that he cannot necessarily accept Elidyr’s story as true, but that he would not rule out the possibility. Gerald cites Augustine to back up his reasoning. This attitude is characteristic of the blending of Welsh superstition and Christian belief and would perhaps alienate the reader by setting the Welsh as different and sympathetic. In this case, Gerald also differentiates himself from the conformity of Anglo-Norman Christian customs. Curiously, Lewis Thorpe notes in this edition that the story of Elidyr

\textsuperscript{38} Owain Gwynedd married his first cousin and was excommunicated by Thomas Becket.
appears in multiple modern collections of Welsh fairytales and folktales.\textsuperscript{39} So, this type of superstition continues to maintain popularity far beyond Gerald's lifetime though it shifts from commingling with Christian customs to being collected with legendary material.

It is important to consider the weight given to St. David's in Gerald's Welsh texts in light of the ecclesiastical hierarchy conflict that he spends so much of his life fighting. The mirabilia on display are generally distanced from Canterbury, but to what extent are they in line with the sanctioned miracles of Rome and the pope? There is a certain hybridity attributable to these miracles that incorporates Celtic Christian tropes, the expectations of Roman Christian tradition, the Classical treatises such as those written by Augustine of Hippo, and the more contemporary Anselm of Canterbury. The \textit{Black Book of Caermarthen} was collected during the reign of Henry II, which suggests that the intellectual elite of the day (to which Gerald must surely have belonged)\textsuperscript{40} was aware of the content of this manuscript. It seems likely that there are echoes of this traditional, vernacular Welsh text in Gerald's \textit{Journey} and \textit{Description} because of the folk nature of his collection which is highly inclusive, if also revisionist, of Celtic materials.

The text of \textit{Journey} reveals a division between Gerald as author and Gerald as the character and member of Archbishop Baldwin's entourage. This subtle division allows Gerald to include the elements of Welsh Christian tradition above while also distancing


\textsuperscript{40} Gerald was educated at the university in Paris and served as chaplain and clerk in Henry II's court.
himself from it. Gerald as the author of *Journey* manipulates his position as a character by establishing an image of himself as unrelenting supporter of Canterbury and the Crusade. This is why the moment of opposition, discussed in the Introduction of this study, found in Book I, Chapter 1 was so important. Gerald the character recedes into the background of this passage because he is included as part of Archbishop Baldwin’s entourage, which gives Gerald as the author room to stress the importance of St. David’s and the “great harm and damage” that would be done “to the standing of the metropolitan see” (77) if setting out a conclusive image of a staunch supporter of the overarching ecclesiastical power allows Gerald to subversively generate a case for the independence of the Welsh church.

Returning to the issue of language skills addressed in Chapters 1-2 of this study, an informed reading of the dichotomy between author and character makes sense of Gerald’s claim that he cannot speak Welsh. Gerald the character sermonizes to the native Welsh “first in Latin, and then in French” (*Journey* 141). Conversely, Gerald as the author and narrator supplies his reader with Welsh etymologies, such as his explanation of the name Llanhonddu (97). Lewis Thorpe suggests that Gerald used the language “when speaking to the Welsh princes” and that if Gerald was fluent, “he was very careful to avoid admitting it” (Thorpe 29). So, the Gerald in the text does not appear to speak any Welsh. Having that fluency would be problematic for his ambitions. However, Gerald defines Welsh terms and place names throughout the text when it serves his interest on a particular topic. So, Gerald never admits to fluency, but he appears to be familiar with a
fair amount of the vocabulary. This familiarity only appears in the text when it serves Gerald’s interests.

This dichotomy between author and character allows Gerald to support the colonizing group in one paragraph and chastise it in the next paragraph. Gerald the character recruited many men for the Cross for Canterbury, while two paragraphs later he accuses their Anglo-Norman colonizers of “behaving so vindictively and submitting the Welsh to such shameful treatment” (142). As long as Gerald cultivates his character as formally backing Archbishop Baldwin and his endeavors, Gerald has room as the narrator not only to discuss folktales unique to Wales, but also to criticize both Canterbury and the monarchy. Separating the character from the narrator appears to be the only viable option for reconciling two very different attitudes in the text of Journey.

Gerald’s role as the author and narrator is vastly different in the Irish texts because, as narrator, he embodies the allegiances of Gerald as the character in Journey. The Irish texts lack that defensive stance of a native people and their church. Instead, Gerald emphasizes the Otherness of the Irish in a way that is both reductive and similar to the position he takes as the character in Archbishop Baldwin’s entourage. Comparative analysis of the two sets of texts yields an understanding of Gerald’s sympathy for his Welsh subject. While the Irish and Welsh texts are in terms of subject matter similar, Gerald is, in the Irish texts, as opposed to the Welsh texts, unambiguously the colonizer.

Critics such as Asa Simon Mittman and Michelle Brown look to Irish marvels for their discussions of alienation and postcolonial discourse. It is clearly more straightforward to think of Gerald as an agent of colonization within this context because
he holds no allegiance to the Irish native people he describes as “secret and distant
freaks” (Topography 31). Gerald’s unmitigated fascination with the unusual Irish is not
held back by any familiarity of its people or clergy. Even the manuscripts contain exotic
images of hybrid creatures and oddities, which are treated as spectacles through the lens
of colonizing voyeur. 41 The marginal illustrations of NLI MS 700, circa 1200, depict such
monstrosities as bestiality, a bearded woman, and murder. For example, folio 39 depicts
Gerald’s description of the rite of initiation of a new Irish king in which he commits
bestiality with a mare and then immediately the horse is killed and boiled in water. The
king bathes in that water and drinks of the “broth.” Gerald concludes from this event,
“When this unrighteous rite has been carried out, his kingship and dominion have been
conferred” (110). Gerald does not actually witness this event, but interprets that which
has been described to him, applying his preconceived notions to the barbarous act.
Edward Said’s descriptions of the relationship between occidental and oriental can be
more easily superimposed on Gerald’s relationship to his subject in these Irish works if
we reverse the West/East dichotomy along which that relationship rests. The position that
ultimately ties together the Welsh and Irish texts is Gerald’s stance as man of the Church
first, before his position as either participant in the colonial power or as Welsh.

As an example of Gerald’s ecclesiastical positioning, the division between secular
power and saint’s power is presented in an interesting case of banishment, which occurs
in Part 2, Caption 78 of Gerald’s Topography. A presumably Anglo-Norman soldier takes
the land of the Irish Saint Finbar “without the assent of the person in charge” and then

41 See Appendix A for some of these images from the National Library of Ireland MS
700, circa 1200.
attempts to grow wheat on his stolen property (89). The bishop of Cork came to the soldier “invoking God and the saints of his church” to prohibit the soldier from “forcibly occupying or sowing that land any more” (89). When the bishop beseeches God to prevent any harvest, his prayer is answered in the form of a miracle, “not a single ear grew in those fields, not any blade, nor grain” (89). So, an Irish bishop thwarts the secular power of the soldier by invoking divine justice and thereby causing a miracle. This is another example of the Church triumphing over the political or military power. Of course, this occurs in the context of Gerald’s participation in a mission of conquest in Ireland. Within that framework, Gerald as recorder of this miracle acts as an intermediary for the benefit of the Church – not the royal conquerors. He specifically states that this miracle could be attributed to the “merits of the holy man” (89). It is unclear where or through what means Gerald heard this miracle, though it is recorded that he did visit Cork. It could be that he heard it directly from the bishop of Cork through a translator, which could mean some exaggeration in ecclesiastical solidarity. This miracle narrative is clearly to the benefit of the church, not the lay authorities.

However, Gerald does offer this commentary on Irish saints:

This seems to me a thing to be noticed that just as the men of this country are during this mortal life more prone to anger and revenge than any other race, so in eternal death the saints of this land that have been elevated by their merits are more vindictive than the saints of any other region (Topography 91).

This is a curious statement in light of the Welsh saints’ miracles that involve loss of sight and speech, or the problem of adhering to a relic. The statement specifically exoticizes the Irish and their saints by portraying them as barbarous natives quick to anger. He
suggests that the Irish are different in a way that the Welsh are not, perhaps countering the perceived exoticism of the Welsh in this way as an appeal to the Anglo-Norman authorities (specifically Henry II, to whom the Topography is dedicated). Gerald is humanizing the Welsh by contrast. His preface to Topography compares Ireland to “the countries of the East” and suggests Ireland is fascinating for its “secret and distant freaks” (31). So, this construction of Ireland situates it as a place both distant and unfamiliar, which suggests that Wales, by contrast, is close and familiar. Wales has already, to some extent, been colonized and textually dehumanized. The contrast suggests that the Irish are more barbarous than the Welsh.

A Welsh local superstition regarding corpses is found in Book II, Chapter 1 of Journey. Gerald describes it as both an “age-old legend” and a “heathen superstition” (168). This legend pertains to a stone called Llech Lafar (“the Talking Stone”) which served as a bridge over the River Alun, which is a body of water that “marks the boundary of the cemetery” on the northern side of St. David’s cathedral. Gerald records that “when a corpse was being carried across it, [Llech Lafar] burst into speech and in the effort split down the middle, the crack still being visible today” (Journey 168). This superstition caused the native Welsh to stop attempting to cross with a corpse. This ambivalence is clearly particular to this region, but may tie into the wider Celtic ambivalence of corpses.

The river specifically borders the cathedral’s cemetery, so there exists here a proximity to the church. The conflation of superstition and religion appears to be at work when a Welsh woman in Gerald’s anecdote about Henry II’s visit to Wales calls upon
Llech Lafar for vengeance rather than some divine justice from a Christian god. Gerald writes that she shouted in Henry II’s presence, “Revenge us today, Llech Lafar! Revenge the whole Welsh people on this man” (167). While this petition to a pagan object is abrasively reactionary to colonial power and dismissive of divine justice, it also situates the acrimonious natives as a people possibly receptive to a Welsh ecclesiastical influence by contrast to their obvious aversion to the Anglo-Norman authorities. Considering the Welsh Church’s divergence on various ecclesiastical policies, it is situated to be more accommodating to local superstition. Therefore, this anecdote is another story that supports, if not an independent Welsh church, then at least Gerald’s bid for the see of St. David’s.

The story of the Welsh woman and Llech Lafar brings up another point of interest. Gerald writes that “She repeated the well-known fiction and prophecy of Merlin” which pertains to an English king who has conquered Ireland and will die as he walks across Llech Lafar (Journey 167). Lewis Thorpe does not offer a reference for this prophecy nor does it appear in either Geoffrey’s Historia or Vita Merlini. Either Gerald fabricated this “well-known fiction” or there was an apparently common Welsh source for it. Alternatively, Merlinian prophecies could be common fodder for local folklore. Given Gerald’s interest in recording all manner of folklore, the source of this prophecy is uncertain.

There is an interesting account of corporeal ambivalence in Gerald’s Topography, Section II, Caption 39, which is titled “An island where human corpses exposed in the open do not putrefy” (61). This island was consecrated by Saint Brendan, and is therefore
tied to a Celtic saint like the relics discussed above. Rather than burying the corpses, the inhabitants place them “in the open” where they “remain without corruption” (61). Could this island be considered a form of relic? It would certainly be a secondary relic. It functions like a relic and fits the qualifications: it was consecrated by a saint and performs post-mortem miracles regularly. The saint is Irish and the folktale contains the requisite ambivalence about corpses.

Gerald refers to another such island in Wales called Ynys Enlili which was occupied by “some extremely devout monks” (Journey 183). He suggests that the reason the men on this island don’t die of disease (only of old age) is “through some miracle occasioned by the merits of the holy men who lived there” (184). A translation of the name of this group of holy monks, “Coelipes,” suggests that Gerald perhaps attributes their longevity to celibacy (183). Part of Gerald’s suggested reforms is enforced celibacy for the clergy. These men are particularly holy because they presumably adhere to more principles than just celibacy. In other words, their long lives could be construed as miraculous and owing to their devout nature. Although there is no indication given that they are not buried when they die.

The subsequent two miracles discussed involve Celtic saints (Cynog and Patrick – Welsh and Irish, respectively) and secondary relics, a torque and a horn. Violating the torque of Saint Cynog caused a man permanent blindness. Violating the horn of Saint Patrick caused a priest named Bernard permanent muteness and a loss of memory. Gerald recounts Bernard’s impairment from first hand memory. So, here we have accounts of two Celtic saints and their relics, neither of which are corporeal. Gerald also mentions the
danger of swearing oaths on these relics, which is another peculiarly Celtic reliquary problem. Oath-breaking is a serious infraction. What is curious in the comparison of these miracles with the two Anglo-Norman ones that precede them is the definitive power of the saints in question. The Anglo-Norman figures rectify their situations in prayer and repentance. The two Celtic men are doomed to disabilities for the remainder of their lives. There is no mention from Gerald of a resumption of their faculties nor is there any mention of repentance. What commentary might Gerald be offering his audience here? The wildman native Welshman refuses to repent his sins?

Gerald discusses the problem of Celtic Christian tradition in the next paragraph:

The common people, and the clergy, too, not only in Ireland and Scotland, but also in Wales, have such a reverence for portable bells, staffs, crooked at the top and encased in gold, silver or bronze, and other similar relics of the saints, that they are more afraid of swearing oaths upon them and then breaking their word than they are upon the Gospels. The reason is that, from some occult power with which they are gifted as if by God, and from vengeance of the particular saint in whose sight they are particularly pleasing, those who scorn them are punished severely, and those who break their word live to rue the day (Journey 87).

In this paragraph, Gerald specifically identifies the “common people” of the Celtic fringe territories and their usage of secondary, tangible relics. Gerald calls into question the ethics of oath-making upon these relics by attributing the danger in them to an “occult power with which they are gifted as if by God” (87). Despite his clearly first-hand knowledge of these occurrences, Gerald syntactically separates himself from these “common people” as a learned man of the Church and politically by situating himself as an invader of the Celtic space rather than an inhabitant. This position gives Gerald power over his subject and refers himself as a reliable source to his reader. Gerald calls into

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42 Emphasis added.
question the practices of the people and their clergy for their hybrid Christian superstition that might not be sanctioned entirely by Canterbury or Rome. Gerald is the observer rather than the practitioner here. Gerald had a clear interest in ecclesiastical reform, and pursued this issue for most of his career. By setting up the native recipient of divine punishment as not recovering, Gerald again establishes himself as authoritative while also demonstrating that he is knowledgeable of the prevalent sins of the Welsh, which require some punishment and reform. This interest in reform seems to have been a likely motive behind his desire for the bishopric of St. David’s. The other notable division at work in this paragraph is the problem Gerald identifies in the worship of objects over the Gospels. He links this problem with the aforementioned “occult power” invested in those objects. However, Gerald does not necessarily make a judgment against this Celtic application of reverence for secondary relics.

Ultimately, Gerald’s treatments of Irish and Welsh miracles are similar. He does frame the Irish material by his allegiance with the colonizer, both secular and ecclesiastical, but the exoticizing of Celtic Christianity in both cases reveals his fascination for all types of marvels. Gerald’s treatment of the Irish in Conquest and Topography does ultimately navigate the boundaries of colonizer and the colonized, firmly setting the Irish as decentralized Other. In the case of the Welsh texts, Gerald proposes a redemption of the native by means of ecclesiastical reform. His discussion of Bernard, the first Anglo-Norman bishop of St. David’s, sets the precedent for his

43 Note that the Concordat of London, 1107 was supposed to put the issue of lay investiture to an end by separating the secular and ecclesiastical powers of the king. Henry I gave up the right to invest bishops and abbots, but reserved the custom of homage.
argument that the Welsh people need a Welsh bishop installed at St. David’s. Gerald states that almost all Anglo-Norman bishops in Wales long to return to England, which is why Bernard “alienated much of the land held by his church without either advantage to himself or profit to anyone else” (Journey 165). Throughout Journey and Description, Gerald develops an argument for his appointment to St. David’s by cultivating lines of reasoning for the independence of the Welsh church, an archbishopric for St. David’s, and the value of Welsh Christian tradition. Each of these issues is addressed in such a way as to alienate the Welsh from Canterbury and inevitably exoticizes Gerald too.

Like his treatments of Merlin, discussed in Chapter 3 of this study, Gerald recounts several tales of the soothsayer Meilyr.44 Due to an unfortunate encounter with a monster, Meilyr “became quite mad” and when he was healed at St. David’s, was gifted with the ability to see demons and foretell the future (116). Meilyr’s encounters with demons led him to be able to identify the sins of sinners. Gerald suggests that Meilyr possessed “some supernatural sort of physical vision” and compares his ability to Belshazzar in the Book of Daniel (120). Meilyr’s abilities, according to Gerald, were generally accepted and utilized for prophecy. The comparable Merlin tales in Gerald’s texts pointed our God’s ability to talk through any man, whether Christian or pagan. The Meilyr tales fit that frame too. Despite his powers stemming from the appearance of demons, some Welshmen accepted his prophecies. This unusual practice might not be considered acceptable for an archbishop of Canterbury and certainly is not a miracle by the traditional standard established by Augustine and Anselm. While it could be

44 Meilyr is the Welshman who was accosted by demons when Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniæ was placed in his lap (Journey 117).
considered *contra naturam*, using demons as sources of prophetic power reduces the resulting prophecies to the words of demons.

The dedications of the Welsh and Irish texts reveal the particularly ecclesiastical argument set out in the Welsh texts. Both *Topography* and *Conquest* are dedicated to secular institutions of power. Scholars often remark upon the Topography dedication because Gerald defines himself as “Silvester to Henry the Second, Illustrious King of the English” (30). Gerald not only defines himself in terms of the secular power, but aligns himself with the legendary Merlin and thus proposes a unique relationship, which would bring him closer to the Henry II as a colonizing person of power. The Welsh texts, on the other hand, are dedicated to Archbishop Stephen of Canterbury.\(^{45}\) The whimsical reference to Merlin is gone because there is nothing to be gained by making that connection for an ecclesiastical audience. That would be too exotic and suggestive of the wrong kind of relationship. Gerald does not want to present himself as an advisor and subject to his ecclesiastical audience, but rather as an equal worthy of the bishopric.

\(^{45}\) Other manuscript versions include dedications to William of Longchamp, Bishop of Ely and Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln. This suggests that the intended audience for the Welsh texts was always primarily an ecclesiastical one.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Gerald’s career ends with apparent disappointment and bitterness, despite the volume and popularity of his works. The first sentence in his prefatory dedication to Archbishop Stephen states: “Just as in our daily habits we are affected by new circumstances and by fresh ideas, so are the minds of men influenced by their various life-patterns” (Journey 63). It is clearly suggested in this preface that Archbishop Stephen should be influenced by the ideas espoused in Journey as well as by the experiences of Archbishop Baldwin within the text itself. The texts of both Journey and Description are geared towards an examination of the problematic subaltern and the relationship between the English Church, as active colonizer, and the Welsh, as passive colonized within this hegemonic system. As discussed in chapters one and two, Gerald as a character in the text is problematically Welsh to an extent that was never established for his uncle, who was in fact genetically more Welsh and yet appointed bishop of St. David’s.

Gerald as author shapes an argument in both texts for ecclesiastical reform and his intended role in that reform as a candidate for the bishopric. Gerald functionally exoticizes himself to his intended readership by demonstrating the value of native Welsh mirabilia and folklore. Collection of that folklore is performed as textual voyeurism and an act of colonization because Gerald as author participates in typifying an image of the native Welsh. The collection, which like the Irish works minimizes and orientalizes his
subject, builds on the esteem of St. David’s by revealing an eminent history separate from the authoritative reach of Canterbury. On the one hand, Gerald exoticizes the Welsh people, their religion, and superstition. On the other hand, Gerald makes an argument for their independence from Canterbury. This textual stance is threatening to the establishment of Canterbury in particular and Anglo-Norman authority in general.

Comparison of the Welsh and Irish texts reveals the different relationships Gerald had with power figures and the ways in which those relationships changed. In all four texts, Gerald constructs a position of authority over the colonized, which strategically shifts his authorial position to alignment with the colonizer, though this position is less effective in his own backyard (Wales). Simon During, a cultural studies theorist, defines the term “hegemony” as describing “relations of domination which are not visible as such. It involves not coercion but consent on the part of the dominated (or ‘subaltern’), in part by appealing to their real material interests” (During 4). Said’s *Orientalism* synonymously sets out this term within the hegemonic context of the voyeuristic gaze on the Orient. Gerald wrote within a hegemonic system and actively participated from within its confines with that never-ending hope of attaining the bishopric of St. David’s so he might enact real reform. This problem causes the Welsh texts to carry a distinctive tension that is lacking both in *Topography of Ireland* and *The Conquest of Ireland* because this internal conflict is not relevant to the conquest and subsequent colonization of a foreign people unknown to Gerald. Gerald acted as liaison in that encounter with the Other in a way wholly different from his function as a member of Archbishop Baldwin’s
entourage in Wales. In Ireland, Gerald accumulated knowledge as a kind of ethnographic voyeur.

Robert Bartlett suggests that Gerald’s ambiguous position between cultures and powers enabled him to write as he did. “His experience of a divided society stimulated his powers of observation – ethnographic consciousness springs, by definition, from an awareness of difference” (Bartlett 2006, 173). Gerald left the hybrid space of the Marches for an ecclesiastical education in Paris. That education, in turn, led Gerald to the opportunity to participate in Henry II’s court and even tutor the young princes Richard and John. This job as tutor is actually a considerable position of power by method of influencing young men who will eventually hold the ultimate political power, though it does Gerald little net good in the end. When Gerald returns to the Celtic space, it is as colonizer and learned ethnographer. The Irish texts reveal an author who operates as a foreigner in an alien space, though neither text functions as much of a travel narrative as the Journey through Wales.

Just as it was important to compare Gerald’s Welsh and Irish texts, this study also considered textual comparisons between the works of Gerald and Geoffrey of Monmouth. Chapter three demonstrated that this analysis reveals not only Gerald’s complex textual relationships with his contemporaries but also the influence of Classical sources and native Welsh materials. Gerald clearly culled sections of histories from both Geoffrey and the Venerable Bede, but the ways in which he mobilizes these selections is far more interesting. His key selections from Geoffrey and Bede were moments of ecclesiastical history that demonstrated the importance of the Welsh Church and St. David’s, in
particular. This includes the selections regarding the seven Welsh bishops and Archbishop Augustine, the eminent history of St. David’s, and the death of the notable Arthur. Considering Gerald’s intended audience, these choices can be read as careful inducements to the colonizer. Gerald retools Geoffrey’s selections in a controlled way that would presumably be considered the most effective advertisements for his candidacy for the bishopric. Considering the “seven bishops” anecdote, Gerald walks a measured line between stances. As always, Gerald is very clearly the hybrid Other between two vastly different worlds and must diplomatically placate both in order to achieve his own ends. Not only is there a divide between Canterbury and the Welsh clergy, but also between the Church and the monarchy. Gerald manages to fall between these two groups too in his lifetime. Gerald’s autobiography *De Rebus* suggests that he exploits this split for the benefit of ecclesiastical and moral reform.

Direct analysis of Gerald’s collected folklore reveals his acceptance of Welsh cultural customs and his proximity to his sources. The native is cast as a sinner of the tangible body, but with a definitive respect for the Church. By constructing such an overt sinner as the Welshman, Gerald easily orientalizes the native and constructs the sinner as a spectacle subject in the folklore. In an act of subversion, the Welsh native saints’ miracles are framed against comparable Anglo-Norman *mirabilia*. The apparent conclusion is that these natives are Gerald’s people (the shepherd’s flock) and he should be the bishop who guides them to subservience and moral reform. The actual result of authorizing a view of the native, is that Gerald identifies himself to the audience as a part of that native group, or an overly sympathetic participant in that culture. The Irish texts
demonstrate a similar level of interest, minus the sympathetic subversion. Gerald has no direct reward to attain in Ireland, except the valuation of his family as proud participants in the colonizing process. There is no direct link of relationship with the native; it is probable that Gerald receives most of the stories in the Irish texts in translation. This is not to say that Ireland held no personal interest for Gerald, because he wrote extensively on its people, animals, and history. Gerald in fact describes the charms of Ireland in the context of the “marvels of the East” when he states: “the marvels of the West which, so far, have remained hidden away and almost unknown, may eventually find in me one to make them known even in these later days” (*Topography* 57). Gerald is not only fascinated by these marvels, but he also finds value in collecting them for manuscript material.

One major consequence of his efforts with both the Welsh and Irish texts is a sustained preservation of otherwise orally preserved folklore and marvels. The manuscripts contain enough unusual and interesting marvels to earn it many copies and translations. The manuscripts even appear translated in Middle English. Manufacturing and recording marvels that would be handed down through the generations might not have been a goal for Gerald, nor the preservation of folklore that would have otherwise been lost. The texts function clearly as products for material benefit, though we know that Gerald never gained the specific benefit he sought.

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46 Gerald states that he only wrote truths which could be verified by the “testimony of [his] own eyes, or that of reliable men found worthy of credence and coming from the districts in which the events took place” (*Topography* 57).

47 MS Trinity College, Dublin, E. 2. 31 (1425 CE); MS Rawlinson, B. 490, Bodleian Library (1440 CE)
APPENDIX

Scans from National Library of Ireland MS 700. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

Depicted: Image of an Irish bearded woman (Topography 72-3).
Depicted: Irish bestiality and the monstrous products of bestiality (Topography 73-6).
Depicted: The Irish rite of initiation for a new king (Topography 109-10).
Depicted: The Irish use of an axe as a weapon (Topography 107-8).
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CURRICULUM VITAE

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