

CONTESTED IDENTITIES IN DISCOURSES OF COLONIALISM AND CIVIL WAR:
RACE, GENDER, AND THE HUMAN/ANIMAL
IN TWELFTH-CENTURY ENGLAND AND WALES

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

In the century following the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, literary texts operated as a battleground upon which ethnically diverse, multilingual British writers fought to determine what British identity would ultimately become. Through a medieval postcolonial framework, in which power and resistance are represented in a bifurcated archive, this dissertation explores the textual methods which writers outside the ethnic and political centers of Anglo-Norman Britain used to contest a would-be hegemonic discourse of British identity. This discourse is kyriarchal, creating hierarchies of identity (racial, ethnic, and gendered) in order to establish biopolitical regulations benefiting the rising Anglo-Norman ruling class of Britain. My study reveals that the concept of race and the technique of racialization were integral parts of British discourse in the formative years of the high medieval period. For this period, the kyriarchal discourse is best represented in the Latin chronicle genre of the Anglo-Norman court to which modern scholars often look for master narratives of medieval Britain. as exemplified in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum* (*Deeds of the English Kings*), finished in 1127, and the anonymous *Gesta Stephani* (*Deeds of Stephen*). Indeed, each chapter illuminates how the historiographical genre seeks to rhetorically create an ethnically unified, patriarchal image of Britain.

Drawing evidence from texts across geographic, temporal, and linguistic lines, I demonstrate that writers throughout England and Wales strove to delineate the contours of British identity, drawing upon concepts of gender and species as well as race. The opening chapter presents several theories of race and outlines how medieval race has been theorized by modern scholarship. I look to Geoffrey of Monmouth's pseudo-historical chronicle, *De Gestis Britonum*, commonly known as *History of the Kings of the Britains* (1136), to show that Geoffrey represents British history as one of racial mutability, pointing toward the viability of

empire-building through ethnic hybridization. Although Geoffrey's massively popular text emphasizes racial plasticity, my second chapter shows that deep divisions between the Welsh and English continued throughout the medieval period. Through a reading of the stereotype of Welsh treacherousness as established by William and refuted in Welsh chronicles, I demonstrate that racialization was a key weapon of both Welsh and English historiography.

Much like Chapter 2, the third chapter zeroes in on a single aspect of medieval race. I argue that Anglo-Normans developed the technique of "animalization" by which they denigrated Welsh personhood as more animal than human, a portrayal countered by Welsh literary representations of the human/animal binary. This exploration shows that a species hierarchy has been a buttressing element of racial discourse in the West for over eight hundred years. In order to demonstrate that hierarchies of race and species are merely two elements of an emerging British kyriarchy, the final chapter offers a trans theorization of the Empress Matilda. Based upon denigrating descriptions of Matilda in the *Gesta Stephani*, and her multi-gendered self-representation in her royal seal, I theorize Matilda as a female king who did not cater to Anglo-Norman patriarchal expectations regarding female power. Ultimately, this dissertation traces several strands of medieval biopolitical and social regulations in order to argue for a much earlier appearance of a British kyriarchy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
CHAPTER 1: Race in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Matter of Britain	21
CHAPTER 2: Operating <i>Druy Duyll</i>: The Racialization of Treachery in the <i>Gesta regum Anglorum</i> and the <i>Brut y Tywysogion</i>.....	61
CHAPTER 3: Postcolonial Animacies in Middle Welsh and Anglo-Latin Literature.....	94
CHAPTER 4: Conceptualizing the Female King in Twelfth-Century England.....	134
Closing.....	175
Bibliography.....	181
Appendix: Movement of the Trope of Treachery: Extra-Textual Evidence of Transmission.....	202

INTRODUCTION

The Emergence of an “Attitude”

The advent of Norman presence in Britain and Ireland ushered in significant shifts not only in language and custom, but in the social matrices undergirding nearly every aspect of medieval British life. By “social matrices,” I mean the intersections of human classification systems based on corporeal (biopolitical) and cultural (social) identities. This dissertation attends to systems of race, gender, and species in the emerging literary traditions of Wales and England in the high medieval period, under the development of Anglo-Norman cultural and political authority in the British Isles. In many ways, this project responds to the issue raised by John Gillingham in 2000:

Twentieth century historians, above all Robert Bartlett and Rees Davies, have produced extremely illuminating analyses of the contemptuous attitude of self-consciously civilized peoples toward the more pastoral peoples on the fringes of twelfth century Europe, but they have not really traced the emergence of this attitude—though it seems to me one of the most important ideological developments in medieval Britain, one which was to shape much subsequent history.¹

¹ John Gillingham, *English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity, and Political Values* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2000), 27. Gillingham is referring most specifically to Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); R. R. Davies, “*Buchedd a moes y Cymry*: The Manners and Morals of the Welsh,” *Welsh History Review* 12 (1984-8): 155-79; R.R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest, The Experience of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales 1100-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); W.R. Jones, “England Against the Celtic Fringe: A Study in Cultural Stereotypes,” *Cahiers d’Histoire Mondiale / Journal of World History / Cuadernos de Historia Mundial* XIII: 1 (1971): 155-171; and Denis Bethell, “English Monks and Irish Reform in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” *Historical Studies* 8 (1971): 111-35.

Gillingham may understate his case here. Indeed, this project interprets the “contemptuous attitude” which shapes “much subsequent history” as medieval racism which sets a precedent for the racism in modern global empires. It must be acknowledged that my dissertation emerged in wide-ranging academic conversations about how Western culture narrates itself. My work on the long twelfth century is fundamentally couched in studies of race which span historical period. The realm of macrohistories of race belongs to Geraldine Heng, whose watershed *Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (2018) was published near the completion of this project, and whose *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (2004) inspired it. The aim of this project is more sharply focused, analyzing hostilities between the “civilized” and “uncivilized” in the formative, high medieval period in Britain. Conducting a narrower exploration of medieval race, as I do in this collection of microhistorical studies, allows for a deep exploration of a single racial dynamic and its unfolding over multiple genres and languages.

Following Gillingham’s call to action, scholars have worked through the phenomenon of anti-Welsh and anti-Irish rhetoric in Anglo-Norman literature. Michael Faletra’s *Wales and the Medieval Colonial Imagination: The Matters of Britain in the Twelfth Century* (2014) and Shirin Khanmohamadi’s *In Light of Another’s Word: European Ethnography in the Middle Ages* (2014), for instance, expose various European attitudes toward the “uncivilized” speakers of Celtic languages or Eastern “Other.” This project pushes Gillingham’s statement further, following postcolonial practices of allowing the colonized or subaltern to speak back to the master narrative—in this case, allowing the Welsh “other” to speak back to the master narrative of Anglocentric historiography which continues to dominate modern studies of medieval

history.² Not only must we unpack the development of the “contemptuous attitude” which Gillingham identifies, we must also show how the “uncivilized” speak back to these attitudes. Critique of the cultural and political hegemony of Anglo-Norman Britain constitutes insufficient understanding of our target of study. It is not enough to see the perspective of the colonizers; we must look to the colonized for a full understanding of how hierarchical social systems affect an entire culture.

The widespread lack of Celtic language training, however, critically impedes the progress of studying counter-colonial attitudes in Welsh-language texts. Few Celtic language programs exist in the world, let alone in the United States. Perhaps we should find it thoroughly unsurprising that colonialist residues, cultural and economic, continue to suppress educational access to languages of the colonized. In short, English-language literary scholars interested in medieval Wales have not typically had training in Middle Welsh. Welsh-speaking literary scholars typically focus on Welsh-specific texts and issues rather than multilingual or Anglo-Norman texts. Fortunately, this problem is being addressed on some fronts. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones’s edited collection, *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales* (2008) provided a much-needed foundation for English-language work on medieval Wales. At present Lindy Brady, Joshua Byron Smith, David Callander, and Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, and Georgia Henly are among those scholars conducting important multilingual studies on paths of exchange between England and Wales.³

² Gayatri Spivak’s watershed essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-316, is thus formative to the structural logic of this dissertation, as I discuss in “Methodology and Scope.”

³ David Callander, *Dissonant Neighbours: Narrative Progress in Early Welsh and English Poetry* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019); Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, “Writing Without Borders: Multilingual Content in Welsh Miscellanies from Wales, the Marches, and Beyond,” in *Insular Books: Vernacular Manuscript Miscellanies in Late Medieval Britain*, eds. Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 175-92; Lindy Brady, *Writing the Welsh borderlands*

At the outset, I would also like to clarify that this project does not attempt to address the large number of languages written and spoken in Britain in the high medieval period. In twelfth-century Wales and the Welsh Marches alone, one would have heard and seen Middle Welsh (with significant regional and dialect variances), Anglo-Norman French, early Middle English, Latin, and Middle Dutch. There would likely have been an Irish presence as well, if not through trade then via the early medieval Ogham stones dotting the Welsh countryside. For this project, I have chosen depth over breadth regarding British multilingualism and multiculturalism, hoping to fill gaps in our understanding about the Welsh and their relationship with their ever-encroaching neighbors in England.⁴

My work in this field addresses the generally neglected issue of race—a concept which carries inherent focus on hierarchical difference—in the dialectical development of British identity after the Norman conquest. I outline/illustrate/illuminate how the paths of exchange between England and Wales were fraught with racial tension, analyzing this tension from a postcolonial, critical race perspective. This dissertation began as a study of border-crossings and hybridization as a positive, even hopeful, phenomenon, drawing on the work of Gloria Anzaldúa’s *La Frontera/Borderlands*. However, the archive itself re-oriented this project’s

in Anglo-Saxon England (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2017); and Joshua Byron Smith, *Walter Map and the Matter of Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017). See also Robert Barrett’s work on Chester, specifically *Against All England: Regional Identity and Cheshire Writing: 1195-1656* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009) and “Leeks for Livery: Consuming Welsh Difference in the Chester Shepherds’ Play” in *Mapping the Medieval City: Space, Place, and Identity in Chester, c. 1200-1600*, ed. Catherine A.M. Clarke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), 184-210; and “Chester and Cheshire” in *Europe: A Literary History 1348-1418*, ed. David Wallace, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

⁴ Another current project which I am pursuing is an expansion of my point in Chapter 1 that Geoffrey of Monmouth adapts events from the Flemish refugee crisis in 1153. Both William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum* and the *Brut y Tywysogion* record how Henry I resettled a group of Flemish refugees in England to south-west Wales in 1108. William notes that Henry cleverly purged his kingdom of a financial burden and established an outpost in Wales, allowing him to surveil the Welsh under the auspices of visiting his Flemish subjects. Today, it is not unheard of for south Walians to speculate about their ancient Flemish roots.

focus, directing me take a step backward, to see how hegemony and resistance engaged one another. Indigenous scholarship teaches us that hybridity is a useful tool of empire, as Jodi Byrd shows in *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (2011) and Sharon Kinoshita demonstrates for medievalists in “Translatio/n, empire, and the worlding of medieval literature: the travels of *Kalila wa Dimna*” (2008).⁵ The project’s early focus on hybridity, then, shifted to what may appear to be a deceptively old-fashioned focus on discrete, national literatures. Far from old-fashioned, this project is deeply concerned with rhetorical and literary interactions between Welsh and English literatures, however hostile those interactions may be, raising the timely issues of how and for whom hybridity is possible and useful. From one perspective, this project is deeply pessimistic, mining the medieval past for harmful biopolitical regulations which we see often in the modern world. However, narrating the long history of kyriarchy in Britain, a cultural touchstone for much of the world, contributes to ongoing projects of cultural recovery.

To clarify how I am using the weighty terms “Welsh,” “Celtic,” “English,” and “Anglo-Norman,” I distinguish between the different linguistic, literary, political, and geographical meanings of these identifiers. In truth, it is difficult to define these terms outside of the context in which they are deployed. The adjective “Welsh” may apply to a text written in one of the Welsh languages (Middle Welsh for the medieval texts of this project)⁶, or to texts and manuscripts created by Welsh authors or scriptoria (whether in Welsh or Latin), to a tribal or national political group (keeping in mind that tribal hostilities among Welsh-speaking peoples could

⁵ Sharon Kinoshita, “Translatio/n, empire, and the worlding of medieval literature: the travels of *Kalila wa Dimna*,” *Postcolonial Studies* 11, no. 4 (2008): 371-385.

⁶ This project does not discuss differentiations between regionalisms and periods of the Middle Welsh language. Regardless, it is important to note that modern Welsh varies significantly by region, with dialects sometimes appearing unintelligible to one another.

render their ethnic or familial affiliations moot), or to peoples living in the area of Britain commonly recognized as Wales. As Simon Meecham-Jones has argued, the looseness and flexibility of signifiers of Welshness are the factors which has allowed Wales to survive into the modern world.⁷ Each chapter seeks to place the concept of *Cymreictod* (Welshness) in historical context, and typically points toward rhetorical constructions of identity at the hands of an other group, rather than attempting to define those identities themselves. Welsh identity has always been deeply regional, and while it is unavoidable in this project to generalize to some extent, I wish to clarify that there was (almost) never a fully united Welsh nation.⁸

I use the term “Celtic” sparingly, referring to linguistic, political, or geographical groups. The identifier is most useful to linguistic studies of the Goidelic (Manx, Irish Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic) and Brittonic (Cornish, Breton, Welsh) language families, but the concept of the “Celtic fringe” is also useful in its description of how medieval England viewed Celtic peoples. At the outset, it should be noted that members of the Celtic fringe, including the medieval Welsh and Irish, did not consider themselves ethnically or linguistically affiliated. Welsh-speakers did recognize Breton as being related to their own language, leading to medieval tales of how the ancient Britons became separated between Wales and Brittany.⁹ I also seek to avoid the slippery term “English” in favor of “Anglo-Norman,” which I deploy in a mainly political (not linguistic) way, though I do use “English” to refer to an increasingly cohesive group after the thirteenth century. There are excellent studies of how Anglo-Saxon and Norman identities hybridized over

⁷ Simon Meecham-Jones, “Introduction,” in *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales*, eds. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1-11.

⁸ Robert Barrett’s work demonstrates the viability of a regionalistic approach to studying Anglo-Welsh relations.

⁹ For example, Brynley F. Roberts, ed., *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2005). On Celticness, see Patrick Sims-Williams, “The Earliest Celtic Ethnography” in *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 64, no. 1 (2017): 421-42.

time, though I do not discuss them here.¹⁰ It is also beyond the scope of this project to discuss how the French of England played a significant role as the language of Marcher lords especially in south Wales, largely because the texts in my archive that are affiliated with Anglo-Norman-speaking populations are composed in Latin. For example, William of Malmesbury was Anglo-Norman and composed the *Gesta regum Anglorum* Latin, as did the anonymous author of the *Gesta Stephani*. I seek not to place weight not on their Latin language, but upon their politics. In short, I emphasize that they are politically affiliated with the Anglo-Norman courts of England, invested in systems of patronage connected to Stephen of Blois, the Empress Matilda, and Henry II.

Methodology and Scope

Each chapter takes a twofold structure, placing an Anglo-Norman text in conversation with a Welsh or Welsh-affiliated text. The exception is the final chapter, which places Anglo-Norman texts against artifacts from the life of the Welsh-allied Empress Matilda. This chapter grew out of an intersectional study on the social hierarchies set up in the *Gesta Stephani* and operates as a companion piece to Chapter Three's critical analysis of the *Gesta Stephani*. Thus Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate the importance of intersectional critical studies, interweaving critical race studies, animal studies, and trans/gender studies. The inextricability of one form of dehumanizing rhetoric from another, and the dependence of these rhetorics on each other, is a key argument of this project. Because a single methodological focus could not do the critical work necessary for the corpus relevant to a discussion of high medieval British race, each chapter develops its own theoretical focus. In many ways, this dissertation is a set of case studies, unified by their

¹⁰ See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

attention to how logics and practices surrounding the body were used to justify wholesale dismissal of an ethnic group.

Although each chapter focuses on a different thread of racializing rhetoric in various literary traditions, languages, and genres, each begins with a detailed explication of that chapter's customized methodological approach. Chapter 1 opens with a discussion of race as a modern theory, also providing a history of race and canonical ideas of race which were operable in medieval Europe. Drawing largely on these theories, Chapter 2 opens with an important historical review, using postcolonial readings to show how anti-Welsh rhetoric appears and evolves throughout the British historiographical tradition since Nennius. Chapter 3 builds upon this overview of race and shows how notions of species and human proximity to animality are integral to the concept and operations of race throughout times and places, and introduces the concept of animalization. Chapter 4 begins with a review of critical transgender theory, an emerging method of inquiry related to queer and feminist theories.

The chronological scope of this project is the long twelfth century, to employ that messy yet convenient term.¹¹ Its focus is on multilingual literary exchanges regarding race in the twelfth century, but it reaches as early as the sixth century and draws on manuscripts dating to the late fourteenth century. Because I trace threads of written racial rhetoric between texts, with forays into less trackable traditions (like the oral formation of the *Mabinogi*), the project is alternately concerned and unconcerned with intertextuality and textual transmission. For example, I observe exchange between William of Malmesbury and the anonymous *Brut y Tywysogion* compilers, but also look to how the *Mabinogi* responds to rhetoric contained in the *Gesta Stephani*. While I

¹¹ See C. Stephen Jaeger, "Pessimism in the Twelfth Century 'Renaissance'," *Speculum* 78, no. 4 (2003): 1151-83, and Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

don't argue that storytellers or scribes responsible for the *Mabinogi* as we have it today read the *Gesta*, I do argue that certain rhetorics permeated British literary culture sufficiently to facilitate exchange between the Welsh and English. The chapters thus do not move chronologically, but follow separate threads of logic.

My discussion touches on Gildas's sermon *De excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* [*On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain*] (c. 510-30), Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* [*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*] (c. 731), and pseudo-Nennius's *Historia Brittonum* [*History of the Britons*] (c. 828), but the project's main focus begins in 1125, with William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum* [*Deeds of the Kings of the English*], which covers British history 449-1120 and marks a watershed moment in Anglocentric history for the British Isles. The year 1135 marks the completion and dissemination of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *De Gestis Britonum*. I draw heavily on the *Gesta Stephani* [*Deeds of Stephen*], which was published in two main parts. Part I covers the years 1135-1147 and was written c. 1148. Part II covers the years 1148-1154 and was written soon after 1153.

The anonymous Welsh materials which I discuss are more difficult to date than the materials associated with the English crown. The Middle Welsh chronicles known as the *Brenhinoedd y Saeson* or *Brut y Tywysogion* [*Kings of the English* or *Chronicle of Princes*] have a complex textual history, based as they are on the Cambro-Latin *Annales Cambriae* [*Annals of Wales*] (perhaps dating to the 9th century) and a now-lost Latin original (likely penned c. 1282).¹² Some of the *Brutiau* [*Chronicles*] record events up to 1382, and manuscripts housing these texts date to the mid-to-late fourteenth century. I have done my best to date the parts of the text upon which my argument hinges. As a literary scholar, I am most concerned with editorial comments

¹² J. Beverley Smith, "Historical Writing in Medieval Wales: The Composition of *Brenhinedd y Saesson*," *Studia Celtica*, XLII (2008): 55-86, 56.

contained in the *Brutiau*, not with the historical acumen or accuracy of their compilers. This is a methodological challenge, and an analytic pleasure, as these texts have been mainly subjected to historical and not literary analysis.

The Middle Welsh *Mabinogion* has been combed over by historians and literary scholars alike. The *Mabinogion* is a nineteenth-century invention, referring to four branches, three romances, and three native prose tales, as well as one later tale. This set of texts has a similarly complicated textual history, with some of the tales dating to the eleventh century and some much later. The most complete manuscripts date to the mid to late fourteenth century. My purpose in reading these tales is not to date them, though their dates do affect how I read individual parts of the tales as commentary on Norman expansionism.¹³ In summary, this project reaches from the early sixth century into the late fourteenth, with central focus on twelfth-century developments of methods of human classification which arise in historical and literary texts.

Defining Race

I would like to clarify a key area which this dissertation, largely on race, does not fully address: skin color. Chapter 1 contains a slightly more extended discussion of how skin color, or epidermal race, factors into the texts I work with, but this project is more concerned with race outside of skin color. The reason for this focus may be self-evident, as medieval Welsh and English phenotypes were not drastically different enough for appearance to be the sole or main focus on their differences in the texts I discuss. This is not to say that epidermal race was not a major factor in medieval race,¹⁴ merely that skin color or phenotypical attributes were not the

¹³ See Simon Rodway, *Dating Medieval Welsh Literature* (Aberystwyth: CMCS Publications, 2013).

¹⁴ For extended studies of epidermal race, see Geraldine Heng's chapter on "Color" in *The invention of race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 181-256; Cord Whitaker, "Black Metaphors in the King of Tars," *JEGP: Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112, no. 2 (April 2013): 169-193; Lynn Ramey, *Black Legacies: Race and the European Middle Ages*

sole or main factors in racial animosity between Anglo-Norman and Welsh peoples in the twelfth century.¹⁵ My forthcoming article on the trope of the “dark Welsh” explores the role of perceived phenotypical difference in Anglo-Welsh relations, but there are two central reasons why it is useful to explore racial animosity between two peoples who are today classified as Caucasian or white. The first reason is that such a study destabilizes perceptions of medieval Europe as universally white, a misperception which has been used to develop a racist, nostalgic view of a purely white cradle of Western civilization.¹⁶ As Dorothy Kim succinctly noted in the wake of the white supremacist Charlottesville riot, “[t]he medieval western European Christian past is being weaponized by white supremacist/white nationalist/KKK/nazi extremist groups,” empowered by popular figures such as Richard Spencer, Milo Yiannopoulos, and sympathizers within the medievalist professoriate itself.¹⁷ In addition to contributing to scholarly studies about how early British societies engaged with one another, it is necessary to conduct work which thinks about race in a critical, informed way. While this project argues that racial/racist thinking emerged much earlier than is traditionally believed, it also demonstrates that the purported

(Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2014); and D. Bindman and H.L. Gates, Jr., eds., *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, new ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁵ I am currently working on a separate project which does discuss the role of epidermal race in medieval Wales. Although the issue of epidermal darkness occupies the margins of literature from and about medieval Wales, scholarship has yet to unpack how discourses of color and representations of dark-skinned peoples circulated throughout this racially fraught area of Britain. It is true that writers outside Wales oriented the Welsh as racially marked by color, threading them into a larger European discourse on epidermal race. In this forthcoming piece, I trace the “dark Welsh” trope from the Old English Exeter riddles (10th cent.) to Gerald of Wales’s *Itinerarium Cambriae* [*Journey Through Wales*] (c. 1188) and *Descriptio Cambriae* [*Description of Wales*], then show how the *Mabinogion* romances use epidermal race as a marker of alterity, setting up a color-free yet orientalized Empress of Constantinople in contradiction to a loathly lady with a caricatured black African phenotype.

¹⁶ See Nahir Otaño Gracia and Daniel Armenti, “Constructing Prejudice in the Middle Ages and the Repercussions of Racism Today,” *Medieval Feminist Forum* 53, no. 1 (2017): 176-201, DOI: 10.17077/1536-8742.2093.

¹⁷ Dorothy Kim, “Medieval Studies Since Charlottesville,” *Inside Higher Ed*, 20 Aug. 2018, www.insidehighered.com/views/2018/08/30/scholar-describes-being-conditionally-accepted-medieval-studies-opinion, accessed 12 Mar. 2019.

birthplace of the “white race” is no such thing. White supremacy in our society and in our scholarship has no home in the medieval world.

Second, this study shows that areas of scholarship traditionally developed by scholars of color, including postcolonial and critical race studies, can apply to white European societies. My dissertation shows that scholarship by BIPOC is not relevant only to BIPOC; rather, literary theories developed by non-white scholars have much to teach those fields still dominated by white scholars. Just as the form of this dissertation’s comparative structure is based upon postcolonial theory’s aim of allowing the subaltern to speak back to racist power structures, my analysis is designed to show that expertise by scholars of color is necessary to comprehend the social structures of a time and place long considered to be the purview of a white academic system.

In order to accomplish the goals outlined above, I define race largely as the product of racialization, a form of Othering. Critical race theorists have long known that race is a social construction, with races being “categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient.”¹⁸ Kwame Anthony Appiah traces “more or less well articulated views about the differences between ‘our own kind’ and the people of other cultures,” with these doctrines emphasizing physical appearance or ancestry through the Old Testament, Greco-Roman thought, the Renaissance, and lodging in the modern concept of the Anglo-Saxon race.¹⁹ To suggest otherwise is to perpetuate pseudo-scientific racial/racist logic, or, as H.L. Gates, Jr. identifies this “habit,” to continue “accounting for the Other’s ‘essence’ in absolute terms, in terms that fix

¹⁸ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 8.

¹⁹ Anthony Kwame Appiah, “Race,” in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, eds. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 274-87

culturally defined differences into transcendent, ‘natural’ categories or essences.”²⁰ To “ignor[e] race,” as Toni Morrison shows that contemporary critical discourse in and out of the academy tends to do, understanding such ignorance “to be a graceful, even generous, liberal gesture,”²¹ is also problematic, “mean[ing] that racism is difficult to address or cure because it is not acknowledged.”²² Because race is a sociocultural reality, not genetically real but instead geohistorically contingent, it is not merely methodologically irresponsible to suggest that only post-Enlightenment race is “real.” As J. Tanner notes, opposing race studies out of “politeness”²³ “seems to imply that modern Euro-American racism is somehow, in contrast to its classical antique counterparts, genuinely intellectually coherent and scientifically well grounded.”²⁴ Tzvetan Todorov acknowledges the timelessness of discrimination based on race, saying that “[r]acism is an ancient form of behavior that is probably found worldwide.”²⁵

Building upon the concept of race and always-already real and not-real, Heng’s watershed study *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (2018) offers a definitive study of medieval European racial logics in a global context, nuancing our understandings of how Europeans, Jews, non-black Saracens, black Africans and Saracens, Native Americans, Scandinavians, Mongols, and Romani peoples were racially constituted in the Middle Ages. It is Heng’s definition which guides this thesis:

²⁰ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “Talkin’ that talk,” in *“Race,” writing, and difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 402.

²¹ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 10.

²² Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 8.

²³ Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 10.

²⁴ Jeremy Tanner, “Race and Representation in Ancient Art: Black Athena and After,” in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, new ed, eds. David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), at 15.

²⁵ Tzvetan Todorov, *On human diversity: Nationalism, racism, and exoticism in French thought*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 91.

[R]ace is one of the primary names we have—a name we retain for the strategic, epistemological, and political commitments it recognizes—attached to a repeating tendency, of the gravest import, to demarcate human beings through differences among humans that are selectively essentialized as absolute and fundamental, in order to distribute positions and powers differentially to human groups. Race-making thus operates as specific historical occasions in which strategic essentialisms are posited and assigned through a variety of practices and pressures. . . . race is a structural relationship for the articulation and management of human difference, rather than a substantive content. (2018, p. 27)

In addition to religious race, which could operate both socioculturally and biopolitically (2018, p. 27), Heng establishes cartographic race, colonial race, and epidermal race as various modes through which racialization (strategic identification, essentialization, and discrimination) could function for medieval Europeans (2018, p. 6). While epidermal race is the “paramount signifier of race” for the modern world, race is not merely about color, nor is it reducible to the work of post-Enlightenment pseudo-science (2018, p. 42).²⁶ Medievalist scholars of race have shown that

²⁶ The application of Linnaean taxonomic systems to humans, as theorized and popularized by post-Enlightenment writers such as Johannes Friedrich Blumenbach, *De generis humani varietate nativa*, 3rd ed, in *The anthropological treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach* (Boston: Milford House, 1973); Joseph Meiners *Grundriss der geschichte der menschheit*, 2nd ed. (Lemgo, Germany: Im Verlage der Meyerschen Buchhandlung, 1793); and Arthur de Gobineau, *The inequality of human races*, translated by Adrian Collins (New York: Howard Fertig, 1967), led to conventional beliefs in physiological, scientific “realities” of various types of sub-groups within the human species, with these types or ‘races’ being recognizable by visual elements including skin color, hair color, and skull size and shape. Modern race theorists, such as Anthony Kwame Appiah and Tzvetan Todorov, call this practice of essentialization “racialism.” See Appiah, “Race,” and Todorov, *On human diversity*. While racialism has been thoroughly debunked, modern social conditions created by race-based practices, such as the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the rise of global capitalism, the North American prison industrial complex, and increasingly-

race and racism do indeed manifest throughout time and space, with race buttressing conventions of medieval literatures as well as modern conventions of the academy itself.²⁷

Kyriarchy

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's concept of kyriarchy usefully describes how multiple biopolitical apparatuses of exclusion (to draw on Catherine Mills's critique of Foucault, p. 174) intersect to create a multifaceted system of oppression. Fiorenza's own definition is as follows:

“Kyriarchy (from the Greek *kyrios* for ‘lord, master, father’ and *archein* for ‘to rule, dominate’) is best theorized as a complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social and religious relations of superordination and subordination, or ruling and exploitation. Kyriarchal relations of domination are built on elite male property rights as well as on the exploitation, dependency, inferiority, and obedience of wo'men who signify all those subordinated. Such kyriarchal relations are still today at work in the multiplicative intersectionalities of class, race, gender, ethnicity, empire, and other structures of discrimination.” (p. 9)

Kyriarchy necessitates intersectional research and dismantling of various systems.

Intersectionality as a concept was theorized by Kimberlé Crenshaw as a black feminist criticism of how race and gender were discussed as “mutually exclusive categories of experience and

mainstream white panic regarding refugee and immigrant movements, make race a reality. See Heng, *Invention*, 52; Appiah, “Race,” 5, and Anthony Kwame Appiah, “Racisms,” in *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. David Theo Goldberg, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 72.

²⁷ See Heng, *Invention*, 3; Kim, “Reframing Race,” 56; and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Race,” in *A Handbook of Middle English Studies*, ed. Marion Turner (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 109-22, at 115. Also see the Medievalists of Color-affiliated bibliography by Jonathan Hsy and Julie Orlemanski, “Race and Medieval Studies: A Partial Bibliography,” *postmedieval* 8, no. 4 (2017): 500-31. A summary of arguments against medieval race can be found in Heng, *Invention*, 4 and 24-7.

analysis” in discussions of antidiscrimination law (p. 139). Crenshaw advocates for legal efforts which first address issues facing “those who are most disadvantaged” (p. 167), specifically by thinking about “massive social reorganization” “in ways that maximize the choices of Black women” (p. 166). The diversity of issues addressed in this dissertation, and the multiplicity of theoretical perspectives used to shed light on the little-understood traditions discussed here, are experiments in intersectional medieval research.

Chapter Overview

As a medieval “bestseller,” Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *De gestis Britonum* [*On the Deeds of the Britons*] also known as the *Historia regum Britanniae* [*History of the Kings of Britain*], established the Matter of Britain and initiated a worldwide interest in (the originally Welsh) King Arthur. In my first chapter, I review the ways in which race, as a broadly defined phenomenon, operated in the medieval systems of learning with which Geoffrey would have been familiar. Most specifically, I review the concept of geohumoralism, or the belief that a *gens* or *natio* takes on inherent racial, ethnic, and cultural traits due to the location of that people. Because critical race analyses are relatively new to the field of medieval studies, this chapter also provides a historiography of race studies, tracing developments in race studies and showing how my applications build from those innovated by Geraldine Heng, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, and others. This chapter then conducts a close reading of Geoffrey’s text. In essence, I demonstrate that Geoffrey, a hybrid Welsh-Norman himself, innovated a system of race which moved away from British notions of racial fixity based in a geohumoral system and racist depictions of the Welsh. Instead, the *De gestis Britonum* (*DGB*) depicts race as changeable through hybridization and the notoriously rebellious Welsh as an elevated, prestigious people. I argue that Geoffrey thus advocates for diversity and hybridity in British identity, which in turn supports the Anglo-

Norman empire-building agenda which Geoffrey's patrons, including Empress Matilda's own brother and chief military commander Robert of Gloucester, so dearly espoused. Geoffrey's pseudo-chronicle may have been widely disparaged by his historian contemporaries such as William of Malmesbury, but it established and popularized a widely disseminated, new mode of representing medieval race, despite William's criticism.

This focus on race continues into my second chapter, augmented with the postcolonial theoretical systems set up by Homi Bhabha and first applied to medieval texts by Cohen. By examining a Middle Welsh chronicle, the *Brut y Tywysogion (Brut)*, which orients itself as a continuation of Geoffrey's *History*, I conduct a study focused on a single element of anti-Welsh rhetoric. This chapter traces the commonplace identification of the Welsh as inherently treacherous, a thread of anti-Welsh rhetoric present in Gildas, Bede, pseudo-Nennius, and William of Malmesbury. I am most interested in how this rhetoric of Welsh treachery operates in Anglo-Norman texts, as Gildas and pseudo-Nennius's work is intra-ethnic and Bede's work reflects a very different inter-ethnic dynamic (concerning the Welsh and the Anglo-Saxons) than William's work (concerning the Welsh and the Anglo-Normans). After establishing the pervasiveness of the concept of treachery as a racialized moral failing in Anglo-Norman thought, I demonstrate that the Middle Welsh *Brut* displays keen awareness of these Welsh stereotypes and takes pains to avoid them. A close reading of the text reveals that the trope of Welsh treachery is not merely absent from the *Brut*. The second chapter illustrates how Welsh chronicles strategically re-cast the racial stereotype of Welsh treacherousness as established by William. Indeed, the *Brut* assigns this moral failing to the Anglo-Normans themselves, countering the William's rhetoric, which I argue was available to the compilers and writers of the *Brut*. Welsh historiography thus co-opts a convention of Anglo-Norman historiography, showing

that race was a key element of the high medieval struggle for political and cultural hegemony in Britain.

Chapter Three focuses on another key element of anti-Welsh rhetoric deployed by Anglo-Norman chroniclers. Through theorization of a racializing technique I call “animalization,” I demonstrate that Anglo-Norman chronicles, particularly the *Gesta Stephani*, orient the Welsh as sub-human, portraying them as animals in need of shepherding or extermination. The chapter first discusses the concept of animacy itself, building on Mel Chen’s queer linguistic theorization of *Animacies*. I apply Chen’s work to the *Gesta* in order to show that the slippage between the animal and the racial/ethnic/sexual Other is a transhistorical phenomenon. After arguing that the racializing technique of animalization serves the project of empire-building for the Anglo-Normans, I provide a space in which medieval Welsh writers speak back through Middle Welsh prose tales. These tales, commonly known as the *Mabinogi*, subvert the human/animal dichotomy present in Anglo-Norman chronicles and present new ontologies altogether. The tales accomplish this subversion by treating human-animal transformations as common, frequent, and educational. The rapist nephews of King Math, for example, learn proper human behavior through a three-year-long transformation into mated pairs of animals. By contrasting historiography with prose *fabulae*, I allow what has been perceived as a “low-brow” genre to speak back to the “high-brow” genre which is so often used to construct historical “truths. Part of this discussion is a comparative exploration of Welsh and Anglo-Norman perceptions of landscape and flora, in which I posit explanations for why the Welsh appeared so savage to their neighbors. Overall, this chapter explores how cultural perceptions of the human/animal relationship functioned across disparate definitions of British personhood.

The fourth and final chapter of my dissertation segues from the transsexual experience of Math's nephews to a trans feminist analysis of the Welsh-allied Empress Matilda. Both Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the *Gesta* as the source of hegemonic, Anglo-Norman authority. Chapter 4 is both deeply historical and theoretical, treating the *Gesta* as both a chronicle and literary work. Historical context is key to this chapter. Essentially, although King Henry I had named his daughter heir to his kingdom, Anglo-Norman barons conspired with Matilda's male cousin Stephen to usurp the crown, actions which resulted in a civil war. Therefore, although Matilda was a member of the ethnic population which ruled most of Britain in her time, her challenge to masculine power resulted in frequent derision by Anglo-Norman chroniclers, especially the writer of the *Gesta*. My analysis demonstrates that this text portrayed Matilda as transgressive in sexual and gendered respects, just as it portrayed the Welsh as racially transgressive. For response, I turn to the only text which Matilda herself left for posterity: her royal seal. By tracing historical seal patterns, I argue that Matilda used the seal to appropriate and redefine the derision she faced. This seal uses the conventional shape of a man's seal and portrays Matilda as enthroned, a portrayal reserved typically for males, putting forth a trans identity steeped in power. Rather than performing the identities of man and woman in the worst ways (which the *Deeds* claims she does), the seal harnesses masculine and feminine conventions to establish a new gendered form of British sovereignty.

This project demonstrates that the Anglo-Latin chronicle tradition, while vital to our historical knowledge of post-invasion Britain, sets up ontologies that are subverted by texts across genre, language, and region. As my dissertation indicates, we must look outside of canonical British historical texts to appreciate the diversity of views regarding how British identity was defined in the difficult years following the Norman Conquest. As a multiethnic,

multilingual island, medieval Britain produced a fascinating cacophony of perspectives on British identity. Texts diverse as Anglo-Latin pseudo-chronicle, Welsh chronicle, Welsh *fabulae*, and a female king's seal jostle for authority in determining how personhood and power ought to function in postcolonial medieval Britain.

CHAPTER 1: Race in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Matter of Britain

1.1 Introduction

Because race is a situationally-created social phenomenon, this dissertation begins with a chapter on racial discourse as contextualized within the narrative of the *De gestis Britonum* (1136), the watershed chronicle by Geoffrey of Monmouth. This chronicle established a deep history and cultural mythology for Britain and was disseminated throughout medieval Europe in many forms, providing the foundation upon which the Matter of Britain rested. Geoffrey's influence ranged from Middle Welsh historiography to global Arthurian romance, making his portrayal of how peoples may be differentiated and classified a key moment in British racial discourse.²⁸ Also known as the *Historia regum Britanniae* or *History of the Kings of Britain*, *De gestis Britonum* abounds with human collectivities which Geoffrey variously identifies as *nationes*, *gentes*, and *populi*. An abbreviated list of the text's cast of collectivities includes Trojans, Britons, Romans, Saracens, Burgundians, Huns, Basques, Irish, Scythians, Picts, Scots, Armoricans, Africans, Saxons, Normans, and Christians, a group which for Geoffrey is theoretically synonymous with the *humanum genus*, the "human race," as a whole.²⁹ This capacious representation of Britain's history, in which the eponymous Britons develop a sophisticated civilization through interaction with a diverse set of peoples, revolutionized historical writing in Britain. We know that Geoffrey wrote for an ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse audience in the early 1130s and that his work, shedding light on the

²⁸ Nahir Otaño Gracia's forthcoming work in progress, *The Other Faces of Arthur*, provides a comparative reading of Geoffrey's global influence through Arthurian romance.

²⁹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *De gestis Britonum*, ed. Wright iii.64.276. All references to the *DGB* are taken from Neil Wright, trans. *Geoffrey of Monmouth's De gestis Britonum*, ed. Michael D. Reeve (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2007). Of course, Denise K. Buell notes that "class, ethnicity, and gender are . . . specifically singled out as the divisions overcome by redemption in Christ," but that this idea saw only theoretical development and little praxis. Denise K. Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), x.

mysterious lost history of the native Welsh, was wildly popular among both Welsh and Anglo-Norman audiences. The socio-political agenda of Geoffrey's intervention in the Anglocentric histories of Britain available to the Anglo-Norman newcomers, however, is less understood. Did Geoffrey's text serve to denigrate the Welsh or to elevate their status? Did Geoffrey support Anglo-Norman colonialism in Britain or did he critique it? While these are not easily answerable questions, I suggest that we may better understand Geoffrey's intervention in the socio-political shifts of his time through analysis of the racial logics undergirding his work. The interactions between linguistic, cultural, and as I will argue, racial groups in *DGB* are highly complex, more so than scholarship has generally acknowledged. In service of a better understanding of Geoffrey of Monmouth and his representation of race, I offer a study of how medieval and medievalist scholarship have developed a discourse of race and the related concept of ethnicity. First, I provide an overview of how studies of medieval race have grown over the past fifteen years and contextualize these studies within the discourses of race in which Geoffrey would have been educated. Building upon this theoretical foundation, I then intervene in scholarship on the function of race in Geoffrey's chronicle-romance. Specifically, I provide new readings of his racially marked giants and his representations of hybridity as they participate in the phenomenon of empire in twelfth-century Britain. Overall, I seek to show how Geoffrey represents racial phenomena in a long-past Britain to develop a phenomenology of race for his contemporary world.

1.2 Theorizing Medieval Race

This study argues that Geoffrey was both a product and producer of medieval British thinking about the phenomenology of race. His work intervenes in contemporary arguments about the function of race in human society through the medium of history writing. By creating a deep

history for Britain, as many insular and European histories did in this period, Geoffrey creates scenarios in which the five main peoples of Britain in the early to mid-twelfth century—Normans, Britons, Saxons, Picts, and Scots—were born, shaped, and fossilized. While Bede classified Britain’s peoples by their five languages, Geoffrey immediately signals that he will categorize peoples by their bodies and the interrelations of those bodies, not the language (just one ethnic element) of those bodies.³⁰ These five peoples are a tidy way of referring to the many groups which Geoffrey portrays, and their formation demonstrates Geoffrey’s portrayal of race being lodged in descent, rather than in geohumoral theory.

It may be necessary to provide a caveat in this study of medieval race, that it is to be expected that medieval discourses of race differ from modern discourses of race. Indeed, modern global colonialism, imperialism, and slave trades, accompanied by post-Enlightenment pseudo-science, have had an indelible impact on how we think and speak about human difference. However, the phenomenon of “race” as a system of classification, based on external perceptions of a collectivity’s supposedly essential and inherent material and immaterial characteristics, certainly operated in medieval Europe. As with any modern studies of medieval material, there are linguistic and cultural translations to be rendered and medievalist scholarship would do well to remember Jeremy Tanner’s observation that “[m]odern Euro-American ‘scientific’ racism is just one type of racism, and it is analytically unhelpful to treat this single historically specific model of racism as a conceptual norm.”³¹ A medieval writer such as Geoffrey would not

³⁰ See *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, eds. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 10.

³¹ Jeremy Tanner, “Imagining Race,” 15. Tanner points out the problematic nature of universalizing modern racism as an absolute system prohibiting studies of race outside the modern. Tanner also questions the viewpoint that being anti-critical race studies is anti-racist. As he points out, “It also seems to imply that modern Euro-American racism is somehow, in contrast to its classical antique counterparts, genuinely intellectually coherent and scientifically well grounded . . .” (15).

recognize the word “race” any more than they would “gender” or “religion;” nor would a medieval Welsh speaker agree with modern views of Irish Gaelic and Welsh as being sibling “Celtic” languages. Therefore, this study of Geoffrey and race focuses on how the *DGB* portrays phenomena relating to the specifics of medieval race; by focusing on the phenomenology of race, rather than how Geoffrey might have defined this term, we can see race in action—which, as I argue more extensively below, is the only meaningful way to address race at all

Two important differences between modern and medieval racial thinking are based on perceptions of physiognomy and religion. The modern world of critical race studies, as well as more popular discourses on race, recognize physiognomy and especially skin color as being key markers of race and racial difference. This notion of race is deeply ingrained in modern thought, and for good reason. Physiognomic difference has been used in the modern world to establish social hierarchies which materialize as very real and substantive conditions. The pan-Atlantic slave trade and its aftermath, including the “one-drop rule” in the United States, is perhaps the most notorious example of how racial difference, whether visually recognizable or not, has been used to create racial hierarchies.

These modern forms of race and racism are often, though not always, evident in medieval representations of race. Modern scholarship on race has revealed diverse approaches to racial difference in medieval European texts. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen shows, the English tale of a knight who defeats an evil giant has long been caught up on the notion of physiognomic difference as marking an essentialized racial difference. This literary tradition runs through *Gormont et Isebart*’s Saracen Gormont, who ravages England, to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s African king Gormundus, who ravages Britain, to *Guy of Warwick*’s African Colbrond.³² This

³² Cohen, “Race,” 109-10.

giant character, across his various iterations, functions as a racial Other, marked by physiognomy and color. Racial monstrosity can manifest in non-giant bodies, as Cord Whitaker shows in his reading of the highly influential *King of Tars*, which explores the complex relationship between race and religion. Medieval delineations of race and religion are complex and changing, as Whitaker demonstrates in his analysis of the text's sophisticated representation of physical and metaphorical blackness and whiteness.

It is significant to this study to note that there are situations in which bodily practices, rather than physiognomy, are used to represent race and often to buttress racism. British Christian discourse regarding Judaism and Jews depends largely on this mode of racial discourse; for example, Cohen shows how blood libel emerged in medieval England and Dorothy Kim has shown that for Christian Hebraists, the mere act of vocalizing Hebrew sounds operated as a form of embodied racial passing.³³ W. R. Jones describes Anglo-Norman treatment of the Welsh as evincing “racial antagonism,” and R. R. Davies has shown that distinct anti-Welsh prejudice extended from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries.³⁴ These scholars haven proven that medieval writers believed that racial difference could be evinced by a range of physical markers, from skin color to language. Therefore, situational specifics are key to any discussion

³³ Cohen “The Flow of Blood in Norwich,” *On Difficult Middles*, 139-74; Kim, “Reframing Race;” Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950-1350* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1994); Jones, “England Against the Celtic Fringe,” 167. On the subject of blood libel and wider Jewish/Christian relations, also see Hannah R. Johnson, *Blood Libel: The Ritual Murder Accusation at the Limit of Jewish History* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012); Steven Kruger, *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), and Lisa Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

³⁴ See W. R. Jones, “England Against the Celtic Fringe: A Study in Cultural Stereotypes” *Cahiers d’Histoire Mondiale / Journal of World History / Cuadernos de Historia Mundial* XIII, no. 1 (1971): 155-171, 167, and R. R. Davies, *The History of Wales: Conquest, Coexistence, and Change: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 462.

of race in the Middle Ages, just as they are in the modern world. Geoffrey of Monmouth's work is no exception.³⁵

The second main way that medieval race is thought to differ from modern race is the matter of religion. For medieval thinkers, race was equated with religion; therefore critical studies of Islam, Judaism, or Christianity were sufficient for students wishing to comprehend medieval race. Heng summarizes the traditional belief that “the master discourse ordering difference in the medieval period was, after all, religion: Religion was understood as properly belonging to the realm of culture, not biology, and culture did not produce authentic determinations of race nor racial formations.”³⁶ This traditional belief, according to Heng, has been shattered in the wake of September 11th; in the milieu of U.S. American Islamophobia, fantasies of racial categories, including religion, have abounded. While it is important to acknowledge the relationship between race and religion in medieval Europe, it is equally important not to over-simplify this relationship. For example, the internal diversity of collectivities within a religion must be noted; anti-Welsh, Irish, and Scottish rhetoric of Geoffrey's time is a key example of the problem of conflating medieval race with religion. That said, there are indeed situations where the two concepts seem to operate together. Heng reads the King of Tars's conversion, which manifests

³⁵ Moreover, cultural or ethnic difference do not always participate in Geoffrey's poetics of race. For example, the *DGB* frequently narrates clashes between peoples, such as the episode in which Locrinus and Kamber fight Huns at the Humber, in which racial difference does not operate at the forefront of the text. This bit of military history, meant to provide a bit of interesting etymological wisdom, does not make for useful critical race analysis. However, when Geoffrey's narrator describes how simple Briton farmers are besieged by “foul battalions of Scots, Picts, Norsemen, Danes and other allies,” critical race analysis becomes interesting by the simple assignment of “foulness” to these peoples. Multicultural clashes or interactions do not necessarily warrant a discussion of race, but a whole-sale castigation of a people or peoples may do so. See Geoffrey of Monmouth, vi.91.60-1: “. . . *taetris cuneis Scotorum et Pictorum et cum Norguegensibus, Dacis, et ceteris . . .*”

³⁶ Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 13.

externally with his black skin turning white, as just such a moment.³⁷ The belief that scholars can treat religion as being entirely separate from race seems a naïve one, as the two concepts tend to intertwine. Race as religion is a foundational concept in the West, as early Christians seem to have self-fashioned themselves as a new race. Denise Kimber Buell has shown that early Christians used ethnic and racial reasoning to position themselves as a distinct religious group, separate from other groups, especially Jews.³⁸ Working independently of but in accord with Heng and Akbari, Buell also notes that modern race may conflate with religion, with violent consequences, such as the Catholic/Protestant divide in Northern Ireland or the Muslim/Israeli divide in Palestine. Akbari shows that Christian representations of Saracens and Jews were undeniably based on both religious and ethnic identities; it is impossible to separate the two. Just as with the equation of race with physiognomy, any critical race study of medieval texts must be attentive toward the specific dynamics of an individual multiracial situation. According to our source materials, racial difference may be marked by physiognomy and/or religion.

In order to head off confusion of terms, it may be useful to note the differences between the terms “race” and “ethnicity” as they operate in this thesis. In modern contexts, the two concepts are often conflated, or used interchangeably. Rebecca Kennedy provides a useful and succinct description of the modern race/ethnicity divide:

In the post-Enlightenment world, a ‘scientific,’ biological idea of race suggested that human difference could be explained by biologically distinct groups of humans, evolved from separate origins, who could be distinguished by physical differences, predominantly skin

³⁷ See Whitaker, “Black Metaphors,” footnote 1, on Heng’s reading of the tale’s “cultural-biological” representation of identity and for analysis of Lisa R. Lampert’s response to Heng.

³⁸ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 6.

color. Ethnicity, on the other hand, is now often considered a distinction in cultural practice within the same race.³⁹

Lynn Ramey voices a similar viewpoint, writing that “race” refers to “a group that shares some socially selected *physical* traits, as opposed to ‘ethnicity,’ which is defined by socially selected *cultural* traits.”⁴⁰ However, it has been proven that medieval race and ethnicity cannot necessarily be divided along such a clean line of “body” vs “culture.” Kim shows that when scholarship identifies a practice as “ethnic” or tension between two collectivities as showing “ethnic prejudice,” the term “ethnic” typically refers to practices inseparable from the body itself. “Ethnicity” refers to the style, colors, cuts, and patterns of clothing; physical adornments, hair colors, styles, and qualities; preparation and consumption practices of food; speech patterns and language; laws, customs, rituals, and sexual practices. These are thoroughly embodied practices, which Kim refers to as extensible embodiments.⁴¹ Because ethnic practices are thoroughly embodied, as is race, we cannot fully separate “race” and “ethnicity.”

Writers conflate these two terms with some frequency. Buell uses the two terms interchangeably in a conscious provocation of how modern readers think about Christianity as an identity. Robert Bartlett believes the two terms are best treated as synonyms, saying “Ethnicity and race both refer to the identifications made by individuals about the groups they belong to. If one word has a use, then the other does . . . For the rest of this discussion racial and ethnic will

³⁹ Rebecca F. Kennedy, C. Sydnor Roy, and Max L. Goldman, eds., *Race and Ethnicity in the Classical World: An Anthology of Primary Sources in Translation* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2013), xiii.

⁴⁰ Ramey, *Black Legacies*, 25.

⁴¹ Kim, “Reframing Race,” 56.

be treated as synonyms.”⁴² Kim’s well-founded argument that we cannot separate race and ethnicity does not mean that we can safely conflate the two. It seems to me that modern writers use the term ‘ethnicity’ when they themselves point to some sort of physical or cultural traits which differentiate one person from another, as a means of signifying that they do not espouse beliefs about racial essentialism or racism themselves. However, this thesis is concerned with the inherently hierarchical concept of race, and so will almost invariably discuss race rather than ethnicity. It may be useful to discuss ethnicity in a medieval context, in fully horizontal situations, with which this dissertation is less concerned. Additionally, “taxonomies of differentiation are hierarchical—not equalizing,” as Cohen observes, and thus “race captures the differentiation of medieval peoples far better than more innocuous terms.”⁴³ While scholarship has sometimes balked at using the term “race,” because of fears of anachronism and/or the specter of pseudo-scientific modern discourse of race, Buell articulates a compelling argument for the study of premodern race, using that uncomfortable term in a deliberate way: “Because our interpretive models for studying the ancient past have been formulated and revised within racist cultures, we need to keep the term active so as to be able to examine how our interpretive models encode, and thus perpetuate, particular notions about race.”⁴⁴ The same holds true for our studies of the medieval past.

Several excellent definitions of “medieval race” have been proposed. Heng’s two-part article, “The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages,” argues that “race is a structural

⁴² Buell, *Why This New Race*, x. Robert Bartlett, “Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (2001): 39-56, 41-2.

⁴³ Cohen, “Race,” 116.

⁴⁴ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 21. See Thomas Hahn, ed., *Race and Ethnicity in the Middle Ages*, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2001) for converse perspectives, especially William Chester Jordan, “Why ‘Race’?” 165-73 and Thomas Hahn, “The Difference the Middle Ages Makes: Color and Race before the Modern World,” 1-37.

relationship for the articulation and management of human differences, rather than a substantive content” and demonstrates the flexibility and perniciousness, to borrow the term from Cohen, of race as a category throughout time and space.⁴⁵ Cohen claims that “Medieval race may certainly have involved skin color, as it does with Colbrond, yet race cannot be reduced to any of its multiple signs. Religion, descent, custom, law, language, monstrosity, geographical origin, and species are essential to the construction of medieval race. Although inextricably corporeal, race is also performative, a phenomenon of the body in motion.”⁴⁶ Kim reminds us that “race is not a static term; nor is it marked only on the flesh” but also operates through “the complexities of bodily entanglement” in unexpected ways.⁴⁷ Akbari posits that “Within the medieval discourse of bodily diversity—in sharp opposition to modern racial discourse—corporeal difference is not an either/or, black/white dichotomy. Rather, it is a continuum, with the monstrous races found at the fringes of the ecumene located on one end, and the normative European body on the other.”⁴⁸

This array of definitions is representative of the strides which medieval studies is currently making in comprehension of medieval race. Geraldine Heng’s definitions, which have remained stable throughout the past two decades, are the current scholarly standard. I offer a supplementary definition: race is a hierarchizing system of categorization which depends upon commonly accepted, essentializing beliefs about an Other individual or collective identity as rooted in the body and its practices. Physiognomy and embodied entanglements, religious practices, and cultural practices are taken as indicators of the group’s essentialities. Racial categories are deployed to delimit and hierarchize individuals and groups in historically and

⁴⁵ Heng, “Invention of Race II,” 332; Cohen, “Race,” 114.

⁴⁶ Cohen, “Race,” 111.

⁴⁷ Kim, “Reframing Race,” 56-57.

⁴⁸ Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100-1450* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 160.

socially specific contexts. Medieval race, allied as it was to religion (with all the sociocultural and biopolitical governance that term implies)⁴⁹ and geography (via geohumoral theory) was highly mutable, much more so than post-Enlightenment logics of race, though this mutability was often disavowed. Overall, useful studies of medieval race focus on a phenomenology of race as it emerges in primary sources; discussions of race are mainly (and perhaps only) productive in analyses of texts which themselves are concerned with fundamental differences between colliding peoples.

Scholars of medieval race may look to scholastic treatises of the medieval period to better understand theoretical notions of race, though these theories did not necessarily reflect or dictate racial discourse in social contexts. In a general sense, medieval racial discourse built upon the work of Aristotle and Galen, who developed the geographically-based system of classifying human difference which extended throughout the medieval period. Pliny's work on the antipodean "monstrous races" also extended throughout the Middle Ages, with these races constituting one end of the racial continuum which Akbari maps.⁵⁰ Isidore's *Etymologies* were of course highly influential in their descriptions of how peoples from different places looked and behaved differently from one another, dependent upon his classical predecessors' geohumoral, or climate theories.⁵¹ Cohen notes that Isidore links group identity with genetic descent, saying "A nation [*gens*] is a number of people sharing a single origin, or distinguished from another nation [*natio*] in accordance with its grouping . . . The words *gens* is also so called on account of the generations [*generatio*] of families, that is from "begetting" [*gignere*, ppl. *Genitus*], as the term

⁴⁹ I borrow these two adjectives from Geraldine Heng, "The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages II: Locations of Medieval Race," *Literature Compass* 8, no. 5 (2011): 332-50, 332.

⁵⁰ Akbari, 160.

⁵¹ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, ed. W. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX*, 2 vols, reprint (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

“nation” [*natio*] comes from being born [*nasci*].⁵² Geoffrey of Monmouth seems to draw on Isidore’s ideas of categorizations to some extent, being less interested in geohumoral race in favor of descent-based race. Geohumoral thought has been discussed as being the sole constituent of medieval racial logic, but has also been treated as just one part of the medieval racial puzzle. For example, Cohen, following Bartlett, looks to Robert of Prüm’s explanation of what constitutes an ethnicity (or race, as Bartlett claims the two concepts are synonyms): customs, language, laws, and descent.⁵³ These traits may be informed by one’s climate, but not necessarily nor entirely. It seems that it is Isidore of Seville’s work on descent-based racial identity to which Geoffrey most closely adheres. If the inherent characteristics of various *populi* were once shaped by geographical effects, that moment has passed before the *DGB*.

A particular stumbling block within studies of medieval race is the non-existence of a hegemonic racial discourse and lexicon of race in our sources, particularly those predating the epistemic shift of the thirteenth century. This epistemic shift, marked by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 and ushered in by the Islamic sack of Constantinople, resulted in harder ontological boundaries and clearer hierarchical categorizations of peoples.⁵⁴ Macrohistorical studies have shown that we can draw some wide-ranging conclusions about medieval race, across time and space, but also that notions and portrayals of race are quite diverse. Despite this stumbling block, however, we can gather data from individual authors.

As for Geoffrey, we can safely draw a few conclusions. Geoffrey wrote prior to the paradigm shift which has governed so much scholarship on medieval race. Therefore, Sharon

⁵² For Cohen’s positioning of Isidore in the *longue durée* of racial discourse in medieval Britain, see Cohen, “Race,” 117.

⁵³ Cohen, “Race;” Bartlett, *Making of Europe*.

⁵⁴ Kinoshita provides a succinct overview of this “epistemic rupture” and modern critical coverage of said rupture in her introduction to *Medieval Boundaries: Rethinking Difference in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 2.

Kinoshita's characterization of writings antedating the thirteenth century holds true for Geoffrey himself: his "[r]epresentations of alterity were notably more fluid and less marked by the racializing discourses typical of later centuries than we sometimes assume."⁵⁵ Geoffrey's work taking place in the wake of the Norman Conquest and largely during the English civil war between Empress Matilda and Stephen of Blois. Geoffrey was highly educated and well-versed in the historiographic traditions of his time, as his professional positions and relationships with high-ranking Englishmen demonstrate. For Geoffrey of Monmouth, race was inherent through various physical and cultural markers, and the position of a *gens*, *natio*, or *populus* on a spectrum of racial normativity was flexible. However, race was not flexible in terms of geohumoral theory, but through descent-based modifications to peoples. Furthermore, a racial group's traits were mutable overall; the Britons' flaws resulted in their devolution to the Welsh and the Saxons' tenacity, and conversion resulted in their possession of Britain. Of course, in characteristic fashion, Geoffrey refuses to provide a simple racial paradigm. For this reason, the remainder of this chapter will focus on Geoffrey's depictions of race, in all its phenomenological complexities, as he develops a history for the prized isle of Britain and her neighbors. Ultimately, I suggest that Geoffrey develops a poetics of race, a system by which hierarchical difference between peoples operates, in the deep history of Britain to fashion a model for a new, postcolonial Britain. *DGB* represents racial difference as lodged in the body and mutable through bodily changes involving cultural practices and intermarriages, thereby creating a space for productive Norman hybridization of the peoples they had only recently conquered. As some fundamental attitudes arise in Geoffrey's portrayals of raced giants, I attend to these portrayals before moving onto discussion of his raced humans.

⁵⁵ Kinoshita, 5.

1.3 Geoffrey's Raced Giants

Comparatively speaking, a significant amount of scholarship on Geoffrey and race has focused on his portrayal of a race of giants, the original occupants of Britain, which is why it is useful to begin a study of race with a study of giants. It has come to be widely recognized that racial difference was popularly represented as what modern scholarship might call a difference in species; thus, a monstrous body often stands in for a monstrously racialized body. Heng writes that “[c]artographic and imaginary race issued a grid through which European culture perceived and understood the global races and alien nations of the world,” providing a cogent summary of studies such as Gregory Guzman’s work on how Mongols were refracted as fictional monstrous cannibals and Debra Strickland’s study of the “monstrous races” tradition.⁵⁶ Upon the sliding scale of medieval race, as schematized by Akbari, I suggest that Geoffrey’s giants represent the ultimate racial Other of a western European imaginary, whose extermination is both necessary and righteous.

Indeed, Brutus’ people demonstrate their rightful ownership of Britain by ridding the virginal isle of these giants. A giant survives abroad up until the time of King Arthur, allowing Arthur to reiterate Briton greatness through his dramatic slaying of this predatory creature, who had threatened the virginal daughter of the Breton King Hoel. While it is clear that the giants figure as racially marked bodies, both in Geoffrey and in later romance, there are multiple and divergent readings of the specificities of the giants’ identities. I close read these giants to suggest that Geoffrey’s giants represent the concept of ultimate racial difference, the unassimilable other. The paradigm of the unassimilable other in the giants operates as a foil for the flexible phenomenology of race which Geoffrey develops in his array of non-giant human races. This

⁵⁶ Heng, “Invention of Race II,” 341.

section first describes Geoffrey's three giants, then explains previous scholarship on them, and finally offers a new reading of these raced figures.

The *De gestis Britonum* includes two major narrative episodes concerning giants. When Brutus arrives at the “*promissa insula*,” the “promised isle,”⁵⁷ appointed to Brutus by Diana herself, the narrator provides an account of a “pre-Columbian”⁵⁸ Britain:

Erat tunc nomen insulae Albion; quae a nemine, exceptis paucis gigantibus, inhabitabatur. Amoeno tamen situ locorum et copia piscosorum fluminum nemoribusque praelecta, affectum habitandi Bruto sociisque inferebat.

The island was at that time called Albion; it had no inhabitants save for a few giants. The choice position of this pleasant land, its numerous rivers, good for fishing, and its woods led Brutus and his companions to want to settle there.⁵⁹

Brutus's companion Corineus selects Cornwall as his kingdom, perhaps because of his strikingly unusual love of giant-wrestling. Geoffrey tells us that:

Delectabat enim eum contra gigantes dimicare, quorum copia plus ibidem habundabat quam in ulla prouinciarum quae consociis suis distributae fuerant. Erat ibi inter ceteros

⁵⁷ Geoffrey of Monmouth, i.20.451-2.

⁵⁸ I deploy this term to deliberately trouble conceptions of the medieval period as being pre-colonial or non-colonial. Narratives of conquest, colonization, and righteous “civilizing” of wild lands proliferate throughout medieval texts. Extermination of natives, and an accompanying paradigm of indigeneity being synonymous with lack of civilization, are common elements of medieval European texts.

⁵⁹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, i.21.453-56.

detestabilis quidam nomine Goemagog, staturae duodecim cubitorum, qui tantae uirtutis existens quercum semel excussam uelut uirgulam corili euellebat.

He loved to fight giants, and there were more of them to be found there than in any of the districts divided amongst his companions. One of these Cornish giants was a monster called Goemagog, twelve cubits tall and so strong that he could loosen and uproot an oak tree as if it were a twig of hazel.⁶⁰

One day, Goemagog and twenty other giants attack a holy pagan feast; Brutus and his companions defeat the horde, but do not kill its leader:

Hunc Brutus uiuum reseruari praeceperat, uolens uidere luctationem ipsius et Corinei, qui cum talibus congregari ultra modum aestuabat. Itaque Corineus, maximo gaudio fluctuans, succinxit se et abiectis armis ipsum ad luctandum prouocat.

Brutus had ordered that his life be spared because he wanted to see him wrestle with Corineus, who was always most eager to fight giants. Overjoyed, Corineus hitched up his tunic, threw his weapons aside and challenged the giant to wrestle.⁶¹

Geoffrey sets a dramatic, homoerotic scene, with Corineus and Goemagog grappling and panting.⁶² The giant breaks several of Corineus's ribs and, infuriated, Corineus lifts the giant and

⁶⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth, i.21.467-72.

⁶¹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, i.21.475-78.

⁶² On the homoerotics of the gladiatorial ideal and virile masculinity in Victorian British contexts, see Anthea Callen, *Looking at Men: Art, Anatomy and the Modern Male Body* (New Haven and London: Yale

hurls him off a rocky cliff. The giant's body breaks into fragments over the cliff's crags and his blood stains the sea, marking the land permanently with his body and his name; thus the place is called "*Saltus Goemagog*," or "Goemagog's Leap."⁶³

The second giant episode occurs at Mont St Michel, as Britain has been long rid of her⁶⁴ giants by the time of King Arthur. Arthur is at his encampment at Barfleur, waiting for his allies to march on the Roman Emperior Lucius:

*Interea nunciatur Arturo quendam mirae magnitudinis gigantem ex partibus
Hispaniarum aduenisse et Helenam neptim ducis Hoeli custodibus eiusdem eripuisse et
in cacumine montis qui nunc Michaelis dicitur cum illa diffugisse, milites autem patriae
insecutos nichil aduersus eum proficere . . .*

Meanwhile news reached Arthur that a huge giant had come from Spain, abducted Helena, duke Hoelus' niece, from her guards and fled with her to the summit of the mount now known as St Michael's, where the pursuing Breton knights were unable to get at him.⁶⁵

University Press, 2018). On queer colonizing desire in Native American contexts, see Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). In general, there is a need for research on queer colonizing impulses in medieval contexts, though interracial lesbian desire in Chaucer's *Man of Law's* tale has attracted some attention. See Karma Lochrie, *Heterosyncracies: Female Sexuality When Normal Wasn't* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 131-2.

⁶³ Geoffrey of Monmouth, i.21.488.

⁶⁴ I deploy the feminine personal pronoun here to emphasize the feminized position of ancient Britain in Geoffrey's narrative.

⁶⁵ Geoffrey of Monmouth, x.165.33-36.

Arthur climbs the mount, planning to defeat the giant single-handedly with his companions Kaius and Beduerus serving as witnesses. While on a reconnaissance mission, Beduerus discovers a weeping old woman who tells him a tragic story: the giant had kidnapped and nearly raped her charge Helena, who died from terror. Enraged, the giant raped the old woman, who then buried Helena. Arthur sets off to locate and kill the giant.

Geoffrey again sets a vivid scene for this giant-battle, saying

Aderat autem inhumanus ille ad ignem, illitus ora tabo semesorum porcorum, quos partim deuorauerat, partim uero ueribus infixos subterpositis prunis torrebat.

The monster was by the fire, his mouth smeared with the blood of half-devoured pigs, some of which he had eaten, some of which, fixed on spits, he was roasting over coals.⁶⁶

Catching sight of Arthur, the giant lurches toward his club and deals the first blow. Arthur fights viciously with his sword, first blinding the giant with its own blood then dealing a death-blow to its brain. Happy with the battle's outcome,

Rex ilico in risum solutus praecepit Beduero amputare ei caput et dare uni armigerorum ad deferendum ad castra, ut spectaculum intuentibus fieret. . .

⁶⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, x.165.74-76.

The king laughed, telling Beduerus to cut off his head and give it to one of the squires to take back to the camp as a sight for his men to gaze upon . . .⁶⁷

At this point, we learn that Arthur had previously defeated another giant:

Dicebat autem se non inuenisse alium tantae uirtutis postquam Rithonem gigantem in Arauio monte interfecit, qui ipsum ad proeliandum inuitauerat. Hic namque ex barbibus regum quos peremerat fecerat sibi pelles et mandauerat Arturo ut suam barbiam diligenter excoriaret atque excoriatam sibi dirigeret et quemadmodum ipse ceteris praeerat regibus ita in honore eius eam ceteris barbibus superponeret. . .

He said that he had not encountered anyone of such strength since he had killed upon mount Aravius the giant Ritho, who had challenged him to a duel. Ritho had turned the beards of the kings he had slain into a cloak and had dispatched instructions to Arthur to shave off his beard carefully and send it to him, so he could place it above the rest, to reflect Arthur's preeminence over other kings."⁶⁸ Arthur won the duel and took Ritho's beard as a trophy. . .⁶⁹

As I state above, modern scholarship on Geoffrey and race originates in readings of these giants. Below I offer a response to this foundational work by Heng and Michelle Warren, each of

⁶⁷ Geoffrey of Monmouth, x.165.93-95.

⁶⁸ Geoffrey of Monmouth, x.165.95-102.

⁶⁹ As Brynley F. Roberts notes in "Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia regum Britanniae*, and *Brut y Brenhinedd*," in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, eds. Rachel Bromwich, A.O.H. Jarman, and Brynley F. Roberts, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 97-116. Ritho resembles Dillus Farfawg from *Culhwch ac Olwen*, and appears to be the only giant-battle which Geoffrey derived from Welsh tradition. See 108.

whom sees the giants as evidence of anxiety about the Self and Other. Here this chapter intervenes, placing the giants at the nexus of a cluster of racial associations. Heng reads Geoffrey's romance-history as a move of cultural rescue, in which he works to recuperate difficult historical moments into familiar and pleasurable narratives. More specifically, Geoffrey expiates the collective guilt of his Norman patrons by recasting Western (many Norman) crusaders' cannibalism of rotting Muslim corpses in Ma'arra, Syria, in December 1098. He transposes the idea of European cannibals onto the figure of the unnamed giant of Mont St Michel.⁷⁰ In short, Geoffrey rehabilitates Western self-image by figuring Arthur's unnamed giant as the alienated bit of Self which Europeans successfully exterminate.⁷¹ Overall, Heng's psychoanalytic-historicist reading of Geoffrey's giants suggest that giants are not quite racial Others; instead, they are the Western Self which has been contaminated by long-term contact with racial Others. Living alongside Islam, being modified geohumorally and culturally by residence in the East, and compromised spiritually through ingestion of human meat—and specifically Muslim human meat—threatens to change the Norman race into something unrecognizable and monstrous.⁷²

In a slightly different move, Warren reads Arthur's unnamed giant as a symptom of indigenous aggression, threatening not to obliterate the male colonizer but to beget racially

⁷⁰ This event is attested in Fulcher of Chartres's *Historia hierosolymitana*, the *Gesta Francorum et Aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, and Raymond d'Aguiliers's *Historia Francorum Qui Ceperunt Iherusalem.*, and supported by Arab sources which say Christian cannibalism of Muslim bodies also occurred at Antioch (Heng, *Empire of Magic*, 23).

⁷¹ Heng, *Empire of Magic*, 26.

⁷² Heng's detailed discussion of the giants claims that Geoffrey orients Arthur as the sublime West who defeats the abject, demonic West who figures as a giant associated with Hispania. Furthermore, Hispania "routinely appears in the eyewitness chronicles of the First Crusade to signify the interior regions of Syria" and letters to Paschal announce that Christians entered Hispania [as Syria] after the cannibalism at Ma'arra (*Empire of Magic* 36). The giant is thus doubly tainted with an aura of Islam, from the Muslim-occupied Spain and the land where Christians partake in an unholy Eucharist, Syria (*Empire of Magic* 36-7).

hybrid children upon his female relatives. Warren suggests that the giant's "cannibalism enacts the native's power to subsume colonizing difference. Cannibalism and rape both force monstrous intimacies; both invade the bodily integrity of difference."⁷³ Additionally, Arthur's encounter with Ritho and his subsequent wearing of Ritho's beard-cloak shows the troubling ability of the colonizer to resemble the monstrous native.⁷⁴

Warren also provides an in-depth analysis of Corineus, the giant-wrestler, and colonial desire. According to Warren, Geoffrey establishes a resemblance between Corineus and giants "by comparing him to one when the Trojans first meet him . . . Corineus's excessive desire to touch indigenous bodies expresses a colonial desire to resemble the native; his particular desire to wrestle the native exposes the violent antagonism of this desire for the almost-same."⁷⁵ The destruction of indigenous bodies, just similar enough to those of the conquerors to offer up enjoyable masculine play, marks the rightful occupation of Britain by the Britons.

Despite their divergent interpretations of the giants, Warren and Heng each reads Geoffrey's giants as evidence of anxiety about the Self and Other, with those identities determined largely by a hierarchy which I would term race. Giants are not human, nor fully inhuman; they are a manifestation of a racial fantasy, wherein racial difference is marked clearly upon a body and can be understood and manipulated by a hegemonic power. I suggest that each of these giants may be interpreted in the same way, by situating both of them within the tradition of the enclosure of the unclean tribes of Gog and Magog. Although there is a scholarly tradition of searching for Goemagog's origins in local Welsh legends or names, a critical race orientation

⁷³ Warren, *History on the Edge: Excalibur and the Borders of Britain, 1100-1300* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 46.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* A potential issue with this reading arises if we remember that Geoffrey's text does not actually say that Arthur wore the cloak of beards, nor even that he took the cloak. Geoffrey says only that Arthur took Ritho's beard; the whereabouts of the cloak are up for speculation.

⁷⁵ Warren, 34.

provides a more useful understanding of Geoffrey's work.⁷⁶ Our discussion of Geoffrey's giants ought not to be an etymological one, but one rooted in the religiously inflected racial dynamics of the giant episodes.

It seems quite clear that Geoffrey taps into a well-established literary tradition of Gog and Magog. Even J. S. P. Tatlock provides a substantial summary of Geoffrey's potential sources on the topic, before summarily dismissing them. These sources are so numerous that Tatlock suggests we need not even figure out which was Geoffrey's specific source, since

Magog son of Japhet (*Genesis*, X, 2), and the vague uncanny prophecies about Gog and Magog, usually as shut up in the Caucasus mountains, to be released in some indistinct future, are referred to by many early medieval writers (the legend probably of ultimately Jewish origin),--by Isidor of Seville's *Historia Gothorum*, Jordanes, additions to *Aethicus Istricus*, Bede, Nennius, Haimo of Halberstadt" and more.⁷⁷

The eschatological specter of Gog and Magog, unclean tribes of indefinite origin and identity, was fodder for a proliferation of readings. Tatlock notes that they were read as Scythians, Goths, Tartars, Turks, Moslems [sic]; "At any rate for a thousand years they were identified with various barbarous peoples who were threatening Christendom."⁷⁸ Although Tatlock cannot

⁷⁶ In 1862, Manley Pope posited an etymological theory that the giant Goemagog derives from a local Welsh legend of a Cawr Madog, a theory which J.S.P Tatlock supports. See Pope, *History of the Kings of Ancient Britain* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co.), 27; Tatlock, *Legendary History of Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), 55. Even if a local Welsh legend influenced Geoffrey's naming of his first giant, we know that Geoffrey had at his disposal a vast corpus of Latinate material on the monstrous race of giants.

⁷⁷ Tatlock, 53-4.

⁷⁸ Tatlock, 54. Tatlock then claims that "It is impossible, furthermore, to see what unclean peoples shut up in the Caspian Mountains or thereabouts can have to do with a single honest autochthonous giant killed by Brutus' hero in Britain centuries before" (55).

imagine that Geoffrey would have linked his giants to these peoples, I suggest that this is exactly what Geoffrey does. The *DGB* reworks the Alexander romance tradition, wherein Alexander the Great fences in the unclean tribes of Gog and Magog, where they still await their release to usher in the apocalypse.⁷⁹

Put simply, Geoffrey's giants are the ultimate racial Others, their difference marked on their bodies and in their cultural practices. Not only are the giants marked by the image of the Saracen (a simultaneously ethnic and religious identity),⁸⁰ they are also representative of the Jews. As Akbari notes, "[t]he association of the Jews with Gog and Magog became widespread during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, mediated by such popular texts as Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon*, and Rober Bacon's *Opus Maius*."⁸¹ In Geoffrey's giants, the idea of the unclean races of Gog and Magog, the idea of the Saracen, and the idea of the Jew mingle and are represented by a clearly marked, monstrous body. The giants are massive, too embodied, and unclean. Goemagog contaminates the cliffside and water with his monstrous body; the Mont St Michel giant is rapacious and cannibalistic; even the relatively innocuous giant Ritho is quasi-cannibalistic, consuming the beards of men as luxury goods held close to his body, transforming kings into creatures of prey bearing desirable pelts. As Sylvia Huot has observed, narratives of unclean and exterminable giants "both mirror and shape the lurid accounts of religious, racial, or ethnic groups targeted for conquest, subjugation, or expulsion by historical or fictional monarchs—be they Saxon or Celtic, Jewish or Muslim,

⁷⁹ See Andrew Runni Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog and the Inclosed Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932) for a full study of the tradition of Alexander's encounter with the tribes of Gog and Magog.

⁸⁰ See Akbari, *Idols in the East*, for an extended development of this argument.

⁸¹ Akbari, 137.

European, African, or Asian.”⁸² In Geoffrey’s giants, anxieties about the unassimilability of Jewish and Muslim bodies to the universal Christian body, linked as they are to the races of Gog and Magog, manifest as key elements of the history of Briton.

The proposition that Geoffrey bases his giants upon a racialized update of Gog and Magog is supported by texts related to the *DGB*. Geoffrey’s giants resonate with the description of Gog and Magog as depicted in a contemporary romance history, Thomas of Kent’s *Roman de toute chevalerie* (which, like the *DGB*, draws on Aethicus Ister’s *Cosmographia*). As Akbari has noted, these diverse yet recognizable races are “against human nature,” they consume “human flesh,” and they eat unclean foods such as dogs, serpents, frogs, toads, slugs, and mice.⁸³ The giant of Mont St Michel is most certainly a cannibal, consuming the flesh of men smaller than him, and Ritho wears the beards of men as consumable goods. *Des grantz geanz*, an Anglo-Norman romance of the fourteenth century, provides an origin story for Geoffrey’s giants; as Huot has found, “the tale of the demonic origins of British giants is attributed to Gogmagog himself, who first related it to Brutus.”⁸⁴ (19). These texts postdate the *DGB*, but contribute to the web of connections that reveal the multifarious meanings of Geoffrey’s giants. They are connected to Hispania, perhaps Muslim Spain or Syria; they hark back to the unclean, monstrous races of Gog and Magog, and are touched by the figure of the Jew, implicated as Jewishness was with the figure of Gog and Magog. Considering the context of Geoffrey’s writing, soon after the first migrations of Jews to Britain and Christian crusaders’ capture of Jerusalem, under the shadow of the civil war following the death of Henry I, touches of unassimilable and defeatable otherness provide explosive moments in the formation of a British history and identity.

⁸² Sylvia Huot, *Outsiders: The Humanity and Inhumanity of Giants in Medieval French Prose Romance* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 2016), 8.

⁸³ Akbari, 93-4.

⁸⁴ Huot, 19.

Thus the indigenous bodies which Corineus and Arthur defeat, the bodies which are sacrificed at the altar of Britain's consolidation of sovereignty and conquering power, operate at the nexus of a variety of racial identities, based largely on racially-inflected religious alterity.⁸⁵ These exotic and fearful identities must be conquered for the Britons to establish rightful and civilized dominion over the great isle of Britain. Just as Geoffrey retells the story of Aeneas in the figure of Brutus, he reworks the tale of Alexander and his wall in the tales of Brutus, Corineus, and Arthur. The familiar hero Alexander, who successfully enclosed Gog and Magog, is resurrected in Geoffrey's greatest heroes, and the horrible tribes of Gog and Magog are re-envisioned as a cluster of monstrous, racial associations. The extermination of these racially marked and monstrous races means that Geoffrey can attend to the interactions of the races which register as human on his medieval spectrum of race.

1.4 Geoffrey on Hybridity and Exogamy

Geoffrey's latent anti-Semitic and slightly more explicit anti-Saracen attitude may give the impression that he portrays Christians and non-Christians as fundamentally different, with the Christian "race" being the only acceptable one. However, the admirable and pagan past of the Britons complicates this Christian/non-Christian dichotomy. Furthermore, while Geoffrey's racially marked, monstrously indigenous giants might be read as signifying a sense of racial rigidity throughout his text, this is not always the case. Indeed, the "rich ambiguity" of Geoffrey's work manifests in the racial politics of historical Britain.⁸⁶ As the life of the pagan Assaracus shows early in the *DGB*, Geoffrey adhered to a descent-based system of race as a

⁸⁵ See Patricia Clare Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies: Arthurian Romance and the Making of Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), on the role of imaginaries in the consolidation of power in Britain.

⁸⁶ Kristen Over, *Kingship, Conquest, and Patria: Literary and Cultural Identities in Medieval French and Welsh Arthurian Romance* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 43.

mutable characteristic of a person, departing from the widespread theory that one's climate created one's race through physiological mutation of the body and its humors. In fact, at moments Geoffrey depicts racial hybridity with a relative amount of comfort, at least in comparison to his contemporaries. For Geoffrey, interactions between different peoples may not only be acceptable, but productive. I do not suggest that the *DGB* portrays utopic, happy hybridities; rather, my analysis below points toward Geoffrey's deployment of hybridity in the service of empire.

Although many medieval writers display disbelief or discomfort with racial mixing, Geoffrey's *DGB* seems to be somewhat of an outlier. Within the realm of postcolonial medieval studies it has been well-established that hybrid bodies are typically monstrous bodies. Moving away from Homi Bhabha's "unfailingly polite hybrids," Cohen points to the work of Gloria Anzaldúa for a model of medieval hybridity.⁸⁷ Medieval racial hybridity, as seen in writers like Gerald of Wales, is an "impudent, relentlessly embodied phenomenon that brings together in a conflictual, unnatural union races in the medieval sense. . . . Medieval hybridity is inherently monstrous."⁸⁸ However, Geoffrey's hybrids do not quite fit into this paradigm, nor do they simply exemplify the dangers of exogamy.⁸⁹ Despite the efforts of historiographers like Bede, William of Malmesbury, and William of Newburgh (among others) to represent Britain's history as a

⁸⁷ Cohen, "Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands," 96. See Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), and Gloria Anzaldúa, *La Frontera/Borderlands* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987). Anzaldúa harnesses monstrous images, like that of the Aztec goddess Coatlicue, to symbolize the Chicana experience of *mestizaje*, what Anzaldúa calls the new *mestiza* consciousness.

⁸⁸ Cohen, "Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands," 89.

⁸⁹ On this subject, Warren aptly notes that the *DGB* alternates between investment in endogamy and exogamy in a move of characteristic ambivalence. See *History on the Edge* 44. Geoffrey does indeed portray Vortigern's desire for a Saxon woman as dangerous; I would argue that this scene is best read in context with Geoffrey's general disdain for the Saxons of history and for the English of his own day. Geoffrey applies popular anti-Welsh sentiments of his day (accusations of barbarism and treachery, specifically) to the Saxons themselves.

series of sovereignties under discrete racial groups, the creation of hybrid spaces and bodies is unavoidable—a fact which Geoffrey seems to acknowledge in his narrative. Geoffrey establishes the possibility and even desirability of hybridity early in the *DGB*. After Brutus, the grand-son of the Trojan Aeneas, slays his own father in a hunting accident, he chooses to live out his exile in Greece, where he finds the descendants of Priam, who “*in seruitutem tenebatur*,” “were held in slavery” under the Greeks.⁹⁰ One ethnic group has entirely enslaved another in a clear establishment of a racial hierarchy. The Trojan slaves rally around Brutus as his reputation for bravery and wisdom grows. Brutus is reluctant to lead the liberation movement which the Trojans desire, but one man changes Brutus’s mind:

“Praeterea erat quidam nobilissimus iuuenis in Graecia nomine Assaracus qui partibus eorum fauebat. Ex Troiana namque matre natus erat fiduciamque in illis habebat maximam ut auxilio eorum inquietudini Graecorum resistere quiuisset. Arguebat enim eum frater suus propter tria castella quae sibi moriens pater donauerat et ea auferre conabatur quia ex concubine natus fuerat. Erat autem frater patre et matre Graecus ascueratque regem ceterosque Graecos parti suae fauere.”

Moreover, there was in Greece a most noble youth named Assaracus, who favoured the Trojan cause. Since his mother had been Trojan he placed great reliance on their help in repelling Greek raids. For he was in dispute with his brother over three castles that their father had granted to Assaracus on his deathbed, which his brother was trying to take

⁹⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth, i.7.68.

from him because his mother had been a concubine. The brother by contrast was Greek on both sides and had induced the king and the other Greeks to support his faction.⁹¹

The hybrid Assaracus is characterized as “Greek” by Geoffrey, but Assaracus’s own brother calls him the son of a Trojan slave. The brother identifies himself as fully Greek and fully noble.⁹² Geoffrey does not comment on whether he views Assaracus as being high or low-born, but the fact that Brutus joins with Assaracus because he will add three castles to the Trojan rebellion suggests that Geoffrey does not view Assaracus’s birth as problematic, but beneficial. Geoffrey, in a move characteristic of most of his peers, does not have a term which indicates Assaracus’s mixedness, but simply calls him Greek, following the patrilineal line in order to produce this designation. However, even as Geoffrey calls Assaracus a Greek, he calls attention to Assaracus’s double, or mixed identity. Assaracus’s hybrid identity proves to be a boon to Brutus, who leads the Trojans to victory and thus gains the means by which he can establish Trojan civilization in Britain. The figure of Assaracus is not an imposing one—his hybridity does not manifest in monstrosity and his role in the *DGB* creates a much smaller spectacle than, say, the giants defeated by Corineus or King Arthur, but this episode demonstrates Geoffrey’s acknowledgement of cultural hybridity as a productive, if troubled, phenomenon.

A second positively-portrayed hybrid follows the pattern Geoffrey establishes with Assaracus. When it seems that Octavius, King of Britain and fighter of Roman rule in Britain in his youth, will die leaving behind a daughter but no male heir, his counselors debate whether to wed the daughter to a Roman nobleman or to Octavius’s nephew, Conan Meriadoc. Caradoc,

⁹¹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, i.7.79-85.

⁹² Curley characterizes the hostility as merely a play on Geoffrey’s “theme of family rivalry, particularly between brothers” in *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (New York: Twayne Pub, 1994), 16. I suggest, of course, that kinship rivalries may take on a racial dynamic, as in this case.

duke of Cornwall, presents a third option: give the daughter and the kingdom to one Senator Maximianus. Geoffrey explains Maximianus's heritage:

Erat autem patre Britannus, quia Loelinus auunculus Constantini, de quo superius mentionem feceram, ipsum genuerat; matre uero et natione Romanus ex utroque sanguine regalem ferebat procreationem. Iccirco igitur stabilitatem pacis promittebat quia sciebat illum et ex genere imperatorum et ex origine Britonum ius in Britanniam habere.

Maximianus had a British father, since he was the son of Constantine's uncle, Loelinus, mentioned above, whilst his mother and his nation were Roman, so that he was of royal blood on both sides. Hence Caradocus could promise an enduring peace, since he knew that Maximianus's claim to Britain rested both on imperial descent and British birth.⁹³

Maximianus's noble stock makes him eligible to inherit Britain, but his mixedness makes him uniquely qualified for the position. Geoffrey first identifies Maximianus as a Briton, maintaining the practice of determining an individual's race by following the race of the father. His second identification, however, is not wholly secondary; Geoffrey does not merely state that the mother of Maximianus was Roman, but that the man himself was of the Roman *natio*. Caradoc gives the good news to Octavius, the dying king, saying "*Ecce ergo tibi dignatus est subuectare Deus iuuenem istum, et ex genere Romanorum et ex regali prosapia Britonum creatum . . .*" "See now,

⁹³ Geoffrey of Monmouth, v.81.203-8.

God has deigned to send you this young man, of Roman blood and descended from the British royal family.”⁹⁴

By a logic of descent, Maximianus is, much like Assaracus, uniquely qualified to lead the Britons. The hybrid figures of Assaracus (Greek-Trojan) and Maximianus (Roman-Briton) show that Geoffrey saw race as descent-based and as potentially malleable. In fact, Geoffrey provides a follow-up tale of what happens when Conanus, who had protested Maximianus’s crowning and gathered an army to attack him, attempts to engineer a pure racial colony in Brittany.

After a period of prosperity, Maximianus grows tired with his own possessions and marches on the continent; although he becomes a less admirable figure at this point, though he does establish Brittany as a “second Britain.” Considering that Geoffrey depicts Brittany in a generally positive way, and may even have been of Breton descent, Geoffrey represents Brittany as an admirable place founded on bloodshed. The text soon takes an unusually dark turn, however, when Conan decides to populate Brittany with pure-blooded Britons. Maximianus had marched on the provinces of the Gauls with thousands of male settlers, establishing Briton presence in those areas and deputizing Conanus to conquer Armorica. Conanus is successful and “*Cumque sibi cessisset uictoria, uoluit commilitonibus suis coniuges dare ut ex eis nascerentur heredes qui terram illam perpetuo possiderent. Et ut nullam commixtionem cum Gallis facerent, decreuit ut ex Britannia insula mulieres uenirent quae ipsis maritarentur,*” “[w]hen finally he was victorious, he wanted to present his fellow soldiers with wives, by whom they might father heirs to occupy the country for ever. To avoid intermarriage with the French, he ordered that women should come from the island to be their brides.”⁹⁵ Disaster follows when Dionotus, father of Conanus’s beloved Ursula, dutifully collects “*filiis nobilium numero undecim milia, de ceteris*

⁹⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, v.83.287-9.

⁹⁵ Geoffrey of Monmouth, v.87.363-66.

ex infima gente creatis sexaginta milia . . .” “eleven thousand noblemen’s daughters, as well as sixty thousand girls of common birth,” some by invitation but most by force, and places them on ships headed for Brittany.⁹⁶ Geoffrey increases the suspense of the tale by describing women who would have preferred to stay with their parents, at home in their own country, or to remain virgins. Echoing the pathos of Innogin’s tear-filled journey from her own home, the scene culminates in mass death:

Postremo, cum uela uersus Armoricanos diuertissent, insurrexerunt contrarii uenti in classem et in breui totam societatem dissipauerunt. Periclitabantur ergo naues infra maria in maiori parte submersae. Quae uero tantum periculum euaserunt appulsae sunt in barbaras insulas et ab ignota gente siue trucidatae siue mancipatae. . .

When they set sail for Armorica, the fleet was struck by adverse winds, which swiftly scattered it utterly. The ships were imperiled on the sea and mostly sank. The few women who escaped were driven to foreign islands, where they were butchered or enslaved by an unknown people . . .⁹⁷

Conanus’s design to manufacture a “pure” race of Britons in Armorica results in sheer disaster; presumably, his soldiers do indeed intermarry with Gallic women after the Briton virgins drown or commit suicide instead of facing rape at the hands of Huns and Picts.⁹⁸ According to

⁹⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, v.88.374-5.

⁹⁷ For Innogin’s tale, see Geoffrey of Monmouth, i.16.270-5. For the sinking of the fleet of virgins, see v.88.383-7.

⁹⁸ Geoffrey of Monmouth, v.88.395.

Geoffrey's complimentary treatment of the Bretons throughout the *DGB*, such intermarriage works out for the better.⁹⁹

The utter failure of an attempt to manufacture a racially pure race of Britons makes a key point in the narrative: namely, the message that hybridization is not only necessary in empire-building, but desirable. To date, the most frequently discussed element of Geoffrey of Monmouth's participation in medieval discourses of race is the debate over whether his portrayal of the Welsh is one of denigration or elevation. While postcolonial studies of Geoffrey have generated productive discussions regarding his perspective on Norman colonialism and the emerging Cambro-Norman culture of the Welsh Marches, this study looks to how Geoffrey responds to race-based anti-Welsh rhetoric. By contextualizing Geoffrey's portrayal of the Britons-cum-Welsh, we may see how the *DGB*'s racial phenomenology (based as it is on descent and a sliding scale of normativity, with the possibility of malleability) applies to the material circumstances of the *DGB*'s composition and circulation.

By January 1139, the month and year of the *DGB*'s first documented reading, portrayals of the Welsh had adopted recognizable tropes. The Welsh were barbarians in their work, as their pastoral economies warranted no market towns or cultivated fields; in their warfare, as they fought harshly and unchivalrously in the eyes of Norman soldiers; and in their beds, as sexual and marital mores scandalized Norman religious authorities.¹⁰⁰ William of Malmesbury had developed a colonial strategy of referring to fellow Christians as barbarians; although formerly this term had been applied only to non-Christians, William worked toward an intra-religious

⁹⁹ This episode is an adaptation of the legend of St Ursula and the 11,010 virgins, a tale in which an attempt at forced marriage of Ursula to the pagan Attila results in their attempted rapes and deaths at the hands of Huns—a tale with a set of racial politics outside of Geoffrey's chosen focus.

¹⁰⁰ Gillingham lists these three elements of the Welsh stereotype in *The English in the Twelfth Century*, 11. The apt rendering of Welsh highland warfare as “literally unchivalrous” is from Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries*, 108.

racial hierarchy based on ethnic practices.¹⁰¹ In summary, the stereotype of the treacherous, savage Welshman was deeply entrenched in British Latinate thought in the 1130s. As Gillingham shows, Orderic Vitalis's writing shows clear development of this thought: although in the early 1130s he described the Welsh neutrally or sympathetically, "[b]y 1140 the sympathy seems to have gone; his vocabulary is more uniformly hostile and condescending."¹⁰² This predominant mode of representation of Welsh existence and habits is widespread enough that Simon Meecham-Jones lists racial inferiority as a key imperialist discourse deployed by the Normans and English.¹⁰³

Geoffrey intervenes in the racist conventions of anti-Welsh rhetoric in two important ways. First, he places the Welsh within the developmental model of human civilization, which served as a medieval European "yardstick" measuring a group's status. Second, he places the Welsh above other peoples of Britain, moving the Welsh near the Normans on the normativity spectrum of medieval race. To scaffold each of these moves, Geoffrey subverts contemporary racial slurs against the Welsh.

As Shirin Khanmohamadi shows in her study of medieval ethnography, Latinate thinkers who developed the anti-Welsh rhetoric of barbarity were steeped in classical learning. The Epicurean tradition inherited by Lucretius and Cicero and later adopted by William of Malmesbury and Gerald of Wales "posted a universal, linear model of cultural development according to which all cultures progressed through certain stages of development on a continuum from savagery to civility This secular model was deployed in twelfth-century contexts of colonization or conquest along Europe's borders as a justification for the subjugation of native

¹⁰¹ For an early and influential study of this phenomenon, see Jones, "England Against the Celtic Fringe."

¹⁰² Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century*, 28.

¹⁰³ See Meecham-Jones, "Introduction," 2.

peoples.”¹⁰⁴ This developmental model was highly useful in the argument for racial hierarchy among fellow Christians; if Normans and Welsh were equal in their Christian identities, they certainly were not equal in terms of their respective ethno-cultural merits. If, as Lucretius posited, men progressed from hunting/forest living to monogamy/hut living to language/cooking/weaving/pastoralism to government to cities to agriculture, then the Welsh were clearly undeveloped and undeserving of the same status as Normans.¹⁰⁵

The *DGB* does not merely provide the Britons with an interesting past; it places the Welsh within this developmental model, orienting them as developed instead of pre-developed. While the modern Welsh have fallen into cultural decay, they are capable of highly “civilized” accomplishments; they established cities, built roads, maintained a wide-ranging economic system, developed a confederation of nations based on kin relations, and saw military victories over diverse peoples, from the Danes to the Huns. Even the “unchivalrous” nature of Welsh warfare is rehabilitated in the *DGB*. When the Briton king Cassibellanus is pursued by the Roman Caesar and Briton duke Andreogus, he escapes to higher ground and thus wins the battle, much to our narrator’s admiration:

“Astabat prope quidam mons in cacumine saxosus densum coriletum habens. Ad illum confugit Cassibellaunus cum suis postquam in debiliorem partem ceciderat. Summitatem quoque eius nactus, sese uiriliter defendebat et insequentes hostes nece afficiebat . . . O ammirabile tunc genus Britonum, qui ipsum bis in fugam propulerunt qui totum orbem

¹⁰⁴ Shirin Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another’s Word: European Ethnography in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 11.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

sibi submiserat! Cui totus mundus nequiuu resistere, illi etiam fugati resistunt, parati mortem pro patria et libertate subire.

Already weakened by the Romans attacking in front, and now taken from behind by their fellow-countrymen, they could not stand for long; with his companions scattered, the king abandoned the field in flight. Near by stood a hill with a rocky summit thickly covered with hazel trees. The defeated king and his men fled to it. Reaching the top, Cassibellaunus put up a brave defence and slaughtered the pursuing enemy How admirable were the Britons of that age, who twice put to flight the conqueror of the whole world! Even after being routed, they faced a man the whole world could not resist, and were ready to lay down their lives for the liberty of their country.¹⁰⁶

Not only are the Britons victorious due to their negotiation of high land and protective tree cover, but they are portrayed as brave and valiant in the method by which they obtain victory. While the common anti-Welsh slur recorded by Gerald of Wales--*homo silvester*--points to the supposed savagery and barbarity of the Welsh, Geoffrey revises the Briton reputation. Britons may be forest-faring people, but this characteristic augments their identity in a positive way.¹⁰⁷ They may be “unchivalrous,” but their achievements surpass those even of Caesar. Thus Geoffrey portrays the Britons as having Welsh characteristics, but resists the notion that these characteristics are necessarily defective. Rather, they reached the heights of civilization and had only recently fallen upon misfortune.

¹⁰⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *iii.62.216-228*.

¹⁰⁷ Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica/Topography of Ireland*, ed. and trans. John O’Meara, Reprint (New York: Penguin Classics, 1983), 1.

If Geoffrey seeks to elevate the Welsh *gens*, he does so through the subordination of other *populi* of Ireland and the British Isles. Several groups in the *DGB* emerge as unequivocally savage and hostile: the domineering Romans, the warmongering Picts/Scythians, and the lurking Huns (who mysteriously appear in Britain and Brittany with surprising frequency). Geoffrey's most immediate villainous race is that of the Saxons: pagan invaders to whom Geoffrey applies some of the most common anti-Welsh ideas. The *DGB*'s villainization of the Saxons is yet to be fully discussed or understood. Most scholars agree that the Norman-English binary collapsed quickly; any racial antagonism was quickly subsumed by intermarriage and linguistic assimilation.

Regardless of his reasoning, Geoffrey adapts one specific convention of anti-Welsh stereotypes and applies it to the Saxons: that of treachery. Representations of the Welsh as being inherently treacherous are racial in nature. For example, William of Malmesbury describes the Welsh as "*pro motu fortunae ad malum pronis*," "being always ready to do ill, as changing fortune leads."¹⁰⁸ W. R. Jones states that "the accusation of treachery was a stock-in-trade libel of the medieval Celts."¹⁰⁹ Overall, William's indictment of the Welsh as changeable, never loyal but always prepared to commit ill, is characteristic of the anti-Welsh rhetoric which runs throughout the Norman chronicle tradition. It is unthinkable that Geoffrey would not have been aware of this convention of the chronicle genre in which he worked.

Therefore, Geoffrey's stereotyping of the Saxon as having an inborn disposition toward treachery is not symptomatic of mere racial prejudice. Geoffrey consciously applies conventions of anti-Welsh rhetoric to the Saxons, subverting one form of contemporary racism by deploying

¹⁰⁸ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum, Volume 1*, ed. and trans. R.M. Thomson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), v.396, 718-9.

¹⁰⁹ Jones, "England Against the Celtic Fringe," 162.

it to new ends. Geoffrey's anti-Saxon attitude is most clearly evident in the scene in which Vortigern invites Saxon contamination of Britain because of his lust for Hengist's daughter, but this single episode hardly illustrates the extent of the *DGB*'s development of the anti-Saxon stereotype.

The Saxons are responsible for Uther Pendragon's death: "*Proditioni etiam solitae indulgentes, machinantur qualiter regem dolo interficiant,*" "Resorting to their customary treachery, they plotted to kill the king by deceit." The "*nefandi proditores*" "wicked traitors" poison a spring, a "*fraude*" "treacherous deed" which results in the death of the king and a hundred of his retainers.¹¹⁰ Uther's heir echoes the language of judgement previously voiced by the *DGB*'s narrator. While campaigning, Arthur makes the following speech:

"Quoniam impiissimi atque inuisi nominis Saxones fidem michi dedignati sunt tenere, ego fidem Deo meo conseruans sanguinem conciuuium meorum in ipsos hodie uindicare conabor. Armate uos, uiri, armate, et proditores istos uiriliter inuadite, quos procul dubio auxiliante Christo triumphabimus."

Since the wicked Saxons, true to their evil repute, refuse to keep faith with me, I shall preserve my faith in my God by attempting to take revenge on them today for the blood of my fellow-countrymen. To arms, men, to arms, and bravely attack these traitors, whom we are sure to defeat with Christ's aid.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth, ix.142.598-609.

¹¹¹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, ix.146.89-93.

Not only are the Saxons wicked in their paganism, as opposed to Arthur's devout Christianity, they are faithless traitors. Their religion is not necessarily the central problem; it is their traitorous habits which the Britons cannot tolerate. The Saxons are later responsible for the African invasion of Britain:

“Exin proditione eorum cum centum sexaginta milibus Afffricanorum ad Britanniam transfretavit, quam in una parte mentitae fidei Saxones, in alia uero ciues patriae, ciuilia bella inter se assidue agentes, penitus deuastabant.”

Thanks to the Saxons' treachery, Gormundus and a hundred and sixty thousand Africans crossed to Britain, which was being laid completely waste, on the one side by the faithless Saxons, and on the other by the continual civil wars waged by its own citizens.¹¹²

Geoffrey does not castigate the African invaders, as though it is only natural that armies would invade Britain given the opportunity. Instead, it is the traitorous, faithless Saxons who are responsible for the invasion. While the Britons are falling from grace, the Saxons are inherently and unchangeably faithless, unable to participate in modern society. While King Gormundus may be a usurper, we are reminded again that his invasion was only possible because of “. . .

¹¹² Geoffrey of Monmouth, xi.184.125-8. This bit of the *DGB* is racially interesting, as Geoffrey de-racializes Gormundus to some extent. While Gormundus is based on an invading Saracen from the French *Gormont et Isembart*, as Cohen notes, his African origins are de-emphasized in the *DGB*. It seems that Geoffrey de-emphasizes race when such a move suits his narrative, such as in the case of St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins and Gormundus. See Cohen, “Race,” 110.

Saxonibus, quorum prodicione applicuerat,” “the Saxons, through whose treachery he had landed.”¹¹³

After Arthur’s reign ends, the Christ-like Brianus narrates the full tale of Saxon treachery to King Caduallo, from their deception of Vortigern up until their aid to King Gormundus, characterizing Saxons as perpetual traitors, despite the friendship between Edwinus and Caduallo.¹¹⁴ While there is a touch of sadness to this speech, considering the previous friendship between Edwinus and Caduallo, and a slightly judgmental tone in the narration of Caduallo’s attempted genocide of Saxons in Britain, Geoffrey reiterates the deceitful treachery of the Saxons in a pious and noble speech by Cadualadrus.¹¹⁵

Ultimately, Geoffrey may portray the Welsh as a people fallen from their noble, ancient roots, but if we contextualize the *DGB*’s portrayal of the peoples of Britain, it becomes clear that he is elevating their current position. In throwing a “Molotov cocktail” at the Anglocentric orientation of Bede, William of Malmesbury, and Henry of Huntingdon, Geoffrey shifts the place of Britons and the Welsh in the contemporary racial dynamic of Britain.¹¹⁶ However, such a move does not necessarily serve anti-colonial ends or support Welsh sovereignty. As Kinoshita notes, imperialism hybridizes itself as a means of spreading and consolidating power.¹¹⁷ The *DGB* provides the opportunity for Anglo-Norman empire to spread, incorporating the peoples whom it contacts. Historically, this technique was highly effective. Within the more immediate context of Geoffrey’s world, he provides the possibility for the existence of people like himself:

¹¹³ Geoffrey of Monmouth, xi.186.157.

¹¹⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, xi.191.258-77.

¹¹⁵ On Edwinus and Brianus’s friendship and falling out, Geoffrey of Monmouth, *DGB*, Wright, xi.191. On Caduallo’s campaign to exterminate the English race, xi.198-9 and xi.200.481-90. On Cadualadrus’s speech regarding “*uersutae prodicionis Saxones*” see xi.203.532-44.

¹¹⁶ Cohen, *Difficult Middles*, 65.

¹¹⁷ Kinoshita, “Translatio/n,” 122.

ethnically hybrid people, caught not between a superior and a fallen race, but the product of productive mixing.

Geoffrey develops a descent-based model of the sliding scale of race, in which an individual's essential qualities (for better or for worse) are inherited from ancestors belonging to one's *gens*, and an individual's descendants may shift based on marriage patterns. While kinship groups within a single *natio* or *populus* are extremely significant in the *DGB* (containing the genesis for a quadripartite division of Britain) the ontological reality of race manifests in multiple ways. At the far end of the sliding scale of race are Geoffrey's giants, who are monstrously embodied and racialized as non-Christian peoples; Britain's very existence, and the Briton identity itself, depend upon their extermination. Given this extreme example of Geoffrey's Latin Christian dread of exogamous miscegenation, it is surprising that the *DGB* condemns Conan's desire to ensure racial purity for the Britons who found Brittany. Geoffrey is highly specific about delineations upon the sliding scale of race, with the Picts and Saxons ranking low and the Welsh and Normans ranking high. Overall, Geoffrey's poetics of race crystallize around a specific project: negotiating the Welsh into a spot adjacent to that of the Normans upon the sliding scale of race and thus facilitating the hybridization of British cultures. Geoffrey's depiction of race is not reducible to his lexicon of words such as *gens* or *populus*; situational readings reveal whether relationships between peoples are kin-based or racially-based. Like much of the *DGB*, Geoffrey's treatment of race is as varied and rich as we might expect of a text composed in the diverse milieu of twelfth-century Britain.

CHAPTER 2: Operating *Druy Duyll*: The Racialization of Treachery in the *Gesta regum Anglorum* and the *Brut y Tywysogion*

2.1 Introduction

Geoffrey's representation of treachery as a distinctly racial failing reflects a common belief in the post-colonial situation of high medieval Britain: that rejection of Anglo-Norman feudal systems and ideologies was perceived as inability to adapt to a civilizing world. Resistance itself, then, was racialized. This chapter reads the Middle Welsh continuation of Geoffrey's history against the Latin chronicle of William of Malmesbury to demonstrate that the concept of treachery itself was a major tool in the rhetorical/racial struggles of high medieval England and Wales.

The Middle Welsh *Brut y Tywysogion* has been rightly treated as an invaluable source of Welsh historical information, but the text's participation in the poetics of racial differentiation in the British chronicle tradition has yet to be fully understood or appreciated. Scholars have noted that anti-Welsh rhetoric manifests throughout the literatures of various colonizing forces in Britain, from the Romans to the Normans; in fact, Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones' recent work lists racial inferiority as a major element of Norman colonialist discourse.¹¹⁸ Medieval scholarship is increasingly discovering the fruitfulness of exploring medieval race relations through the vocabularies of postcolonial and critical race theory. While multiple modes of developing and expressing racial difference existed in medieval Britain, this chapter traces the

¹¹⁸ Meecham-Jones, "Introduction," 2. Also see Huw Pryce, "British or Welsh?" National Identity in Twelfth-Century Wales," *English Historical Review*, CXVI, no. 468 (1 Sept. 2001): 775-801, and Gillingham, "The Beginnings of English Imperialism," in *The English in the Twelfth Century*, 3-18. It is important to note that other anti-Welsh tropes, though not the specific topic of this chapter, include the closely-linked tropes of barbarism and bestiality. More writers participated in this tradition than is possible to name here.

particular trope of treachery as it was deployed in the Latin chronicle traditions of both the Welsh and the English.

As Chapter 1 establishes, medievalists are increasingly turning their attention to the manifestation of racial difference in the Middle Ages. Just fifteen years ago, Thomas Hahn observed that

the disconnect between dominant medieval racial discourses—dynamic, effective, even pernicious systems of identity in their own terms—and the common assumption that color constitutes the default category of difference no doubt explains . . . the lack of interest in . . . race studies on the part of professional medievalists . . . and the general absence of attention to the Middle Ages among those engaged with racial identities as mechanisms or tropes of difference.¹¹⁹

While medieval European discourses of race depended upon color to a greater extent than Hahn here suggests, it is true that modern scholarship has overlooked medieval operations of race. The rift between modern discourses of race and medieval studies has narrowed since Hahn's comments.¹²⁰ Geraldine Heng's work, in particular, has left an indelible mark on the study of medieval racial systems. Heng connects the new wave of scholarship like hers to the traditional when she notes that

Medievalists . . . have long been interested in questions of race. Earlier scholarship conjured with 'the Celtic races,' Germanic stock,' 'Indo-Europeans,' 'the Anglo-Saxon

¹¹⁹ Thomas Hahn, "The Difference the Middle Ages Makes," 8.

¹²⁰ See Ramey, Whitaker (2013), and Whitaker (2015).

race,' *inter alia*, as more than contingently heuristic categories, and discussed relationships between ethnicity, lineage, tribe, *natio*, *gens*, blood, linguistic affiliations, ties to territory, etc Importantly, medievalists have shown that studying the Middle Ages reconfigures our understanding of key contemporary concepts such as gender, sexuality, national formations, and even literacy. Race should prove little exception.¹²¹

As a contribution to this growing form of scholarship, this chapter approaches the medieval British discourse of racial difference, as it manifests in the chronicle tradition, from a framework that understands racial difference as constituted in its very articulation. In other words, the thread of racial discourse which I explore here not only responds ideas about racial difference, but constitutes racial difference itself. Ultimately, I argue that articulation of racial difference, specifically in the trope of treachery, manifests in the *Brut y Tywysogion* (hereafter referred to as the *ByT*, to differentiate from its Latin Brut source) as a response to the trope's appearance in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum*. By understanding the *ByT* not merely as a repository of historical fact, but as an anti-imperialist text which inverts the discourse of racial inferiority used by the *Ffreinc* (to borrow the *ByT*'s term for the people we might call Anglo-Norman or English), we may better understand the text's efforts to portray the Welsh not as morally defunct, but as clever practitioners of what I term expedient complicity, a postcolonial process by which a subjugated group feigns willing compliance with oppressors in order to gain the benefits that come with identification with the powerful. This concept is linked to Homi Bhabha's notion of sly civility, in which colonized people do not protest a colonizer's actions but

¹²¹ Heng, "The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages," *Literature Compass* 8, no. 5 (2011): 315-31, 327.

politely avoid them.¹²² While sly civility and expedient complicity are both interpreted by the colonizer as duplicity, and thus often pointed to as evidence of the moral depredation of the colonized people, expedient complicity refers not to avoidance of resistance or compliance, but to necessary and full cooperation on the part of the subjugated party—until such cooperation becomes unnecessary.¹²³

The re-framing of medieval race relations in postcolonial terms contributes to the growing body of scholarship which seeks to elucidate relationships between medieval European racial and ethnic groups in clearer terms than traditional paradigms might achieve. For example, one of R. R. Davies's contributions to the study of empire in post-Conquest Britain points to how the Irish and Welsh learned to manipulate English perceptions of Welsh and Irish bestiality and wildness:

One Irishman prefaced his petition by describing himself as 'a resident at the end of the world in the Irish parts'. A Welsh cleric was even more *wily*: asked to accompany one of Henry II's knights on a reconnaissance of a part of south-west Wales, he resorted to eating grass and roots, thereby ensuring that a report was duly sent back to the king that this was indeed a God-forsaken country fit only for a bestial race of people. [emphasis added]¹²⁴

¹²² Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, Chapter 5, demonstrates this concept with the tale of a European Archdeacon's anger at a group of American natives. In 1818, these natives who had accepted Christianity passively failed to attend confession, out of fear that the Christian missionaries would use confession as a method of surveillance.

¹²³ Corinne G. Dempsey, *Kerala Christian Sainthood: Collisions of Culture and Worldview in South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), uses the notion of expedient complicity to explore the cult of St George in the hybridized religious and cultural milieu of Kerala. Dempsey's use of the concept allows for a nuanced understanding of how Keralites appropriated an icon from a colonial structure, thus demonstrating a level of expedient complicity (p. 37).

¹²⁴ R. R. Davies, *The First English Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 119.

Davies demonstrates how Irish and Welsh peoples turned negative stereotypes to their own benefit, and uses the term *wily* to express this clever technique. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen takes up this same episode from Gerald of Wales's *Itinerarium Kambriae* but interprets the events through a postcolonial framework, which allows us to dispense with pejoratives in favor of more precise language. When Henry II sent a Norman-Breton noble to scout Pencader with the Welsh dean Guaidan, Guaidan led the Breton through difficult track ways, and would eat a handful of grass when he saw it. Because the Breton reported that the area was terrible and yielded nothing but grass to feed the bestial Welsh inhabitants, Henry II decided the area was not worth taking. He therefore gave the land to Prince Rhys ap Gruffydd to hold in tenure. Cohen identifies Guaidan as practicing sly civility, the methods by which an oppressed group resists an oppressor through polite avoidance.¹²⁵

Just as we can understand the Grass-Eating Welshman's "wily" negotiation of his precarious subject position in England's first empire as a move of sly civility, we can use the concept of expedient complicity to better understand how the *ByT*'s representation of historical events can differ so dramatically from the representation of the same events which William of Malmesbury produces.¹²⁶ Ultimately, such a study enhances modern understanding of how medieval racial difference manifested and functioned across two linked, yet often diametrically opposed, medieval British literary spheres: Welsh and English literatures.

¹²⁵ Cohen, *Difficult Middles*, Chapter 3. Emphasis added.

¹²⁶ A useful, descriptive parallel for this semantic shift appears in Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity," in which Bartlett writes that "Revising our vocabulary is not in itself meritorious. To distinguish sex and gender is to observe the world in a more nuanced way. To relabel sex as gender has the intellectual value of preferring pine furniture to mahogany" (41). Landmark medieval postcolonial studies include Cohen, *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Patricia Clare Ingham and Michelle Warren, *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval through Modern* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and Warren, *History on the Edge*.

2.2 Origins of the Trope of Welsh Treachery: *Twyll* and *Perfidia*

The notion of Welsh racial inferiority has its origins in channels of learned, Latinate culture which predate the *ByT*, but William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum* represents a landmark codification of this notion. Indeed, William is a key actor in the "monsterization of the Welsh" which "took on a special urgency in the twelfth century," due to the military difficulties which the Welsh posed to King Stephen,¹²⁷ and Kennedy and Meecham-Jones acknowledge William, along with Bede, as a foundational anti-Welsh writer in the imperialist project of "England's First Empire."¹²⁸ Davies, too, identifies William (along with Henry of Huntingdon) as having "defined the essence and trajectory of what one may call political and social Englishness," a definition which necessarily identifies the Other, the non-English, as subaltern.¹²⁹

The specific trope of Welsh treachery, however, has literary origins as early as Gildas's *De excidio Britanniae*. This is not to over-emphasize Gildas's role in anti-Welsh rhetoric, however; if later writers found his invectives against his own people to be useful fodder for their own imperialist agenda, we cannot conclude that Gildas participated in that agenda. However, his statements have been echoed after his own time, meaning that his work cannot be excluded from treatment in this analysis of anti-Welsh rhetoric.

¹²⁷ Cohen, *Difficult Middles*, 92.

¹²⁸ See Davies, *The First English Empire*. Other 12th century Latin writers of Britain doubtlessly contributed to anti-Welsh racism. Geoffrey of Monmouth, for example, bestows a prestigious history upon the Welsh, but packages the history for Norman colonists and perpetuates the notion of the Welsh as a deservedly subjugated race. The *Gesta Stephani*, in its support for Stephen during the Civil War, demonizes the Welsh for their contributions to Matilda's campaign. See Michael Faletra, *Wales and the Medieval Colonial Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) for thorough coverage of what he terms the "Galfridian legacy" of the four colonial discourses theorized by Kennedy and Meecham-Jones.

¹²⁹ Davies, *The First English Empire*, 116.

The *De excidio Britanniae*, though not a chronicle in the strictest sense, has been valued as one by both medieval and modern scholarship due to its status as the lone extant Cambro-Latin text from the sixth century. This text, mainly an invective against the sinful Britons by the British writer Gildas, was composed circa 540 AD and is hostile enough for D. Rhys Phillips to surmise that Gildas's migration to Brittany late in his life was no migration at all: instead, "[p]robably Gildas as well as his relatives had to flee from Wales to escape the wrath of those he had attacked: he had hurled the contents of the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocrypha, at the heads of his countrymen."¹³⁰ It is well known that Gildas establishes anti-Welsh rhetoric which would be perpetuated for centuries, but his origination of the trope of Welsh treachery, situated as deeply as it is in religious doctrine and language, has not been fully realized. The fact that Gildas was, himself, British, affects how we read his motivations, but not the results of his rhetoric. Like Biblical prophets' castigations of their own peoples, or Wulfstan's sermon to the Anglo-Saxons, *De excidio* seems to have been designed for internal circulation. Gildas establishes criticisms of the Welsh people wholesale, perhaps hoping that they will inspire change, or at least fear; however, these wholesale criticisms took on an unfortunate afterlife, surviving even into Ranulph Higden's fourteenth-century *Polychronicon*.¹³¹

Obviously, Gildas sees the sins of his race as collective and all-encompassing, as he points twice to the sins of his people as being biologically ingrained, even more so than the natural fallen state of "*omnibus gentibus*" "all races."¹³² He writes of his race that "*illud veluti*

¹³⁰ See D. Rhys Phillips, *The Romantic History of the Monastic Libraries of Wales: From the Fifth to the Sixteenth Centuries* (Swansea: Published by author, 1912).

¹³¹ See the "Closing" section of this thesis.

¹³² References to Gildas are from *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and other Works*, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom (Chicester, UK: Phillimore, 1978), Section 4.2. Because this edition contains an English translation with the Latin as an appendix, quotes are cited by section and sub-sections rather than page numbers. This system facilitates clearer reference to both the English and Latin, since the edition is not facing-page. Translations are Winterbottom's unless otherwise noted.

ingenitum quid et indelebile insipientiae pondus et levitatis ineluctabile” “it has as though inborn in it a load of ignorance and folly that cannot be erased or avoided” and laments the “*inolorum scelerum*” “congenital sins” of his people.¹³³ These comments form the origin of anti-Welsh rhetoric in the later Middle Ages, a rhetoric which depends largely on the notion of racial inferiority.

Among the failings of the Welsh race, which include the sins of fornication, gluttony, and laziness, is the proclivity to rebellion; in fact, the Britons always “*ingrata consurgit*” “ungratefully rebel” against leaders, including those from across the sea.¹³⁴ They rebel specifically through ignoble means. The “*leaena dolosa*,” “treacherous lioness” understood by scholars to be Boudica, leads a host of “*vulpeculas*” “tricky foxes” against Roman leaders, but these “*perfidiorum*” “treacherous ones” are quickly slaughtered or enslaved.¹³⁵ According to Gildas, Boudica’s rebellion and subsequent British cowardice and defeat result in the internationally known proverb that the “*Britanni nec in bello fortes sint nec in pace fideles*” “British are neither courageous in war nor faithful in peace.”¹³⁶ Gildas makes clear that the faithlessness of individual British leaders such as Boudica is not confined to isolated cases, but symptomatic and demonstrative of a spiritual defectiveness shared by the Briton people. Through the rhetorical method of accumulation, Gildas demonstrates what seems to be general British *perfidia*: faithlessness, deceit, and treachery.

¹³³ Gildas, 1.13; 1.14.

¹³⁴ Gilas, 4. 1.

¹³⁵ Gildas, 6.1; 6.2; and 7, respectively. In the first two quotes we see an example of animalization in anti-Welsh rhetoric, a common method of creating and expressing racial difference.

¹³⁶ Gildas, 6.2. Translation is mine.

His characterization of General Maximus, the historic figure who would become a beloved national hero in some stories,¹³⁷ provides a key example of treacherous Welsh habits. Maximus operates “*callida primum arte potius quam virtute*” “by means of cunning rather than virtue.” He is also not a Roman in any meaningful way, but is implied to be thoroughly British when Gildas describes the situation of Britain which allowed for Maximus’s treachery. Gildas writes:

Itemque tandem tyrannorum virgultis crescentibus et in immanem silvam iam iamque erumpentibus insula, nomen Romanum nec tamen morem legemque tenens, quin potius abiciens germen suae plantationis amarissimae, ad Gallias. . . Maximum mittit.

At length the tyrant thickets increased and were all but bursting into a savage forest. The island was still Roman in name, but not by law and custom. Rather, it cast forth a seed of its own bitter planting, and sent Maximus to Gaul . . .¹³⁸

Maximus is no conquering Roman hero, but a stereotypically treacherous Briton.¹³⁹ Thus far in the text Gildas has argued that the entire Welsh race is inherently fallen and its war heroes are treacherous, tricky, and cunning. Gildas himself is British, but holds himself as an exception to the general character of the Britons. Britain’s spiritual leaders are no different from the general

¹³⁷ For a modern English translation, see Sioned Davies, ed. and trans., “Dream of Macsen” in the *Mabinogion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For the Middle Welsh see Brynley F. Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2005).

¹³⁸ Gildas, 1.13. Winterbottom translates this as “deceitful.”

¹³⁹ According to Alheydis Plassman, Gildas uses Maximus to represent the apex of Briton *infidelitas*. See “Gildas and the Negative Image of the Cymry,” *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 41 (Summer 2001): 1-16.

population, as Gildas reveals in his complaints against the clergy and deacons, who are “*raptores subdolos*” “treacherous grabbers” and “*bilingues*” “two-tongued,” respectively.¹⁴⁰ Gildas clearly establishes a wealth of invectives against the Britons who came before him, thus also disparaging his own people, the Welsh. Gildas’s harsh criticism of his own people takes on a racial valence, whether his intent was to do so or not. The unwavering deceitfulness of the entire people is particularly present in the *De excidio Britanniae*, a foundational text for subsequent historiography in Britain. Essentially, treachery becomes the defining vice of the Welsh.

This thread of racial rhetoric also lodges in Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, though, as with Gildas, we cannot ascribe the later Anglo-Norman imperialist project to his work. Still, it must be noted that “neither in the Chronicle nor in [*Historia Ecclesiastica*] did Bede ever fail to alter the wording of the passages that he cited from the British monk Gildas.”¹⁴¹ While Bede draws on direct quotations from the Spanish priest Orosius, he deliberately modifies the language of his British source—a potential reflection of Bede’s general low opinion of British abilities, which produced texts in need of improvement.

Bede’s low opinion of the British race manifests in his description of General Maximus, which reinforces the connection between Britain and treachery established by Gildas. During a particularly turbulent time for the Roman Empire,

. . . *Maximus uir quidem strenuus et probus, atque Augusto dignus nisi contra sacramenti fidem per tyrannidem emersisset, in Britanniam inuitus propemodum ab exercitu imperator creatus in Galliam transit. Ibi Gratianum Augustum subita incursione*

¹⁴⁰ Gildas, 66.1; 109. 2.

¹⁴¹ “Introduction,” by Judith McClure and Roger Collins, in Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), XXV.

*perterritum, atque in Italiam transire meditantem, dolis circumuentum interfecit,
fratremque eius Ualentinianum Augustum Italia expulit.*

. . . an energetic and upright man named Maximus, one worthy of the title of Augustus had he not risen to the rank of dictator by breaking his oath of allegiance, was elected emperor by the army in Britain almost against his will, and crossed to Gaul. There he treacherously murdered the Emperor Gratian, who had been terrified by the sudden incursion and was intending to cross into Italy. Maximus also drove from Italy Gratian's brother, the Emperor Valentinian . . . ¹⁴²

Bede's modifications from Gildas's narrative include praise of Maximus's good character and political potential, if only the army in Britain had not urged him to murder his rightful Emperor *dolis*, or by deceit. It seems almost that Bede is reluctant to depict Maximus as wholly evil; however, while Gildas used the adjective "*dolosa*" to describe Boudica's rebellion, Bede applies the same term to Maximus. This shift reflects a scathing indictment of the man who would become so beloved in Welsh vernacular folk tale.

Bede's critiques of the British people are too numerous to fully discuss here, but he develops the association of the Britons with the practice of treachery throughout the first book of the *Historia*. The fifth-century heretic "*Pelagius Bretto*" "Briton Pelagius" spreads "*uenena suae perfidiae*" "his treacherous venom."¹⁴³ In a time of peace and plenty, the Britons

¹⁴² Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, eds. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (1969), i.IX, 36-7. References to the *Ecclesiastical History* taken from Colgrave and Mynors.

¹⁴³ Bede, i.X, 38-9.

. . . *omnium lues scelerum comitari adceleravit, crudelitas / praecipue et odium ueritatis amorque mendacii, ita ut, si quis eorum mitior et ueritati aliquatenus proprior uideretur, in hunc quasi Britanniae subuersorem omnium odia telaque sine respectu contorquerentur.*

. . . commit every kind of foul crime; in particular, cruelty and hatred of the truth and love of lying increased so that if anyone appeared to be milder than the rest and somewhat more inclined to the truth, the rest, without consideration, rained execrations and missiles upon him as if he had been an enemy of Britain.¹⁴⁴

This example is not remarkable for its indictment of Pelagius, but for its use of the adjective *perfidiae* to describe Pelagius's dealings. The latter example elaborates on Bede's view of the Britons as faithless. This excerpt invites the reader to construct a belief about the Britons on a system of negative logic: if a *faithful* man is the enemy of Britain, clearly a *faithless* man is an ally of Britain.

Much of the *Historia* elaborates on Briton savagery and apostasy, building upon Gildas's view of Briton spiritual failings, and Book V provides a summary of general Briton failings, as part of Bede's final description of the state of Britain's indigenous peoples. While the Picts have agreed to cooperate with the English and the church, and the Irish live peacefully and "*nil contra gentem Anglorum insidiarum moliuntur aut fraudium*" "devise no plots or treachery against the English," the Britons, it is implied, through the same negative logic which Bede uses in the

¹⁴⁴ Bede, i.XV, 48-9.

example above, *do* devise plots and treachery against the English.¹⁴⁵ However, such treachery will come to naught, according to Bede:

Brettones, quamuis et maxima ex parte domestica sibi odio gentem Anglorum, et totius catholicae ecclesiae statum pascha minus recto moribusque inprobis inpugnent, tamen et diuina sibi et humana prorsus resistente uirtute in neutro cupitum possunt obtinere propositum . . .

Though, for the most part, the Britons oppose the English through their inbred hatred, and the whole state of the catholic Church by their incorrect Easter and their evil customs, yet being opposed by the power of God and man alike, they cannot obtain what they want in either respect.¹⁴⁶

Because of treacherous Briton resistance of English and ecclesiastical colonization, crimes which the Welsh have added to the sins which Gildas berates, Bede suggests that the Britons are unworthy of anything they own. While the ultimate reason that Britons deserve their sufferings may be their failure to adhere to Roman church law and custom, and refusal to support the Roman mission to convert the new English population of Britain, their behavior is invariably treacherous. As Renée Trilling notes, these fundamental failings of the Britons result in divine punishment in the form of the Saxon conquest.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Bede, v. XXIII, 560-1.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Renée Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia: Historical Representation in Old English Verse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

Key to Bede's argument, and subsequent arguments about Briton (and later Welsh) resistance, is the notion that the resistance to colonization *is in and of itself* a sign that the colonizer has a rightful claim to lands. The logic, in essence, is circular. Because Britons deserve oppression for their sins, God allows the pagan Saxons to colonize Britain. In turn, because the Britons refuse to accept their punishment with deference and instead resist colonization, they deserve further punishment. Above, Bede characterizes Briton resistance to the English race and the Roman church as a racial predilection, and such resistance, it is implied, constitutes the deservedness of Welsh subjection to outside forces.

2.3 The *Cymry* in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum*

The notion that Welsh subjection is well-deserved due to racial inferiority, largely signified through the Welsh practice of *perfidium*, continues into post-Conquest Latin chronicle. William of Malmesbury's self-proclaimed, and well-demonstrated, knowledge of the British chronicle tradition tells us that he inherited the anti-Welsh rhetoric of his forerunners. In fact, William clearly sees himself as a successor to Bede in many ways. The *Gesta regum Anglorum* opens with this introduction:

Res Anglorum gestas Beda, uir maxime doctus et minime superbus, ab aduentu eorum in Britanniam usque ad suos dies plano et suaui sermone absoluit; post eum non facile, ut arbitror, reperies qui historiis illius gentis Latina oratione texendis animum dederit Vnde michi cum propter patriae caritatem, tum propter adhortantium auctoritatem uoluntati fuit interruptam temporum seriem sarcire et exarata barbarice Romano sale condire; et, ut res ordinatius procedat,

*aliqua ex his quae sepe dicendus Beda dixit deflorabo, pauca perstringens,
pluribus ualefatiens.*

The history of the English, from their arrival in Britain to his own time, has been told with straightforward charm by Bede, most learned and least proud of men. After Bede you will not easily, I think, find anyone who has devoted himself to writing the history of this people in Latin It was therefore my design, in part moved by love of my country and in part encouraged by influential friends, to mend the broken chain of our history, and give a Roman polish to the rough annals of our native speech. To make clear the sequence of events, I will give a selection from the work of Bede, to whom I shall often have to refer, touching on a few points and letting most go by.¹⁴⁸

Thus William's views of the Welsh,¹⁴⁹ influenced as they are by Bede and Gildas, represent a long and well-established history of anti-Welsh rhetoric. It is undeniable that, generally speaking, William is concerned with collective identities within Britain. Robert Bartlett has noted William's near-obsession with the concept of *gens*, a term which appears around one

¹⁴⁸ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, Vol 1, Book i, Prologue, 14-5. Translations have been slightly modified from those of Mynors, Thomson, and Winterbottom. This edition will be referenced throughout this chapter, as its marriage of manuscript versions B and C, with supplemental additions from versions A and T is adequate for present purposes. Version C^e as it appears in London, British Library MS Royal 13 D II is most relevant to the discussion below, and its representation in Mynors, Thomson, and Winterbottom is particularly appropriate to this project.

¹⁴⁹ The origins of the Anglo-Saxon word for the Britons, *wealh*, has been much debated. Meaning either "foreigner" or "slave," possibly either depending on context, this word is used here because William himself adopts the term. See Simon Meecham-Jones, "Where Was Wales?" and Peter Robson, "'Feorran Broht': Exeter Riddle 12 Commodifying the Exotic," in *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales*, eds. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 71-84.

hundred times in the text, and can be translated as people, nation, or race.¹⁵⁰ (Bede's *Historia* is riddled with references to *nostrae gentis*, and Bede's concern with the concept no doubt contributes to William's interest in the notion of race.)¹⁵¹ Above, it appears in the very first sentence of the *Gesta regum Anglorum* as *illius gentis*, referring to the English as Bede would have defined that group. As the child of a Norman and an Englishwoman, William's concern with *gens* is intensely personal as well as scholarly, since William seeks to fashion a new Britain in which Norman and Anglo-Saxon races merge into a new world in which William's hybrid identity is acceptable.¹⁵² The Welsh provide a convenient racial alterity by which a new English identity can emerge.¹⁵³

William's first contribution to the trope of Welsh treachery appears in the first few pages of the *Gesta*, following the pattern set by Gildas and Bede. After Britain has been rightfully subjected as a province of the Roman Empire, the now-infamous, treacherous, Maximus appears:

. . . *Maximus, homo imperio aptus si non contra fidem ad tirannidem anhelasset, quasi ab exercitu impulsus purpuram induit, statimque in Galliam transitum parans ex prouintia omnem pene militem abrasit Ita cum tiranni nullum in agris preter semibarbaros,*

¹⁵⁰ See Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity."

¹⁵¹ Bede, i.XXX, 106-7, provides an example of this concern.

¹⁵² See Bartlett, "Race and Ethnicity," and Cohen, *Difficult Middles*, Chapter 2.

¹⁵³ This is not to suggest that Welsh racial alterity alone was harnessed by the emerging English race for the purpose of unification. The ever-present Saracen threat provides an even more potent source of alterity, and William's implicit treatment of the Welsh and Saracens as parallel threats blossoms in Gerald of Wales's work, as I discuss in an upcoming piece. For the key study on the treatment of Saracens in medieval Britain, see Heng, *Empire of Magic*. Anti-Irish rhetoric is another particular favorite of British writers, prominent in Bede and, to an even greater extent, William's work. As Kathy Lavezzo's *Angels on the Edge of the World: Geography, Literature, and English Community, 1000-1434* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006) argues, William takes care to delete any of Bede's material that was complimentary toward the Irish. See "Gerald de Barri and the Geography of Ireland's Conquest," *Angels on the Edge of the World*, 46-70. And, of course, the potency of anti-semitism in this period cannot be overlooked. See Cohen, "The Flow of Blood in Norwich," *Difficult Middles*, 139-174.

nullum in urbibus preter uentri deditos reliquissent, Britannia omni patrocínio iuuenilis uigoris uiduata, omni exercitio atrium exinanita, conterminarum gentium inhiationi diu obnoxia fuit.

. . . Maximus, a worthy candidate for empire had he not *treacherously* aspired to absolute power, assumed the purple as though under compulsion from the army and, making immediate preparations to cross into Gaul, stripped the province of nearly all its troops . . . Thus these petty dictators had left no men in the countryside save half-barbarians, and none in the towns save those whose god was their belly; and Britain, robbed of the youthful strength of her defenders and despoiled of all skill in the arts, long lay exposed to the greed of neighboring peoples.¹⁵⁴

William presents a narrative of British history in which the Welsh figure of Maximus (known as Maccen Wledig in the *Mabinogion's Dream of Maccen* and the Romano-British Maximianus in Geoffrey of Monmouth's text) acts not bravely, but treacherously. This treachery on the part of a petty dictator, according to William, leads to the utter depravity of the native Briton people. Due to a Romano-British leader's quest to take over the Roman Empire, Britons collapse into barbarism, gluttony, cultural poverty, and weakness. The removal of Maximianus's toxic presence in Britain does not signify the removal of Briton decadence; instead, their only possible opportunity to develop a prestigious civilization through Latinity (transmitted through Roman imperialism) fails. Treachery itself is responsible for Briton—and, it can be concluded, ultimately Welsh—racial inferiority.

¹⁵⁴ William of Malmesbury, i.2, 18-19.

In following episodes, William reserves some praise for Arthur's valorous defense of his people against barbaric invaders (with the assistance of Ambrosius, the sole remaining Briton Roman, of course) but tempers this praise with a criticism of William's own Welsh contemporaries, whose "nugae . . . delirant" ["trifles rave"] about fictions and "fallaces somniarent fabulae" [dream of false fantasies].¹⁵⁵ This criticism demonstrates William's willingness to portray British valor, represented through tales of Arthurian victories, only as situated safely in the past; however, contemporary Welsh notions of their own valorous past are apparently ridiculous.¹⁵⁶ William's seeming praise of British resistance to barbarian colonization hinges upon his view of colonization by Romans or Normans as positive influences upon the Britons. The only sort of anti-colonization movements by the Britons which are praiseworthy are those resisting invasion by the Anglo-Saxons. Therefore, William's praise of Britons might be interpreted as castigation of the English of his own time, placing the ancient Britons just above the lowly status of the English. However, William's treatment of the Anglo-Saxons improves significantly after their conversion to Christianity, suggesting that his praise of British resistance to the Anglo-Saxons harks back to Gildas's laments of the apocalyptic consequences of pagan invasions of Britain.

William's views on the English and French are complex ones (made more complicated by William's own ethnic hybridity), but his views on the Welsh are rather simpler. Perhaps William and other writers allied to the Anglo-Norman hegemony of the twelfth and thirteenth

¹⁵⁵ William of Malmesbury, i.8, 26-27.

¹⁵⁶ This perception that tales are dangerous because of their potential to foment rebellion among the Welsh was widespread; for example, the *Vita of Edward II* says that tales of the vatic Merlin (Welsh Myrddin) cause the "mad Welsh" to rebel. See R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 436. It is also important to note, however, that Welsh vitae sometimes portray Arthur unfavorably. William's criticism of *Welsh storytelling* is a key indicator of his attitude toward the Welsh, not his criticism of Arthur alone.

centuries (such as Gerald of Wales) were right to fear Welsh literary traditions, since, as Patricia Clare Ingham has shown, the power of the imagination was crucial to creating notions of union in late medieval Britain. It is possible that William's anxiety about the power of traditional Welsh storytelling betrays the very power of fantasy's role in the political and ethnogenetic maelstroms of post-Conquest Britain.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, William's mockery of Welsh "fantasies" of their own history betrays his anxiety about the power inherent in fables of ethnic identity.

William amplifies his criticism of the Welsh in his own time in Book 5 of the *Gesta*. The central issue, it seems, is Welsh rebellion against what Falettra calls the second Norman conquest, the invasion of Britain which began in earnest two decades after the conquest of 1066.¹⁵⁸

William writes:

*Walenses rex Henricus, semper in rebellionem surgentes, crebris expeditionibus in
deditionem premebat, consilioque salubri nixus, ut eorum tumorem extenuaret,
Flandrenses omnes Angliae accolae eo traduxit. Plures enim, qui tempore patris pro
materna cognatione confluerant, occultabat Anglia, adeo ut ipsi regno pro multitudine
onerosi uiderentur; quapropter cum substantiis et necessitudinibus apud Ros, prouintiam
Walliarum, uelut in sentinam connessit, ut et regnum defecaret et hostium brutam
temeritatem retunderet.*

¹⁵⁷ See Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies*. For full treatment of the role of Arthuriana in the delineations of medieval Britain, see Warren, *History on the Edge*. Siân Echard's *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), specifically "This is that Arthur": chronicle responses of Arthur' (Chapter 2), 68-106, is the authority on the matter of Arthur in British Latin chronicle.

¹⁵⁸ Falettra, *Wales and the Medieval Colonial Imagination*, 3.

The Welsh were in constant revolt, and King Henry maintained pressure on them by frequent expeditions until they surrendered; also, in reliance on an admirable plan for reducing their ebullience, he removed into Wales all the Flemings who were living in England. Many Flemings who had trooped over in his father's time, relying on their kinship with his mother, were lying low in England, in such numbers as actually to seem a burden on the realm itself; and so he collected them all together, as though into some great midden, in the Welsh province of Rhos, with all their belongings and relatives, thereby simultaneously purging his kingdom and putting a brake on his headstrong and barbarous enemies.¹⁵⁹

This strategic design of settler colonialism by Henry I, and William's approval of this move, indicates the low political and social position of the Welsh from an Anglo-Norman perspective. After the settlement, Henry himself travels to the area to maintain surveillance of the Flemish settlement in Wales. Danger strikes quickly, when a mysterious arrow strikes Henry's mailcoat. By Divine Providence, according to William, this "*perfidia*" comes to naught, and it is unclear whether a Welshman or Norman actually fired the arrow.¹⁶⁰ The link between Wallia and *perfidia*, however, is evident—it seems possible that Wales itself contaminates travelers with its association with treachery. This association is even more explicit in an earlier episode of the *Gesta*.

William's record of Norman frustration with the constant rebellion in Wales points to another illustrative episode. When Robert of Bellême rebels against Henry, fortifying the castles

¹⁵⁹ William of Malmesbury, v.401.2, 726-7. This is a rather polite translation of the passage, which orients the Flemish people as feces being defecated by the English king into the dung heap that is Wales.

¹⁶⁰ William of Malmesbury, v.401, 726-9.

of Bridgnorth and Arundel against him, the Welsh force at Shrewsbury joins the rebellion. Here William refers to the Welsh as “*pro motu fortunae ad malum pronis*” “being always ready to do ill, as changing fortunate leads.”¹⁶¹ This indictment of the Welsh as changeable, never loyal but always prepared to commit ill toward the king, is characteristic of the anti-Welsh rhetoric which runs throughout the British chronicle tradition.

The overall treatment of the Welsh in the *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, both in areas of the text based on earlier histories and areas of the text original to William, is negative in the extreme, and based on a view of Welsh changeability and frequent resistance as evidence of the Welsh moral failing of general faithlessness.¹⁶² This moral failing seems to be an exceptionally severe one in William’s world; after a treacherous Breton lord at Rouen rebels against King Henry I, the king’s brother wishes to imprison the lord. But the king leads the lord to the top of a tower, jesting that soon all of Rouen will belong to the lord after all—Henry then pushes the lord off the battlements. The king explains that “*illius uero qui tibi iuratus fecerit hominum nullo modo posse differri suplitium, si fuerit probatus perfidiae*” “if a man who has done homage on his oath is proved a traitor, his punishment can in no wise be deferred.”¹⁶³ For the Norman kings, and in the spiritual judgment of William himself, treachery is the ultimate crime.

¹⁶¹ William of Malmesbury, v.396, 718-9

¹⁶² Although William’s disdain for the early British as weak without the Roman army, and easily conquerable, is telling. If the Britons do not fight back against colonizers, they are weak and (paradoxically) deserving of defeat. If they do fight back against the “righteous” Norman colonizers, they are morally defunct. Ultimately, their defeat is a sign that they simply deserve oppression.

¹⁶³ William of Malmesbury, v.392, 712-5.

2.4 The *Cymry* in the *Brut y Tywysogion*

As I state above, the Welsh perspective of what constitutes treachery differs dramatically from that of Anglo-Latin historians writing during the “second Norman Conquest.”¹⁶⁴ The *ByT*, our best representation (in chronicle form) of medieval Welsh perspectives on English colonization of Wales, takes a very different view of what constitutes political treachery than the Anglo-Latin tradition in which it intervenes. In fact, I argue that this chronicle makes the same argument that Meecham-Jones does when he problematizes the medieval and modern habit of referring to Welsh military actions against the Normans as “rebellion,” as though the Normans had a *de jure* authority.¹⁶⁵ Meecham-Jones suggests that “maybe terms like ‘disloyal’ and ‘rebel’ should always be placed in inverted commas in discussions of medieval Wales”; as an alternative to this solution, I posit that the concept of expedient complicity can be used to develop a critical discussion of “treachery” as a component of Welsh resistance.¹⁶⁶

Before approaching my textual analysis, it may be helpful to review how the history of manuscript production and transmission in medieval Welsh historiographical enterprises makes the present hypothesis plausible. I would like to address the question of how the author of the lost Latin *Brut* could have had access to the anti-Welsh rhetoric of William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum*. An extended discussion of the question of how William’s text may have influenced the *ByT* appears in the appendix.

The *ByT*, in its two surviving versions, is the best-known constituent of a larger network of Welsh chronicles. Three surviving *Brutiau*, which are the two *ByT* versions plus an extended

¹⁶⁴ See Jon Kenneth Williams, “Sleeping with an Elephant,” in *Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages: Archipelago, Island, England*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 173-89, for elaboration of how tales from the *Mabinogion* operate in a resistant, postcolonial framework.

¹⁶⁵ Simon Meecham-Jones, “Where Was Wales?” 45.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

text called the *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, each use, as source material, a lost Latin *Brut* which in turn used the *Annales Cambriae* as a source.¹⁶⁷ This Latin *Brut* was, according to J. Beverley Smith, “put in hand soon after the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282”; and the author most likely worked out of the Cistercian abbey of Strata Florida.¹⁶⁸ Though the author had as source material the *Annales Cambriae*, he probably did not use the versions or manuscripts extant today. The two main versions of the *ByT*, in Oxford MS 111 (the so-called Red Book of Hergest) and in Peniarth 20, represent two independent translations of the Latin *Brut*.

The *ByT* text roughly covers the years 680 through 1282, claiming to be a continuation of Geoffrey’s *De gestis Britonum*, and later scribes added entries for the years 1283-1332 in one manuscript (MS Peniarth 20) and the *Brenhinoedd y Saeson* continues into the fifteenth century.¹⁶⁹ Considering the scholastic prestige of Strata Florida in the thirteenth century, and the learned nature of the *Brut*, it is probable that the creator of the Latin *Brut* was familiar with the virulent anti-Welsh rhetoric of William of Malmesbury, as well as the sources William used to buttress his work (Gildas’s invectives against his own people, as well as Bede’s distaste for the Welsh). The *Brut* is also influenced by Geoffrey of Monmouth, as its opening references the end

¹⁶⁷ See David Dumville, *Annales Cambriae: AD 682-954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and Thomas Jones, ed., *Brut y Tywysogion: Peniarth MS. 20* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysogol Cymru/ Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1941); ed. and trans., *Brut y Tywysogion: Peniarth MS. 20 Version* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952); and ed. and trans., *Brut y Tywysogion: Red Book of Hergest Version* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973).

¹⁶⁸ J. Beverley Smith, “Historical Writing in Medieval Wales,” 56. While I use the titles *ByT* and *ByS*, following J. Beverley Smith and Thomas Jones, it should be noted that *Brenhinoedd y Saeson/ The Kings of the English* is sometimes used as an encompassing name for all three *Brutiau*. David Dumville’s edition of the text, for example, uses this title and classifies the three *Brutiau* as P, R, and S. See David N. Dumville, *Brenhinoedd y Saeson, ‘The Kings of the English,’ A.D. 682-954: Texts P, R, S in Parallel* (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 2005).

¹⁶⁹ “*Brut y Tywysogion*,” *Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru*/National Library of Wales, www.llgc.org.uk/en/discover/digital-gallery/manuscripts/the-middle-ages/chronicle-of-the-princes, accessed 11 Mar. 2019. As Jones notes in *Brut y Tywysogion: MS Peniarth 20* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), xxxv, the Red Book version begins in 680, Peniarth 20 in 681, and BS in 683. Also see R. William Leckie, *The Passage of Dominion: Geoffrey of Monmouth and Periodization of Insular History in the Twelfth Century*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981.

of his *DGB*, and Welsh recensions of the *DGB*, collectively known as the *Brut y Brenhinedd*, circulated throughout Wales. It is my argument that the *Brut* does not merely record contemporary political or military issues, but actively intervenes within the trajectory of anti-Welsh rhetoric in the British chronicle tradition, replacing William's representation of Welsh treachery with depictions of Welsh expedient complicity.

The *ByT*'s awareness of the trope of Welsh treachery is evident in both the text's vocabulary and in multiple asides which provide commentary on historical events. Thomas Jones and J. Beverley Smith have commented on the effusive style of the *ByT*, a style which derives ultimately from the Latin *Brut*. Any modern reader might note the stark contrast between the rich prose of the vernacular chronicles and the succinct style of the *Annales Cambriae*. Smith describes this difference well, saying that the author of the Latin *Brut* composed:

a greatly expanded version of the annalistic entries that formed his source material, presenting a greatly elaborated rhetorical prose composition without any additional factual information whatsoever. The literary enrichment is particularly a characteristic of the narrative of the period from the early eleventh century to the late twelfth century.¹⁷⁰

Historians have been relatively uninterested in the “non-factual” content of the Latin *Brut*, but I suggest that this content, or “purely creative prose” reveals something more interesting than historical fact: this prose reveals a perception and interpretation of historical fact.¹⁷¹ The rich prose of the *ByT* provides two avenues of literary analysis which I explore

¹⁷⁰ Smith, “Historical Writing,” 47.

¹⁷¹ Smith, 56.

below. First, I provide an examination of the *ByT*'s vocabulary and, second, I analyze moments in which the author of the *ByT* pauses the narrative in order to provide commentary, literary elaborations which I call "editorial moments."

Through a conspicuous absence of terms that ascribe treachery to the entire Welsh race, the *ByT* develops a clear portrayal of outside groups as innately more dangerous than the Welsh themselves. The text's use of the word *tuyll* (modern *twyll*) and its various conjugated and mutated forms (one of which being *duyll*, as in *druy duyll*, "by means of treachery") reveals much about the text's response to the trope of Welsh treachery. The verbal noun *twyllo* has a range of meanings, including "to deceive, defraud, swindle, mislead purposely, be unfaithful to, entice, seduce, disappoint, cheat."¹⁷² This word appears with considerable frequency in several forms throughout the *Brut*. By my count, this word and its various forms appear 37 times in the Red Book manuscript *Brut*, and each use demonstrates the *ByT*'s concern with proper political and military behaviors.¹⁷³ The text also uses words similar to *twyll*, including *ystryw*, meaning deceit or artifice, and *brad*, meaning deception or plot.¹⁷⁴ There are two or three other synonyms that appear in the text, but each seems to appear only once; because these words do not set up a pattern of usage, I have left them out of these calculations. In total, the Red Book version of the *Brut* uses these three main terms for deceit, the Middle Welsh equivalent of the word treachery, or *perfidia*, 46 times.¹⁷⁵ Most of these references involve dealings between Welsh lords, and often describe interfamilial conflicts. The *ByT*'s central concern, of course, is Welsh history, and the text's creator(s) had no qualms in identifying individual Welsh lords as treacherous, as any

¹⁷² *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru, s. v. "twyllaf,"* accessed June 20, 2019.

¹⁷³ While my study included redactions in other manuscripts, I discuss the Red Book here because it is relatively well known and is representative of the other versions.

¹⁷⁴ *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru, s.v. "ystryw,"* accessed June 20, 2019; "*brad*," accessed June 20, 2019.

¹⁷⁵ The count in the Peniarth 20 version is not identical to this one, but comparable.

English or French history would. What is more interesting about the text's use of various forms of *twyllaf* is that seventeen of these uses refer to Saxon or to French treachery, almost always in their dealings with the Welsh. About 37% of the time, the text points to "treachery" as wrongdoing committed by the *Saesson* or the *Ffreinc*. In the *ByT*, it is clear that any group of people, or any individual within a larger group, may perpetrate treachery, a practice which is hardly unique to Welsh historiography.

However, what is most telling about the *ByT*'s deployment of the vocabulary of treachery is not a presence, but rather an absence. What we do not see in the numbers above is any substantial use of the words *twyll*, *ystryw*, or *brad* to describe Welsh behavior toward the Saxons or the French. The text narrates events in which the Welsh violate vows of homage to French lords and engage in what both medieval and modern readers might view as subterfuge, but the text almost refuses to characterize the Welsh as operating by means of *twyll*, *ystryw*, or *brad* in their dealings with groups outside their own kin. These terms are used to describe internecine conflict between Welsh individuals, but any cross-cultural conflict only applies these terms to the Saxons or French. At no point during cross-cultural conflict are these terms deployed in descriptions of the Welsh.

Therefore, I posit that the *ByT*'s very vocabulary reacts to and intervenes in the trope of Welsh treachery as established by Gildas, adopted by Bede, and codified for an emerging Anglo-Norman population by William of Malmesbury. The *ByT*'s very definition of what constitutes treachery differs dramatically from the definition used in the Anglo-Latin chronicle tradition. The concept of expedient complicity serves as a useful tool by which to interpret the *ByT*'s strategic choice not to portray the Welsh as even capable of committing treachery against the colonizing forces. In the *Brut*, antagonistic action against the colonizer does not fall under the

category of treachery.¹⁷⁶ Rather, the usefulness of a temporary alliance with the oppressor has fallen away, and the natural course of Welsh resistance against the oppressor can resume. It is almost as though the Welsh cannot logically enact treachery toward the French, since their natural loyalty is only to bonds of kin and sworn allegiance to other Welsh lords. As R. R. Davies has noted, the only legitimate authority is held by the Welsh; fealty sworn to non-Welsh is not legitimate and breaking those vows cannot constitute treachery.¹⁷⁷

William of Malmesbury uses the revolt of Robert of Bellême, and Welsh involvement in Robert's revolt, to disparage Welsh ability to be loyal. The *ByT* also records Robert's revolt, but with a perspective that elaborates on and explains the Welsh role in the episode. According to the *ByT*, there is a twist in the story, which William had failed to record. King Henry sends for Iorwerth ap Bleddyn during the Shrewsbury rebellion, and promises him more compensation than Robert of Bellême can offer Iorwerth: all of "*Powys a Cheredigyawn a hanner Dyuet . . . a Gwhyr a Chetweli*" "Powys and Ceredigion and half of Dyfed . . . and Gower and Cydweli" to be kept during the king's lifetime free from rent or tribute.¹⁷⁸ Iorwerth accepts the king's offer and turns on Robert, his erstwhile ally. According to the *ByT*, Robert's great mistake was that he

¹⁷⁶ See Bhabha, *Location of Culture*; Cohen, *Difficult Middles*; Jon Kenneth William, "Sleeping with an Elephant;" and Helen Fulton, "Class and Nation: Defining the English in late-medieval Welsh poetry," in *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales*, eds. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 191-212, for examples of strategic and useful deployments of Bhabha's postcolonial theory in medieval studies scholarship.

¹⁷⁷ See R. R. Davies, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles 1093-1843* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and *History of Wales: Conquest, Coexistence, and Change: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹⁷⁸ Jones, *Brut y Tywysogion: Red Book of Hergest Version* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1955), 45. Because MS Peniarth 20 and BS include Ystrad Tywi/ Vale of Tywi in this list, and because *RB* includes Ystrad Tywi as part of this land package later on, it is likely that the failure to include this area is a scribal error.

. . . *orchymynassei rodi cret y'r Bryttannyeit, hep debygu cael gwrthwynebed gantu, ac anuon y holl auodyd a'e anyueileit a'e oludoed a'e holl enguhed y blith y Bryttannyeit, hep goffau y sarhaedeu a gauas y Bryttannyeit gynt y gann Rosser, y tat ef, a hu, vrawt y tat—y rei a oed gudedic gann y Bryttannyeit yn y callonneu yn vyuyr.*

. . . commanded that trust should be placed in the Britons, not thinking that he would meet with opposition from them, and had sent all his flocks and herds and wealth and all his treasure to be among the Britons, unmindful of the injuries that the Britons had previously suffered at the hands of Roger, his father, and of Hugh, his father's brother—which the Britons held in remembrance hidden away in their hearts.¹⁷⁹

From William's perspective, Welsh political and military strategies are based on the moral defects of treachery and changeability; from the *ByT*'s perspective, these strategies are merely logical and necessary. The Welsh had been forced to enact expedient complicity, working with the very Norman family who had committed injuries against them. However, when King Henry made this compliance unnecessary (or rather, when the king made it worth Iorwerth's while to comply with the Crown), the Welsh saw no moral problem with betraying Robert of Bellême. While William displays the colonialist symptom of what Bhabha terms colonial disavowal, a process by which colonial domination disavows and denies its own chaotic intervention in the world of the colonized,¹⁸⁰ the Welsh enact expedient complicity, making alliances with the Normans when necessary and breaking them when beneficial.

¹⁷⁹ Jones, *Red Book of Hergest Version*, 44-45.

¹⁸⁰ See Bhabha, "Signs taken for wonders," *Location of Culture*, 145-174.

It is clear that the *ByT*'s very vocabulary resists the discourse of Welsh treachery; additionally, the text contains direct addresses which develop a representation of not Welsh, but *French* proclivity for treachery. This first editorial moment occurs in one of the entries which Smith identifies as a highly 'literary' section. In the year 1112, Gruffudd ap Rhys ap Tewdwr, the king of Deheubarth, returns from his fosterage in Ireland to the land of his patrimony in south Wales. He moves intermittently from relation to relation, residing with his sister Nest and her husband Gerald of Pembroke as well as others.¹⁸¹ However, evidently due to his circulation throughout south Wales, Gruffudd ap Rhys is accused before Henry (by an unnamed party) that he and all Britons are plotting to throw off the king's rule. Gruffudd ap Rhys, now a fugitive from Norman authority, takes refuge with Gruffudd ap Cynan. Hearing this news, Henry calls Gruffudd ap Cynan for an audience, planning to recruit him to the Norman side. At this moment the *ByT* creator(s) shift from narration to commentary, saying that "*megys y mae moes y Ffreinc twyllaw dynyon drwy edewidion . . .*" "and as it is the custom of the French to deceive people by promises."¹⁸²

This piece of commentary is a key moment in the *ByT*'s formation of its representation of French racial identity. It is vital to take pause over the very fact that this comment is indeed commentary, and not historical narration. This kind of shift in mode of address from narration to commentary is rare enough within the *ByT* that such shifts are striking. The *ByT*-creator(s), are known for having adopted a full, ornate prose style, but does not frequently adopt the moralizing or summative tone it does here. The conclusion made here striking because of how rarely such deviation occurs within the text. Second, we must note that this comment is not an invective

¹⁸¹ Nest, also known as the 'Helen of Wales,' and her husband Gerald are grandparents of Geraldus Cambrensis, or Gerald of Wales. Thus Gruffudd ap Rhys is the great uncle of Gerald of Wales.

¹⁸² Modified from Jones, *Red Book of Hergest version*, 84-5

against an individual ruler. The *ByT*-creator(s) provides the titles of important parties when possible, at times tracing genealogical lines and relationships, and providing more detail about individuals than the general narrative demands. This text also does not refrain from identifying individual Welsh nobles as treacherous or as having committed ignoble military acts. However, the author here makes a sweeping generalization about the actions of the *Ffreinc*—a move which the text would never make in regards to the Welsh—and thus demonstrates that racial stereotyping can be a tool of both the colonizers and the colonized. The universal *moes*, which can mean custom, tradition, way, habit, or wont, of the *Ffreinc* is to use treachery and deceit in all their dealings with others.¹⁸³

A second example of the *ByT*'s direct response to the trope of Welsh treachery occurs during the warfare following the French king's deceptive promises to Gruffudd ap Cynan. The year is 1113 and the violence continues, with Gruffudd ap Rhys and his allies battling *Ffreinc* warriors as well as Gruffudd ap Cynan's Welsh forces. A key encounter occurs as a Briton force prepares for battle at a riverside. Without warning, French archers attack. Welsh forces are drawn out from their would-be refuge and killed in unfair battle. Thus the recorder of this section of the *ByT* states, "*megys y mae moes gan y Ffreinc gwneuthur pop peth drwy ystryw,*" or "it is the way with the French to do everything by deceit."¹⁸⁴ Here the *ByT* reiterates its criticism of Henry's false promises to Gruffudd ap Cynan, but does not merely villainize the commander of the French archers. Instead, the *ByT* attributes the French victory to an inherent character of deceitfulness.

A third key editorial intervention occurs in the entry for 1175. In that year,

¹⁸³ *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, s.v. "*moes*," accessed June 20, 2019.

¹⁸⁴ Jones, *Red Book of Hergest version*, 94-5.

y kyrchawd y Ffreinc lys Seissyll uap Dyfynwal; a gwedy dala Gwaldus, y wreic, y lladyssant Cadwaladyr, y vab. A'r dyd hwnnw y bu y druanaf aerua ar wyr Gwent. A gwedy y kyhoedickaf danllywechedic dwyll honno ny beidawd nep o'r Kymry ymdiret y'r Ffreinc.

the English fell upon the court of Seisyll ap Dyfnwal; and after Gwladus, his wife, had been seized, they slew Cadwaldr, his son. And that day the most pitiful massacre befell the men of Gwent. And after that most openly revealed treachery none of the Welsh dared place their trust in the English.¹⁸⁵

This explanation for Welsh distrust of the English, demonstrates the *Brutiau's* dedication to portraying the English, not the Welsh, as treacherous and deceitful.

Welsh resistance to Anglo-Norman colonialism manifests in the *ByT* as the chroniclers co-opt the trope of Welsh treachery and apply it to the colonizing forces of the *Ffreinc*. By enacting resistance through literary means, the *ByT*-creator participates in a pattern which Michelle Warren detects in the British Arthurian traditions. Just as the colonizers and decolonizers harness the same tools (which include cartography, topography, genealogy, ethnic identification and negation, and etymology) in the Arthurian tradition, as means to argue for the right to hegemony in Britain, so do the colonizers and decolonizers in the chronicle tradition.

¹⁸⁵ Jones, *Red Book of Hergest version*, 164-67.

2.5 Conclusion

The Anglo-Latin rhetoric of inherent Welsh treachery, codified in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, persists beyond the chronological scope of this chapter. English notions of Welsh subjectivity were shaped by the trope of Welsh treachery. William Marx notes that the NLW MS 21608 variant of the Middle English prose *Brut* attests to the trope of Welsh treachery. A Middle English writer adds two redactions of Llewellyn ap Gryffydd's epitaphs—one by a Welsh writer, one by an English writer—to the Common Version of the Middle English *Brut*. The Welsh writer, using Middle English, describes Llewellyn as “Prince off Wales and protectour Fourme and ensample off quiete balaunce / Leder off his peple be vertues gouernaunce” while the English writer resorts to the trope of Welsh treachery, saying “Heere lieth the prince off all errour / Off true men robbour and oppressour / Off Englishmen false traytour”¹⁸⁶ This rhetoric of treachery, begun by Gildas but rapidly adopted in Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman, and English historical and political discourse, is co-opted and deployed to Welsh advantage in the *Brut y Tywysogion*. Physical evidence for the transmission of William's *Gesta* to the *Brut y Tywysogion* may be circumstantial, but combined with textual analysis of the trope of Welsh treachery in each text, it is safe to hypothesize that the *Brut* responds to Anglo-Latin anti-Welsh rhetoric. In this way, the *Brut* participates and seeks to intervene in the chronicle tradition of Britain by shifting historical perspective from one which treats Welsh resistance to colonization as treacherous, to one which identifies the colonizers themselves as treacherous. The *Brut*'s intervention thus shows direct engagement on the part of medieval British writers with issues of racial difference, a growing area of interest in medieval studies. It is clear that

¹⁸⁶ William Marx, “Middle English Texts and Welsh Contexts,” in *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales*, eds. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 13-26, 21.

racializing tropes crossed the Welsh-English border, and emerging medieval scholarship can do more to explore how multiple racial and ethnic groups constructed and understood racial difference.

CHAPTER 3: Postcolonial Animacies in Middle Welsh and Anglo-Latin Literature

3.1 Introduction

If specific moral failings, such as the proclivity toward treacherous behavior, could take on racial valences in textual productions of the high medieval period, it certainly follows that other forms of social “failure” could be raced. This chapter turns to the issue of the role of humans in the natural world of animals and plants, as represented in English colonial and Welsh anti-colonial texts, to explore how understandings of species variation, and the role of the human species within the natural world of animals and plants, was used in the construction of logics of racial variation. Essentially, this chapter explores how English and Welsh texts viewed the concept of “civilization” and proper human proximity to animals and plants. A few central questions guide this chapter: What roles do perceptions of animals and animality play in Anglo-Norman representations of the Welsh as subaltern? To what extent did cultural and economic differences between “Welsh” Wales and Anglo-Norman England (differences largely grounded in natural landscape) affect constructions of racial and ethnic difference? And, finally, how and to what extent do Welsh texts respond to the rhetoric of animality upon which so much of medieval British racial discourse depends? In order to answer these questions, this chapter first addresses the issue of dehumanization through animalization. After this discussion of modern and medieval theories of how animality itself constructs the human, I close read the Anglo-Norman *Gesta Stephani* and the Third Branch of the *Mabinogi* to explore various attitudes toward the human/animal divide. The chapter closes with a discussion of how high medieval pastoralism and agrarianism participated in the creation of racial discourses, and shows that Manawydan of the *Mabinogi* performs English “civilized” behavior in order to demonstrate Welsh humanness

itself. In the end, I argue that Anglo-Norman and Welsh literary works depend upon representations of non-human animals and plants to make sense of human status and difference

3.2 Theorizing Dehumanization through Animalization

Postcolonial and critical race studies have proven that the concept of animality has been deployed time and again as a mechanism by which to orient individuals and collectivities as subaltern. I refer to this process as “animalization,” a term which describes the ongoing rhetorical process of an oppressive group characterizing a subaltern group as being animal-like with enough frequency that the notion of a certain collectivity as animal-like becomes a commonplace, culturally accepted conceptual metaphor. This chapter on animalization contributes to the broader subject of anti-Welsh attitudes, as well as to broader studies on racism.

My concept of animalization is a broadening of the well-theorized phenomenon of simianization: the representation of a racial or ethnic group as ape-like in order to justify colonization and/or enslavement of that group.¹⁸⁷ Simianization is a well-documented phenomenon in the modern world, being used most commonly to justify enslavement and disenfranchisement of black Africans.¹⁸⁸ Not surprisingly, the scope of simianization and other forms of animalization reaches far beyond the bounds of this chapter, moving geographically and chronologically past the anti-Welsh imperialist rhetoric of Anglo-Norman writers which I discuss below.

While racist attitudes depended upon other variations of animalization, simianization and accompanying comparisons to black Africans was a key element of nineteenth-century anti-Irish

¹⁸⁷ See W.D. Hund, C.W. Mills, and S. Sebastiani, *Simianization: Apes, Gender, Class, and Race* (Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2015).

¹⁸⁸ Lisa Wade, “Whites, Blacks, and Apes in the Great Chain of Being,” *Sociological Images of The Society Pages*, 12 July, 2012, www.thesocietypages.org/socimages/2012/07/12/whites-blacks-apes-in-the-great-chain-of-being, accessed 11 Mar. 2019, is a useful sociological introduction to the subject.

sentiment. For example, the English historian Charles Kingsley simianizes/animalizes the Irish.

In 1861, Kingsley wrote

I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault. I believe there are not only many more of them than of old, but they are happier, better, more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours."¹⁸⁹

Kingsley's socio-economic racism directed at the Irish, buttressed by his epidermal racism directed at black peoples, seeks to justify colonialism and racial oppression. Indeed, because the English have considered "Celtic" peoples to be racially separate from themselves, there is a long tradition of attempting to locate somatic or epidermal race in the Irish body. Kingsley's note that the Irish tend to be tanned, indicating a working-class identity, is tinged with wistfulness, as though such color comes very close to solving the mystery of Irish whiteness. His attitude permeated American culture as well, with the Irish being compared both to simians and to black Africans.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, an 1876 cover of *Harper's Weekly: A Journal of Civilization* depicted a

¹⁸⁹ L. P. Curtis, Jr, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts*, p. 84, cited in Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development*, reprint, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), xxviii. New genetic research has undermined the concept of race, in its manifestation in discourse regarding white British peoples, as biologically or genetically determined; see Wes Davis, "When English Eyes are Smiling" *New York Times*, March 11, 2007,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/11/opinion/11davis-sub.html>, accessed 13 March, 2019.

¹⁹⁰ See Lisa Wade, "Irish Apes: Tactics of De-Humanization" *Sociological Images of The Society Pages*, 28 Jan. 2011, www.thesocietypages.org/socimages/2011/01/28/irish-apes-tactics-of-de-humanization/, accessed 11 Mar. 2019.

barefooted, caricatured black man and a grimacing, simianized Irishman facing off, equally weighted upon a hanging scale. The unsophisticated black man is labelled “south” and “black”; the angry and confused Irishman is labelled “north” and “white.”¹⁹¹ Blackness and whiteness are equatable here, each racially lower than the white Anglo-American race.

While racist depictions of African Americans as simian are the form of animalization with which most contemporary readers are most familiar (the Irish having successfully achieved whiteness largely by adopting anti-blackness),¹⁹² many other peoples have been subjected to this form of representation. Anglo-American representations of Chinese immigrants as rats were once commonplace and Nazi characterization of Jews as rodents buttressed the regime’s genocidal agenda.¹⁹³ The widespread representation of a people as animal is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, the subaltern-as-animal is a transhistorical and likely global phenomenon.

Nicole Shukin usefully describes this association of the subaltern with animals as “the productive ambivalence of the colonial stereotype and the animal sign,”¹⁹⁴ as Mel Chen observes in her wide-ranging study of *Animacies*. The extent to which a given thing is perceived as having animacy, which is “a quality of agency, awareness, mobility, and liveness,”¹⁹⁵ is often the extent to which that thing is respected as a subject. A culture’s perception of a thing’s level of animacy results in that thing’s political and social recognition. In Kingsley’s example, for instance, a clear hierarchy of animacies based on species, color, and culture emerges. The white

¹⁹¹ See Thomas Nast, “The Ignorant Vote” ... 9 Dec. 1876. *Harper’s Weekly*, Harper’s Weekly Election Cartoons collection, www.elections.harpweek.com/1876/cartoon-1876-Medium.asp?UniqueID=26&Year=1876, accessed 13 Mar. 2019.

¹⁹² See Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, reprint (New York: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁹³ See Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012). On a Jewish American response to Nazi racial logic, see Art Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*, Vols. I-II (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991).

¹⁹⁴ Quoted in Mel Chen, *Animacies*, 97.

¹⁹⁵ Chen, 2.

English man > the white Irish man > the black African and human animal > Simian animal.

Kingsley expresses horror that the human/nonhuman divide does not neatly overlay the black/white racial divide, which he views as fundamentally un-crossable. He thus demonstrates the very kind of thinking which leads Chen to conclude that existing scholarship and everyday language practices show that vivid links are drawn between “immigrants, people of color, laborers and working-class subjects, colonial subjects, women, queer subjects, disabled people, and animals, meaning, not the class of creatures that includes humans but quite the converse, the class against which the (often rational) human with inviolate and full subjectivity is defined.”¹⁹⁶

3.3 The Medieval Hierarchy of Animacies

These modern schematics and systems are not identical to medieval ones, of course, but the method of differentiating peoples through a hierarchizing evaluation of animacy is present in central and late medieval British texts. The concept of animacy in the Western tradition has classical origins, as Chen shows. Aristotle’s *De Anima* says the soul animates humans, animals, and vegetables, but not dead matter like stones. Modern perceptions of animacy use this theory, adhering to the concept of a definite split between Animate and Inanimate matter, and modifying the system by replacing the Soul with DNA and biological processes. Jane Bennett, according to Chen, has ushered in a new understanding of animacy, in which the Alive/Dead split is not so stable. *Vibrant Matter* began this shift in Western academic thinking, saying that nonhuman bodies, both organic and inorganic, engage with affect—and that affect is part and parcel of materiality. New materialisms, developing from Bennett’s study, are currently revising Aristotle’s view of the inanimate, arguing that “dead” things such as stones generate multiple meanings by means of their very materiality. This shift in thought has reached medieval studies,

¹⁹⁶ Chen, 95.

as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's 2015 book, *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman*, may indicate. Plant and animal studies, working from a similar orientation of questioning previously accepted notions of animacy divisions, are also revising how we think about subjectivity across entities which are visibly animated. These new understandings of what constitutes liveliness do not necessarily have a direct effect on rhetorics of racism that depend upon hierarchies of animacies, but do play into how a cultural consciousness views what things and bodies matter and which do not.

While Chen's work provides a fundamental theoretical method on which this chapter is based, it depends upon the pre-medieval Aristotle and post-medieval Descartes for an historical review of animacy, which she discusses mainly in texts from the nineteenth-century and forward. However, medieval writers were also highly invested in the concept of what gave things in the world their animacy, their "quality of agency, awareness, mobility, and liveness."¹⁹⁷ John Aberth's *Environmental History of the Middle Ages* provides a useful overview of how medieval philosophers constructed standard views of humans and their role in the natural world. Building upon Aristotle's classification of the world into four elements (earth, water, fire, air) and the heavens into one element (ether), medieval thinkers such as Augustine and Isidore developed canonical views of what materials were animated by divine souls. Typically, the human/animal split was maintained through spiritual arguments. Origen, for example, attacked the Greek Orphic philosophy, which equated animals with humans on the basis of their "liveness."¹⁹⁸ In his reading of Celsus's Orphic standpoint, Origen refutes the notion of human/animal equality and defends Aristotle's work on the classification and hierarchizing of animated beings.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Chen, 2.

¹⁹⁸ John Aberth, *An Environmental History of the Middle Ages: The Crucible of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 143-4.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Building upon the work of St Augustine, St Ambrose, and Ibn Sina (also known as Avicenna, who worked in turn from Aristotle), landmark philosophers like Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas all “differentiated humans from animals largely on the grounds that only the former possessed reason and had souls, through the divine spark, which allowed them to enjoy an afterlife and enter the heavenly realms, from which animals were excluded.” Any animal intelligence was called *estimativa*, a sixth sense which we tend to refer to as instinct, but did not endow animals with the same divine status as humans.²⁰⁰ This general system is not homogenous, nor can it be argued that such thinking penetrated all areas of medieval thought. It is, however, a useful beginning for exploration of high medieval rhetoric which depends upon non-human subjects to justify imperialist and colonial projects.

Returning to Mel Chen’s theory of how animacy functions, I suggest that, for a baseline understanding of medieval perception of animacies, we might adapt John Cherry’s “animacy hierarchy, which conceptually arranges human life, disabled life, animal life, plant life, and forms of nonliving material in orders of value and priority.”²⁰¹ Cherry’s cross-language study of grammars of animacy reveals an intricate hierarchical system: *Humans > Animals > Inanimates > Incorporeals*. Within these broad categories, systems such as *adult human > nonadult* and *male/masculine gender > female/feminine gender* manifest.²⁰² My chapter does not undertake the comprehensive linguistic project which Cherry does, but we can use this modern map as a yardstick for medieval perceptions of animacy. The historians and writers of high medieval Britain reveal their own value systems, which I argue can be mapped analogously to modern

²⁰⁰ Aberth, 146.

²⁰¹ Chen, 13. All references to Cherry taken from Chen.

²⁰² See Chen, 25-6 for full chart. Additional hierarchies useful to this project include *higher/larger animals > lower/smaller animals* and *motile/active inanimates > nonmotile/nonactive inanimates*. Incorporeal entities include institutions, regions, natural forces, and landscape.

systems. Thus, we might tentatively map Anglo-Latin perceptions of the hierarchy of animacy as God > Man > Woman > Animal > Plant > Stone, and Christian > Muslim > Jewish (usually) and English > Welsh > Irish. This chapter, of course, focuses on the human/animal split as it manifests in logics of race, not on the place of stone or feminine gender, though this is addressed in a separate chapter. Rhetorics of animalization function because of the hierarchies of animacy inherent in systems of thought which we can trace through linguistic analysis, as Cherry does. If a theological, moral, or ethical system, such as Christianity, does not allow for the enslavement, torture, or mass murder of a group of fellow humans, such prohibitions can be circumvented by demoting that group to a lower level of animacy. If a group does not rank as truly human, it cannot argue to have the rights which Western traditions tend to afford the human, or so goes the logic of animalization. In general, animals have borne immense symbolic weight for human cultures, as Chen notes as she describes the vast landscape of animal studies. There have been objections to studies which focus on this immense symbolic weight. Susan Crane's 2012 *Animal Encounters*, for example, posits that scholarship has overlooked the actual animals informing human depictions of animals.²⁰³ While I agree with her critique of scholarship's humanist bent, I would posit that because animals inhabit the intersection between medieval literary studies and critical race studies, my project has little choice but to focus on the symbolic weight of animals. Human cultures invest much in animals, and when human difference emerges, we force the animal to mediate between them. Chen states that "[i]n a way, animals serve as objects of almost fetishistic recuperation, recruited as signifiers of "nature," or "the real," and used to stand in for a sometimes conflicting array of other cultural meanings (including fear, discipline, sexuality, purity, wisdom, and so on)."²⁰⁴ For some medieval authors, indeed, animals bear nearly the full

²⁰³ Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2012).

²⁰⁴ Chen, 100.

weight of figurations of racial difference. In fact, Cohen observes that “the representational matrix for collective difference in the twelfth-century British Isles derived from and centered on a discourse of animality rather than a vocabulary for human variation.”²⁰⁵ This discourse was turned against the English as well as the Celts, in that Gildas began a pattern of referring to the English disparagingly as wolf- or dog-like, a trope which persists through the romance *Richard Coeur de Lion*, the work of Wace, and Margery Kempe. Overwhelmingly, however, animalization was applied to non-English groups who resisted Anglo-Norman and Christian rule. In the following section, I provide a contextualized reading of the *Gesta Stephani*, a landmark Anglo-Latin historical text which turns its colonizing, and animalizing, gaze toward Wales.²⁰⁶

3.4 The Animal Welsh in the *Gesta Stephani*

Conventional studies of the long twelfth century speak used to describe this period as a medieval Renaissance, pointing to its advances in scholasticism. These advances were part and parcel of political shifts, and I suggest that shifts in thought about the natural world contributed to the imperialist rhetoric which we see in so many Anglo-Latin chronicles of this period. In Chapter 1, I review the delineation of racial lines and codification of anti-Celtic attitudes which this period saw in England, a review which provides a preliminary understanding for the situating of the following comments. In short, the twelfth-century witnessed tightening notions of what constituted “civilized” life, with the gendered and raced strictures which this mode of operation entails. It is little surprise that tribal Celtic peoples were found wanting in civilization. They were represented, among other things, as treacherous, immoral, heretical, lawless, and uncouth.

²⁰⁵ Cohen, *Difficult Middles*, 40.

²⁰⁶ See Antonia Gransden, “Realistic Observation in Twelfth-Century England,” *Speculum* 47, no. 1 (1972): 29-51, and *Historical Writing in England: c. 550-c. 1307* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

This rise of the stereotype of the Celt occurred alongside another dramatic shift of the high Middle Ages: a so-called “Collaborative” stage in the relationship between Western European humans and their natural environments.²⁰⁷ While many texts and attitudes in the earlier Middle Ages view the natural world as dangerous, inscrutable, and even hostile, as we can see in much of the Old English literature tradition, the “Collaborative” stage around 1000-1300 is when, according to Aberth,

medieval man demonstrated his ability to impact his surroundings instead of simply being subject to nature’s whim, as both the number and size of population centers expanded, along with the arable support network needed to maintain them, at the expense of the wild and untamed landscape.²⁰⁸

The notion of “collaboration” here seems a dated concept. More accurately, we might say that this period saw confident growth of ecological imperialism, in which exploitation of land, animal, wind, and water culminated in an “agricultural revolution.”²⁰⁹ On a broad and generalized scale, the natural world was no longer feared as a power subject only to God and not to humans; it could be cultivated, changed, managed, and forced to produce what humans desired.

That said, this period did see a significant shift in humans’ relationship with the natural world, whether landscape, plants, or animals. This shift was both practical and ideological,

²⁰⁷ Aberth, 6. Aberth takes issue with overgeneralizing medieval attitudes toward Nature; I agree with this critique, and thus use this general understanding of the twelfth century in order to pull at the kinds of critical threads which he says are necessary (such as different elements of Nature and different levels of understanding throughout society).

²⁰⁸ Aberth, 6.

²⁰⁹ Aberth, 29.

according to Aberth, as we can locate a new-found “discovery of nature” and a neo-Platonic revival of the concept of the “world-soul,” or *anima mundi*, or natural vitality, in the high medieval period. God was thought of as the grand artisan of the macrocosm’s various natural materialities, and man as the microcosmic link between the divine and the earthly. The notion of *anima mundi*, akin to Chen’s concept of animacy, as present in man’s immediate natural surroundings, apparently convinced writers that humans were part of Nature itself, not separate from it.²¹⁰ My readings of the long twelfth century, however, complicate this perception of the “Collaborative” stage as described by Aberth. Why, for instance, does the *Gesta Stephani* writer portray the Welsh as wild and animal-like and thus racially inferior, if the paradigm *Human > Animal > Inanimate* is not functional in this period? My answer, of course, is that the Collaborative period was not generally collaborative. Instead, I suggest that we can see an intensification of the rifts between ontological categories, making the splits of human/animal, civilization/nature, and agriculturalism/pastoralism all the starker. (The man/woman or male/female split also intensified in this period, though that is not the subject of this chapter.)

These rifts are starkly evident in the *Gesta Stephani*, an Anglo-Latin chronicle which serves today as historians’ key witness to Britain’s early twelfth century. The *Gesta Stephani* is an anonymously authored panegyric to Stephen of Boulogne, who was crowned king of England after the death of Henry I. This action ushered in the historical period known as the once called the Anarchy, now generally known as the Civil War, between the years 1135 and 1154.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Aberth points to Bernard Silvester, Honorius of Autun, William of Conches, Alain de Lille, and implicitly St Francis of Assisi as writers who evince this attitude. See p. 41.

²¹¹ This label is controversial, since there were in fact two kings, one female and one male, vying for the crown, and not a lack of kings. To others, the title may simply seem inaccurate. It is unclear, due to lack of triangulating evidence, whether the Civil War was, in truth, as violent as the *Gesta* attests. It is possible that the *Gesta* exaggerates the ruinous effects of the Civil War in attempts to villainize Matilda, her allies, and the Welsh. But the term is used here for its usefulness as evidenced in scholarship and because of historical attestations to the period’s chaos as it manifested in the daily life of British subjects.

Because Henry I had named his legitimate daughter Empress Matilda his heir, and seen his vassals swear fealty to her, Stephen's bid for the crown was seen by many as a usurpation. Matilda fought to recover her promised title, going so far as to take London itself, but was never crowned. However, she secured the kingship for her son, who would become Henry II. Matilda is therefore responsible for the establishment of the Plantagenet dynasty, which she secured after nineteen years of warfare. The Peterborough Chronicle famously identifies the chaotic, violent Civil War as a devastating time when "Christ and his saints slept."²¹² The *Gesta* also adopts this apocalyptic tone, suggesting that the upturning of all social systems indicated a level of chaos requiring the firm, righteous hand of Stephen himself.

The text is a key, eyewitness account of the political and social chaos which eventually resulted in the creation of the Plantagenet dynasty. Because of the locations on which the text focuses, as well as clues inherent in the text's tone and priorities, it seems that the author may have been Robert, Bishop of Bath.²¹³ The text saw little popularity after its initial composition, as paeans to Stephen would not have been overly welcome in the kingdom of Henry II—even if the text does append some praise to Henry. This praise was written after Henry's kingship became inevitable. In fact, the text is divided into two sections by date of composition. Part I covers the years 1135-1147 and was written c. 1148 and Part II covers the years 1148-1154 and was written after 1153, the year in which Stephen named Henry II his heir.²¹⁴ A lone, complete version

²¹² G.N. Garmonsway, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London: Everyman Press, 1965), 265.

²¹³ Davis, "Introduction," xxxvii. Book divisions and manuscript information taken from R. H. C. Davis and R. A. B. Mynors, "Introduction," in K. R. Potter, *Gesta Stephani* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), xi-xl.

²¹⁴ See Davis, xx. Timeline information taken from Marjorie Chibnall, "Matilda (1102–1167)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, www.oxforddnb.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/view/article/18338, accessed 15 Dec. 2016; Edmund King, "Stephen (c.1092–1154)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. Online ed. Sept 2010, www.oxforddnb.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/view/article/26365, accessed 15 Dec. 2016;

survives in MS 792 at the Municipal Library at Valenciennes, accompanied by William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*. A lost, incomplete manuscript from Laon is represented by André Duchesne's 1619 folio *Historiae Normannorum Scriptores Antiqui*. I provide a timeline of the major events of the Civil War in the footnotes, as this understudied period of history is key to two chapters of this dissertation.

This chapter is most concerned with what I term the 'Welsh section' of the *Gesta Stephani*. Overall, the text is organized like a chronicle, providing an account of events in chronological order throughout the nineteen years of the war. However, Chapters 8 through 11 of the *Gesta* focus on Stephen's dealings with the Welsh throughout the war, deviating from the text's teleological logic in favor of a region-based textual unit. This structural deviation is notable in and of itself, as the text is almost exclusively chronological in format, and it serves to place emphasis on the role of the Welsh in the Civil War. This 'Welsh section' opens with a Bedian topographical description, which quickly takes an ethnographic turn. I excerpt the opening of the Welsh section below, to provide a clear view of the variety of ways in which the Welsh are oriented as animals in need of subjection to ownership claims and taming.

and Thomas K. Keefe, "Henry II (1133–1189)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. Online ed. Jan. 2008, www.oxforddnb.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/view/article/12949, accessed 15 Dec. 2016.

Major Events:

Death of Henry I.....	1 December 1135
Stephen Crowned.....	22 December 1135
Matilda Invades.....	30 September 1139
Matilda Named "Lady of England".....	7 April 1141
Matilda retires to Normandy.....	March 1148
Young Henry II Invades.....	April 1149
Henry II weds Eleanor of Aquitaine.....	May 1152
Stephen names Henry II his heir.....	6 November 1153
Stephen dies.....	25 October 1154
Henry II crowned.....	19 December 1154
Matilda dies.....	10 September 1167

Est autem Walonia terra siluestris et pascuosa, ipsi Angliae proxima uicinitate contermina, ex uno eiusdem latere in longum iuxta mare protensa, ceruorum quidem et piscium, lactis et armentorum uberrima; sed hominum nutrix bestialium, natura uelocium, consuetudine bellantium, fide semper et locis instabilium. Postquam autem Normanni, bello commisso, Anglos sibi subiugarunt, hanc etiam suo imperio terram adicientes castellis innumeris munire; propriis incolis uiriliter edomitis, constanter excoluere; ad pacem confouendam, legem et plebiscite eis indixere; adeoque terram fertilem omnibusque copiis affluentem reddidere, ut fecundissimae Britanniae nequaquam inferiorem aestimares. Verum, rege Henrico mortuo, pace quoque regni et Concordia cum ipso sepulta, in dominos suos Walenses mortale semper odium spirantes, foedus quod eis pepigerant penitus abruperunt; et diuersisque turmatim emergentes locis, nunc huc nunc illuc hostiliter discurrerunt; depraedatione, igne, gladio uillas euacuarunt, domos consumpserunt, homines necauerunt.

Now Wales is a country of woodland and pasture, immediately bordering on England, stretching far along the coast on one side of it, abounding in deer and fish, milk and herds; but it generates men of an animal type, naturally swift-footed, accustomed to war, volatile always in breaking their word as in changing their abodes. When war came and the Normans conquered the English, this land also they added to their dominion and fortified with numberless castles; they perseveringly civilized it after they had vigorously subdued its inhabitants; to

encourage peace they imposed law and statutes on them; and they made the land so productive and abounding in all kinds of resources that you would have reckoned it in no wise inferior to the most fertile part of Britain. But when King Henry died and the peace and harmony of the kingdom were buried with him, the Welsh, who always cherished a deadly hatred of their masters, broke their compact with them utterly, and appearing in bands at different places, they made hostile raids in various directions; they cleared the villages by plunder, fire, and sword, burnt the houses, slaughtered the men.²¹⁵

As Michelle Warren suggests, topographical descriptions can serve as the figurative claiming and consumption of land by the masculine imperial gaze.²¹⁶ This theory is especially appropriate in this context. In this passage, the *Gesta*-author orients Wales in terms of the natural resources which it produces in close geographical relation to his native England. It is highly desirable and naturally fecund, almost tantalizing in its potential offerings to the English. Wales produces animal-based products (a factual observation, which I address below), which the author implies are valuable, but it also produces Welsh people. These people are remarkably similar to the non-human animals which thrive in their country. Wales, the feminine “nurse of bestial men,” produces both productive and non-productive animals: those who produce meat and milk, and those who produce only social chaos and violence.

The *Gesta*-author sees the Welsh not merely as military foes, which would place them on a level of animacy equal to that of the Anglo-Normans, or even the Anglo-Saxons with whom the conquerors were intermarrying, but as animals living in a harsh landscape unfit for regular

²¹⁵ Potter, 14-15.

²¹⁶ Warren, 3-4.

human habitation and agrarianism. Meanwhile, the Anglo-Norman people, with whom Anglo-Saxons were intermarrying during this period, are civilized and productive, reflections of the fertile landscapes on which their agrarian economy can thrive. This Welsh-English binary was being mitigated prior to the Civil War, as the *Gesta* records that Wales under the Normans was becoming a civilized landscape. The *Gesta* praises Norman colonial efforts as civilizing, implying that if the land can be forced to yield natural resources, these efforts have succeeded.²¹⁷ In Aberth's terms, we might say that if the Normans can incorporate Wales into the Collaborative stage of human history, they will have succeeded as a civilization.

While the English, who are civilized and peaceful, unnaturally ravage one another during the war, the Welsh are wild by nature, a characteristic which manifests with increased intensity during the Civil War. The wild lifestyle of the Welsh is facilitated by their "swift-footedness." The Welsh human body is not quite human; like beasts of burden, the Welsh are too comfortable with "hoofing it," to use the modern term, to be quite as human as the Anglo-Norman. In groups, then, the Welsh are like herds of animals, as two analogous turns of phrase show. Just as wild animals once overflowed, or *inundarant* (4) English lands as a mark of peace and prosperity, so did the Welsh pour out, or *effuderunt* (17), into English lands after Henry's death. Thus, the Civil War is not just a series of battles, but a truly anarchical, bizarre reversal of Anglo-Norman fortune. The level of power which the fully human Anglo-Norman people and society participate in has been compromised, and an animal people have taken that power for themselves.

The *Gesta* portrays the Welsh people as animals; thus, when the Welsh achieve political sovereignty, proper ontological boundaries have been severely violated. This terrifying reversal,

²¹⁷ In fact, the *Gesta* frequently uses the current state and use of natural resources as sign of political and social prosperity. When the Civil War begins, animals are hunted wantonly (3), eliminating the former swarms of useful herds in Britain. Later in the Civil War, English fields bloom white, then waste away with no one to harvest them (p. 153, section 78).

in which divinely appointed animacies have been subverted, intensifies later in the Welsh section. After a series of successful rebellions, the Welsh manage to kill the most powerful Marcher lord, Richard Fitz Gilbert. This victory leads to the Welsh possession of baronial lands and castles. The *Gesta* comments that the Welsh “. . . *quibus paulo ante flexa ceruice subiciebantur, eorum nunc uersa uice rigide dominabantur*, or “were now by a reversal of fortune the stern masters of those before whom a little earlier they had bent compliant necks.”²¹⁸ In short, the Welsh have thrown off their yokes. The status of human existence within a divinely appointed hierarchy of animacies is disturbed.

What I hope I have demonstrated above is that the author of the *Gesta* crafts a rhetorically sophisticated portrait of the Welsh as a sub-human, animal people. They are morally transgressive at a fundamental level, incapable of existence at the level of civilization achieved by the Normans. It goes without saying that this racist view is politically motivated. As an ally of Stephen of Blois, the *Gesta*-author harnessed every possible rhetorical move in order to disparage his political enemies. Matilda’s key supporter was her illegitimate half-brother, Robert of Gloucester. As an illegitimate, though influential, son of Henry I, Robert held military power as a marcher lord. The Civil War saw independent Welsh revolts against Norman marcher lords, but Robert managed to recruit Welsh forces to fight with him against the forces of Stephen of Blois.²¹⁹ The *Gesta*-author would have seen the Welsh, at best, allied to Matilda, whose claim to the throne he saw as illegitimate. At best, he would have heard reports of Welsh defeats of Norman lords and known that they bode badly for the Norman hegemony of which he was an integral part. Below, I provide further explanation of how and why the discourse of animality in

²¹⁸ Potter, 18-19.

²¹⁹ The *Gesta*-author refers to Gloucester as the gathering place for all “*sentina*” “filth,” suggesting that it was Matilda’s central fortification in the geographically scattered battles of the Civil War (p. 101; section 47).

which the *Gesta*-author participates functioned as well as it did in Anglo-Latin discourse. For now, however, I turn to a discussion of how Middle Welsh texts represent animality .

3.5 Welsh Representation of the Human/Animal

It should be noted that the rhetoric of the Celt-as-animal is not restricted to the *Gesta*-author; scholars have regarded Gerald of Wales as similarly critical of the Welsh, and he is undeniably critical of the Irish, whom he views as fully sub-human. Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*, drawing on William of Malmesbury's *Historia regum Anglorum*, notes that the Anglo-Saxon King Edgar's excellent reforms and taxation policy cleared the country of Welsh wolves.²²⁰ It is unequivocally true that the Anglo-Latin high medieval discourse of race depended on a rhetoric of animality in various ways. This fact becomes clear in the scholarship which takes a critical eye to the texts produced by hegemonic powers within Britain. However, analysis of Middle Welsh texts may reveal to what extent this rhetoric permeated the isle of Britain as a whole. If influential Anglo-Norman texts portrayed the Welsh as sub-human, we should ask the question of how Welsh texts respond to these portrayals. To what extent do high medieval Welsh texts seem concerned with accusations of the Welsh people as animal? Do Welsh texts participate in the values of the Collaborative period in comparable ways to Anglo-Norman texts? To return to Cohen's wording, to what extent do Welsh texts discuss "collective difference in the twelfth-century British Isles" through a "discourse of animality"? In order to answer these questions, I turn to texts which are rife with representations of humans not fully extricable from animality. My ultimate point is that the Welsh texts, like Anglo-Latin ones as

²²⁰ Ranulph Higden, *Polychronicon*, Book 6, translated by John Trevisa (London: Longman, 1965). Higden's amalgam of earlier English histories and chronicles abounds with racist descriptions of the Welsh and Irish, many of which are specifically designed to portray these peoples as animal. According to Higden, Irish and Welsh 'hags' can turn themselves into hares (Book 1). Higden's description of Wales takes the odd form of sing-songy couplets which describe barbarism (Book 1 XXXVIII).

exemplified by the *Gesta*, reveal a hierarchy of animacies. However, Middle Welsh texts seem more concerned with what a fluid relationship between humanity and animality can teach humans about how to live in a society. In these texts, animals are largely a source of education, sometimes punitive and always edifying.

The *Mabinogi* proper is a cluster of four discrete tales which are self-identified as the *Pedeir Cainc y Mabinogi*, or Four Branches of the *Mabinogi*. These four tales are extant in two key manuscripts, along with other short tales which, together, were labelled the *Mabinogion* in the nineteenth century. The earlier manuscript is known as the *Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch*, or White Book of Rhydderch, which was copied in the mid-fourteenth century by five scribes at Strata Florida for the wealthy patron Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyd (c. 1325-1400). This manuscript is now divided into two volumes, National Library of Wales Peniarth MS 4 and Peniarth MS 5.²²¹ The later manuscript is called the *Llyfr Coch Hergest*, or Red Book of Hergest (Oxford, Jesus College MS 111) and was copied around 1382.²²² I have discussed the racial dynamic present in the *Brut y Tywysogion*, contained in these manuscripts, and noted that each book's content predates its recording. I follow the same logic for the purposes of this study, which suggests that the Four Branches, which portray a largely pre-Christian Britain, predate the *Llyfrau Gwyn* and *Coch* by two hundred years or fewer.²²³

²²¹ Information on the *Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch* is taken from "The White Book of Rhydderch" from the website of the *Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru*/National Library of Wales, www.llgc.org.uk/en/discover/digital-gallery/manuscripts/the-middle-ages/white-book-of-rhydderch, accessed 21 Feb. 2018.

²²² From "Jesus College MS. 111," at the website of Early Manuscripts at Oxford University. Early Manuscripts at Oxford University, www.image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=jesus&manuscript=ms111, accessed 21 Feb. 2018.

²²³ The dating of the Four Branches is a controversial issue. See T.M. Charles-Edwards, "The Date of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi," *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1910/2, 1971): 263-298; and *Wales and the Britons, 350-1064* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 323 and 653.

Animals, both mundane and magical, populate the pages of the *Mabinogi*. As I state above, they frequently serve educational purposes. The mundane ones, such as Pwyll's dogs who unfairly claim the stag hunted down by Arawn's albino hounds, or the Irish horses maimed by the jealous Efnysien, push the narratives forward. The magical ones are often humans, transformed into animal form, such as the mice plaguing Manawydan's fields, or the transsexual pairs of deer, boars, and wolves in Math's court. I provide three key examples of how the *Mabinogi* illustrates fluidity between humanity and animality: two are figurative, with one being comedic and the other deadly serious. My final, extended example discusses actual transformations not only of physical form, but also of sex and "gender," if fictional animals can be said to take on genders. These examples provide an overview of how animals function in high to late medieval Welsh prose.

The tale of "Pwyll Pendueic Dyuet," the first branch of the *Mabinogi*, is largely a story of the love between the mortal king Pwyll and his otherworldly bride, Rhiannon. After winning Rhiannon simply by realizing that he could not overcome her magical curse and so calling out to her, Pwyll makes a rash promise to her former fiancé. The fiancé, a mortal named Gwawl, of course wishes for Pwyll to give up Rhiannon. After harshly rebuking Pwyll's foolishness, Rhiannon orchestrates a plan by which Pwyll will trap Gwawl in a magical bag. Indeed, Gwawl falls for the trap and receives a sound beating while lying on the floor of the court, completely trapped. In desperation, Gwawl releases Pwyll from his promise.

At no point is Gwawl actually transformed into an animal; however, the running joke of the scene is that the courtiers believe that there is a badger in the bag. The text reads:

Ac mal y delei pob un o’ e niuer ynteu y mywn, y trawei pob un dyrnawt ar y got, ac y gouynnei, ‘Beth yssyd ymma?’ ‘Broch,’ medynt ynteu.

As each one of Pwyll’s men entered, he struck the bag a blow and asked, ‘What’s in here?’ ‘A badger,’ the other said.”²²⁴ If someone inquired as to the name of the game, they would reply “*broch yg got*,” or “Badger in the Bag.”²²⁵

The narrator then provides a pithy etiological aside (not unusual in the Four Branches) in which we learn that “*Ac yna gyntaf y guarywyt broch yg got*,” or “And that was the first time that Badger in the Bag was played.”²²⁶ While this scene may cause discomfort for an audience invested in animal rights, it is almost certainly intended to be comedic. This comedic animal “transformation” is didactic in a light-hearted tone. The ill-tempered Gwawl is no more attuned to honorable courtly behaviors than a badger, and so he is disciplined in a way to which an animal might be subjected.

The latter part of this same tale depicts the parental woes of Rhiannon. When a mysterious claw steals her baby, Pryderi, her attendants fear retribution. They develop a plan involving a litter of newborn puppies:

“Lladwn rei o’r canawon, ac irwn y hwyneb hitheu Riannon a’r gwaet, a’y dwylaw, a byrwn yr eskyrn gyr y bron, a thaerwn arnei e hun diuetha y mab. Ac ni byd yn taered ni an chwech wrthi hi e hun.”

²²⁴ Middle Welsh quotations from Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1978), 17. Modern English translations from Sioned Davies, *Mabinogion*, 14.

²²⁵ Williams, 17; Davies, 14.

²²⁶ Williams, 17; Davies, 14.

“Let us kill some of the pups, and smear Rhiannon’s face and hands with the blood, and throw the bones beside her, and swear that she herself destroyed her son. And the word of the six of us will prove stronger than hers.”²²⁷

These attendants frame Rhiannon for cannibalism, suggesting that she had torn apart her child with her teeth. Perhaps it is because of her animal crime, one of savage consumption which could be expected of a boar or wolf, that her punishment is to figuratively become an animal. While her crime is one which could be committed by a wild animal, her punishment is to become a beast of burden:

Sef penyt a dodet erni, bot yn y llys honno yn Arberth hyt ym penn y seith mlyned. Ac yskynuaen a oed odieithyr y porth, eisted gyr llaw hwnnw beunyd, a dywedut y pawb a delei o’r a debygei nas gwyppei, y gyffranc oll, ac o’r a attei idi y dwyn, kynnic y westei a phellynic y dwyn ar y cheuyn y’r llys.

This is what [her punishment] was: to stay at that court in Arberth for seven years. And there was a mounting-block outside the gate—to sit by that every day, and tell the whole story to anyone whom she thought might not know it, and offer to carry guests and strangers on her back to the court if they permitted it.²²⁸

The irony here is thick. The Otherworldly Rhiannon, who dramatically enters the narrative on a magical white horse, is forced to behave like that very animal. She is reduced to the humiliating

²²⁷ Williams, 20; Davies, 16.

²²⁸ Williams, 21; Davies, 17.

position of a beast of burden, carrying visitors to the castle on her back, and entertaining visitors with the tale of her crime. This story is not one of actual education or just punishment. Instead, it is meant to evoke pathos within the reader, a reaction of righteous indignation for the noble Rhiannon's unjust treatment. The similarities between Gwawl's and Rhiannon's humiliations, despite the contrasting emotional reactions which these scenes are designed to evoke, show that a human taking on the treatment of an animal is a common form of punitive education in the *Mabinogi*.

The fourth and final branch of the *Mabinogi*, "Math uab Mathonwy," or "Math son of Mathonwy," contains what I would argue to be the most fascinating and meaningful series of human-animal transformations of the *Mabinogi*. This tale portrays forms of animacies across the spectrum as fundamentally unstable. A human may become an animal; an animal may dissipate into thin air; a mass of flowers may become a woman; an inanimate lump may become a child. And, not least important of these transformations, a male may become a female.

The tale's eponymous Math is king over Gwynedd in north Wales and, like many Welsh and Irish heroes, suffers from a *geis*. In times of war, he may fight, but in times of peace, he must remain seated with his feet in the lap of a virgin. Math's two nephews, Gilfaethwy and Gwydion, concoct a plan to foment war between Math and King Pryderi of Dyfed (the same Pryderi born to Rhiannon and Pwyll in the *Mabinogi*'s First Branch). The scheming nephews do this so that Math's virgin, Goewin, will be left alone and vulnerable to Gilfaethwy's seduction. Their plan is successful. Gwydion the magician conjures insubstantial chargers, complete with gilded saddles, to trade for Pryderi's Otherworldly swine. These chargers disappear into nothingness after the trade is made and a war between Gwynedd and Dyfed arises. In the chaos, Gilfaethwy rapes Goewin.

Goewin's account of the attack takes the form of a tale of transformation: no longer is she a *morwyn* (virgin), but instead a *gwraig* (wife or sexually experienced woman).²²⁹ She is keenly aware of what the rape means for her value to Math and Gwynedd overall. Her social and economic value is compromised after this attack but, perhaps selflessly, she immediately tells Math about the attack. As it seems that he would simply cease to exist, or perish, without the lap of a virgin, Goewin had provided him with an essential service. Math is infuriated by his nephews' crimes and immediately retaliates. First, he pledges to wed Goewin, thus recuperating the lost social value she may have lost as an unmarried *gwraig*. The nephews' punishment is strange, but highly appropriate to their crimes of rape and accessory to rape:

Ac yna y kymmerth e hutlath, ac y trewis Giluathwy yny uyd daran ewic; ac achub y llall a wnaeth yn gyflym, kyt mynhei dianc nys gallei, a'y taraw a'r un hutlath yny uyd yn garw.
“Canys ywch yn rwymedigaeth mi a wna fywch gerdet y gyt, a'ch bot yn gymaredic, ac yn un anyan a'r gwyduilot yd ywch yn eu rith, ac yn yr amswer y bo etiued udunt wy, y uot ywchwitheu. A blwydyn y hediw, dowch yma ataf i.

Then he took his magic wand, and struck Gilfaethwy so that he changed into a good-sized hind, and he caught Gwydion quickly—he could not escape although he wanted to—and struck him with the same magic wand so that he changed into a stag. ‘Since you are in league with each other, I will make you live together and mate with each other, and take on the nature of the wild animals whose shape you are in; and when they have offspring, so shall you. And a year from today return here to me.’²³⁰

²²⁹ Davies, 242.

²³⁰ Williams, 75; Davies, 52-3.

The nephews obey these commands, returning after one year with a fawn fathered by Gwydion and birthed by Gilfaethwy. Their punishment, however, continues. Math transforms the nephews into swine, but reverses their sexes. Gwydion becomes a wild sow and Gilfaethwy becomes a wild boar; dutifully, they return after one year with a piglet. Their third and final transformation is into wolves, again with their sexes reversed. Gwydion becomes a wolf and Gilfaethwy becomes a she-wolf and together they produce one cub. The three animal-children are transformed into human boys, baptized, and welcomed into Math's court. As for the nephews-cum-mates, Math proclaims them redeemed: “*‘A wyr, ’ heb ef, ‘o gwnaethauch gam ymi, digawn y buawch ym poen, a chywilyd mawr a gawssawch, bot plant o bob un o honawch o’y gild.’*” “‘Men,’ he said, ‘if you did me wrong, you have been punished enough, and you have been greatly shamed that each of you has offspring by the other.’”²³¹ Math then transforms the nephews into humans with his magic wand and accepts his them back into his court as fully forgiven retainers and counselors.

This multipartite punishment brings together conversations about the nature of humans, animals, men, and women. According to Math's own words, the central point of the punishment is sexual humiliation, the very kind of humiliation to which they subjected Goewin. This sexual humiliation is complicated by the gender reversals which the nephews suffer. (Here I use the term “gender” loosely; as it is a human construct, I do not suggest that a she-wolf, for example, practices femininity or womanhood.) Each man is forced to undergo what a medieval audience would think of as quintessentially female experiences, including questionably consensual sexual penetration, arduous pregnancy, and painful, not to mention dangerous, childbirth. The children

²³¹ Williams, 76-7; Davies, 54.

who are the result of this forced sexual relationship serve as hard evidence, and perpetual reminders, of the nephews' sexual humiliations.

This punishment is unusual even for the often-mysterious workings of the world of the *Mabinogion*. If we turn to native Welsh law, however, we find context for the gendered punishment of Gilfaethwy and Gwydion. The Laws of Hywel Dda, native Welsh law supposedly set forth by the legendary 10th-century king Hywel the Good, stipulates that restitution must be made in cases of rape.²³² The culprit is expected to pay the woman's *amobr* and *dirwy* to the lord and the *sarhad*, *agweddi*, and *dilysrwydd* to the woman. The man may deny the crime, but if a woman swears her testimony with her hand upon the offending member, the man is convicted. The Law's final statement on this matter is "[i]t is not enacted in the law of Hywel Dda that a man is to be gelded for violating a woman."²³³ This provision, not forbidding but certainly discouraging dismemberment as a punishment for rapists, seems to suggest that this punishment was used at some point in time in medieval Wales. Had gelding not been a common practice, it was at least present in the popular imagination to the extent that the redactor of the Laws thought to mention it.²³⁴ The tale of Math follows this provision of the Laws to the letter: Math does not

²³² Welsh law places great importance upon the testimonies of women in cases of alleged rape. Socially and financially, women seem to have had significant clout in cases of sex crimes. Melville Richards, *The Laws of Hywel Dda* (Liverpool: University Press, 1954), 69. Essentially, the rapist must pay punitive fines and the woman's marriage-gifts, though he is not expected to marry her. According to Richards the *amobr* is the "maiden fee payable by a girl's father to the lord on the occasion of her marriage" (124); the *dirwy* is "for major crimes such as fighting, theft, and rape" (123); the *sarhad* is "payment for insult or injury" (122); the *agweddi* is a dowry or "bride's property, handed over by the father to the bridegroom at the marriage" (124); and the *dilysrwydd* is generally a security, but here means purity or wholeness and specifically "the payment for destroying a woman's integrity" (132).

²³³ Richards, *The Laws of Hywel Dda*, 69.

²³⁴ See Robin Chapman Stacey, *Law and the Imagination in Medieval Wales* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018) and *The Road to Judgment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

technically castrate his nephews. However, he does temporarily remove their male genitals in order to enact the humiliating punishments described above.

Of course, a major part of the humiliation consists of the animal transformations themselves. Math could have transformed the brothers into women and forced them to mate, achieving the same gendered humiliation without the transformations. Instead, the brothers suffer the hardships of wild animals, taking on the “natures” of animals themselves. There seems to be some implied humiliation here. Like Nebuchadnezzar, who suffered madness and animal-like impulses in the wilderness, or Merlin, whose madness causes him to nearly starve alone in the forest, the nephews’ stint as animals in the wilderness is a negative, if potentially instructive, experience. Since they could not manage to obey the laws of humans, perhaps the Laws of Hywel Dda, they are given over to the natural laws governing animals. However, Math’s punishment is designed to be rehabilitative, not merely punitive. Giving his nephews over to animal natures does indeed seem to teach them valuable lessons about how to behave in human society.

These three examples of animal transformations, two figurative and one literal, show that the Welsh prose of the *Mabinogi* is interested in the capacity humans have to resemble or behave like animals. While the Second Branch does use the rhetoric of animality to castigate the Irish, the majority of the text portrays humans behaving as animals as a necessary, educational form of punishment. Of course, the genres of the texts I have discussed in this chapter differ significantly. The *Gesta Stephani* is a chronicle and the Four Branches are fiction. There are two major reasons why it is possible, even important, to look at these texts alongside one another. First, the *Gesta* is a chronicle in the loosest sense of the word. More accurately, it is a panegyric to Stephen, centered around the rhetorical mission of praising a king holding onto his crown.

When we analyze this text in terms of its rhetorical craft, we can see that it is shaped using techniques not unlike those used in the creation of *fabulae*. It is imaginative, evocative, and emotional, narrating and commenting on Stephen's exploits. Second, I would suggest that systemic elements of a society, such as racism, take up residence across genres and media. Like magma, they may exist underneath the surfaces and bubble up at key moments. While the *Gesta* and *Mabinogi* are not representative of all Anglo-Latin and Middle Welsh writing, they are literary works which come from influential writers and thinkers of their times.

3.6 Racial Dynamics in Medieval Pastoralism and Agrarianism

By way of extending this analysis of how high medieval British writers saw the places of humans and animals in the world, I would like to discuss a few practical reasons why the Welsh-as-animals rhetoric worked so effectively within Anglo-Latin and, later, English literature. In this chapter's introduction, I review systems understanding the human/animal relationship, including insistence upon a fundamental species split deriving from Aristotle and that system's pervasiveness in the modern concept of animacy. Now that I have provided a reading of a twelfth-century text containing foundational anti-Welsh rhetoric based on a discourse of animality, I would like to focus in on the specific cultural differences apparent in Welsh and Anglo-Norman societies. This focus may provide a concrete means of understanding why and how Anglo-Norman anti-Welsh rhetoric developed the technique of animalization. In sum, I posit that time-honored European methods of classifying peoples were adapted and applied to the Welsh in the interest of Anglo-Norman imperialist desires. Instead of using the geohumoral system, however, writers looked to the economic system of Welsh Wales, as it depended upon the landscape of Wales, in order to rationalize their view of the Welsh as animal.

Geohumoral theory, as codified in Galen's work and deriving ultimately from Hippocrates' *Airs, Waters, Places*,²³⁵ taught medieval learners that an individual's humoral make-up could be predicted and understood in the context of the region of the world from which they came. This physiognomic system developed stereotypes, in which a people's appearances reflected their inner personalities, both of which depended upon their place of origin. Isidore, and later Bartholomaeus Anglicanus, taught that the cold and dry air of the north yielded fair-colored people with large appetites, physical vigor, and great strength and bravery in battle. The heat of the south produced small people with sun-darkened skin and frizzled hair, who were vengeful, cruel, timid, and observant.²³⁶

Since it would be difficult to posit a fundamental difference between the Anglo-Norman people and the Welsh based on climate, considering the geographical proximity of the two peoples, writers turned to other elements of the natural world in order to rationalize this difference. Economically speaking, human relationships with the natural world and its resources in England were quite different from those in Wales. As Robert Bartlett has shown, Anglo-Norman writers expressed extreme frustration with the fact that Celtic groups did not practice agrarianism in the English mode, saying "[i]n some ways pastoralism became a cultural yardstick, and the dichotomy between bread and milk assumed immense symbolic importance."²³⁷ The practice of viewing the cultural practice of depending upon foodstuff besides grains as barbaric has a long history; an ancient Akkadian text describes barbarians as "people who knew not grain"²³⁸ and the Catholic church still requires wheat-based breads for the

²³⁵ See Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 33.

²³⁶ Strickland, 35-6.

²³⁷ Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 161.

²³⁸ Bartlett, 163.

Eucharist, with Thomas Aquinas noting that bread and wine are required for the Eucharist, being the “most common food of mankind.”²³⁹ Contemporary race studies demonstrate that food usage has been used to argue for racial hierarchies for millennia. For example, Hortense Spillers shows that New World colonizers and slave traders used a lack of agrarianism to argue for the animal status of non-European peoples of color.²⁴⁰

Heng’s work on medieval Western representations of Mongols demonstrates that food itself (erroneously thought of an element of non-biological “ethnicity” in modern popular discourse, as Dorothy Kim has proven) was racialized. Like the Welsh, Mongols were closely associated with their animals, dependant upon horses, oxen, goats, sheep, and camels for nearly every aspect of their way of life—and considering their founding ancestors to be a grey wolf and a fallow deer, “totemic primordial parents of the Mongol race” (293). This close relationship with animals meant that the Mongol diet was aberrant according to Western Christian standards—and this diet, in turn, contributed to the animalized racialization of the Mongols. Heng summarizes the immensely significant role of economic system and foods consumed in the medieval period, saying:

John’s report to the Pope and Christians of Europe makes plain that a civilization, to the official envoy of the Latin West, is defined by what it eats. Bread, a universal staple made from a variety of grains in sedentary societies around the world practicing

²³⁹ A.J. Schulte, “Altar Breads,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), www.newadvent.org/cathen/01349d.htm, accessed 11 Mar. 2019. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia: A Concise Translation*, ed. Timothy McDermott (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1989), 570.

²⁴⁰ Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” in *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*, ed. Hortense Spillers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 203-99, at 71.

agriculture, was not routinely part of the nomad diet; nor were vegetables, fruit, nuts or herbs; and alcoholic beverages fermented from grain or fruit had to be important if they were to be consumed. Instead, a society practicing the animal husbandry of pastoralism lived off its animals, and what its animals produced. Mongols drank the milk of their animals, and they fermented mares' milk into *koumiss*, a dietary staple and an alcoholic beverage which William of Rubruck, if not John, came to enjoy. Mongols ate the meat of their animals, including horsemeat, but in such sparingly small quantities that John is astonished they could survive on so little; they also ate whatever creatures they were able to catch in the austere environment of the steppe, including wolves, foxes, dogs, and—John reports with revulsion—even lice. The papal envoy says they even ate the afterbirth of mares.²⁴¹

Indeed, “The dietary habits of Mongols who practiced transhumance thus seemed as extreme and bewildering as the climate and the ecoscape in which they had to survive” (294). Unlike the Mongols, the Welsh typically appeared very much like the English themselves. Even so, the medieval Welsh, not adhering to the agrarian practices of England, were racialized in opposition to the Anglo-Norman in multiple ways, not least was in the food they consumed. Non-agricultural systems and the close relationship between humans and animals in these societies appeared strange and unnatural to many Europeans.

The Welsh economy, of course, was centered around the natural resources available in the landscape to which they had been relegated in centuries of Anglo-Saxon and Norman immigration. Like the Mongols, they practiced transhumance and were racialized for it. As R.R.

²⁴¹ Heng, *Invention*, 294.

Davies notes, most of Wales towers above England's average sea level, and while these topographical characteristics were suited to military defense, they do not support agriculture.²⁴² The notion of Wales as wild and wooded and the Welsh as animals inhabiting their woods, as it appears in the *Gesta*, has deep roots, reaching as far back as Julius Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, written between 58 and 49 BC. Caesar's description of the Britons prior to the Roman invasion of Britain emphasizes the failure of British tribes to separate the civilized world from the wooded world. To paraphrase William Linnard, Caesar observes that a British town is nothing more than a thick wood fortified with a ditch and a rampart.²⁴³ This characterization of Briton lands, which were eventually restricted to the geography of modern-day Wales, persists into the Domesday Book of 1086. This survey, which was used by William the Conqueror to consolidate his newly claimed lands and to map the new Norman holding of Britain, contains many descriptions of Welsh border counties which are heavily forested. Linnard provides one example, describing Denbighshire: "There is land enough for 20 ploughs only . . . All the rest of the land is woods and moors, and cannot be ploughed."²⁴⁴ The long history of Wales as innately hostile to human dwellers served as a useful basis for anti-Welsh rhetoric of the twelfth century and beyond. As Linnard observes, Wales is "very strongly defended by high mountains, deep valleys, extensive woods, rivers, and marshes" and the Welsh "neither inhabit towns, villages nor castles, but lead a solitary life in the woods, on the borders of which they . . . content themselves with small huts made of the boughs of trees twisted together, constructed with little labour and expense, and sufficient to endure throughout the year."²⁴⁵ These descriptions of Wales as highly forested and

²⁴² Davies, *Conquest*, 139-40.

²⁴³ William Linnard, *Welsh Woods and Forests* (Llandysul, UK: Gomer Press, 2000), 14-15.

²⁴⁴ Linnard, 25.

²⁴⁵ Linnard, 27.

its people as uninterested in clearing said forest or developing civilization outside of these forests seem historically accurate, as far as records and archaeological evidence show.

This disinterest, or inability, of Welsh peoples to clear the forests in which they lived, served as fodder for anti-Welsh rhetoric which formed Anglo-Norman racial hierarchy. After all, forest dwelling was not evaluated within a system which valued cultural relativism. On the contrary, writers from cultures in which agriculture was deeply entrenched, such as William of Malmesbury and the author of the *Gesta Stephani* perceived the Welsh as unable to participate in the proper hierarchy of animacies. Mainly, it seems to have been the large-scale practice of transhumance upon which Anglo-Norman writers were most fixated. While English manorial life meant that the year centered around agricultural seasons and times of sowing and harvesting, the Welsh were “out of time,” we might say. They did not observe seasonal sowing and reaping, which must have seemed massively alien to English and Anglo-Norman feudal workers. Nor were the Welsh properly grounded, as they practiced semi-nomadic patterns of movements for the sake of their grazing herds. Displaced in both time and space, the Welsh were in no way proper Christians with a stable, agrarian economy. Their lives, in a material sense, depended upon a very different relationship to natural resources than that of those living in England. While England was participating in the new “collaborative” stage of European interaction with natural resources, Wales did not. As R. R. Davies words it, non-Welsh saw the Welsh as “to put it kindly, a wild people living in a wild country or, to put it more bluntly, an untamed and undisciplined people, who lived like animals in a strange and weird land.”²⁴⁶

Thus far, this section of this chapter has sought to comprehend the machinery of anti-Welsh rhetoric in Anglo-Latin writing. I would now like to provide a reading of a Welsh text

²⁴⁶ Davies, *Conquest*, 139.

which depicts the human/animal split or variations thereof in order to allow these texts to speak back to the colonizing rhetoric I have reviewed. My reading of Welsh texts has shown a very different attitude toward the human/animal split than Anglo-Latin texts. The Third Branch of the *Mabinogi* is particularly valuable to my discussion of economic differences in Britain, as it explicitly depicts a pair of Welsh lords leaving their “milk and meat” and experiencing the agricultural economy of England.

The third tale proceeds as follows: after a disastrous encounter with Irish enemies, the young prince of Dyfed in north Wales, Pryderi, returns home to Britain with his fellow soldier Manawydan. Manawydan weds Rhiannon, the quasi-deific mother of Pryderi, and these three settle into a comfortable life alongside Pryderi’s wife Cigfa. Their happiness is short-lived when a supernatural mist descends upon the land. When it dissipates, the foursome seem to be the only people left in the land. They are forced to seek employment when their rations run out, and so Pryderi and Manawydan take up trade in the English mercantile community of Hereford. Without any training whatsoever, they become master saddle makers, then shield-makers, then cobblers. However, each time, their skill and commercial success so far exceed that of English craftsmen that they are forced to leave town in order to avoid confrontation. They return to north Wales and hunt and fish on their own. Eventually, Pryderi and his mother are imprisoned supernaturally and Manawydan decides to try crafting in Hereford again; when the same problem arises, Manawydan makes an interesting choice.

Sef a oruc Manawydan, pan gychwynnwys parth a Dyuet, dwyn beich o wenith gantaw, a chyrchu Arberth, a chyuanhedu yno. Ac nit oed dim digriuach gantaw no gwelet Arberth a’r tirogaeth y buassei yn hela, ef a Pryderi, a Riannon gyt ac wynt. Dechreu a wnaeth

kyneuinaw a hela pyscawt, a llydnod ar eu gual yno. Ac yn ol hynny dechreu ryoryaw, ac yn ol hynny, heu groft, a'r eil a'r trydyd. Ac nachaf y guenith yn kyuot yn oreu yn y byt, a'e deir grofd yn llwydaw yn un dwf, hyt na welsei dyn wenith tegach noc ef. Treulaw amsweroed y ulwydyn a wnaeth. Nachaf y kynhaeaf yn dyuot; ac y edrych un o'e rofdeu y doeth. Nachaf honno yn aeduet.

“[Manawydan and Cigfa] set out for Dyfed. When Manawydan set off, he took him a load of wheat and made for Arberth and settled there. Nothing gave him more pleasure than seeing Arberth and the land where he had been hunting, he and Pryderi, and Rhiannon with them. He began to get used to catching fish and wild animals in their lairs. After that he began to till the soil, and then he sowed a small field, and a second, and a third. And indeed, the wheat sprang up the best in the world, his three fields flourishing alike so that no one had seen wheat finer than that. The seasons of the year passed by. Harvest time arrived, and he went to look at one of his fields; it was ripe.”²⁴⁷

Manawydan is most at peace when hunting and fishing in Dyfed. The tale repeatedly portrays our main character as “living off the land,” as it were, demonstrating the type of behavior which the *Gesta Stephani* excoriates. He does not live up to Anglo-Norman cultural standards: he does not eat bread, does not live in a town. However, when pressed, Manawydan not only succeeds in English cultural and economic pursuits, he actually exceeds the abilities of English craftsmen, threatening to put them out of business. When it becomes clear that he will never be able to practice a craft peacefully in England, he imports the agricultural practice of

²⁴⁷ Williams, 59; Davies, 41.

wheat growing to south Wales. Of course, Manawydan proves to be the best possible farmer of wheat, outproducing his English neighbors but facing no negative social consequences for this accomplishment.

Jon Kenneth Williams has read Manawydan's impressive forays into the English market economy in the context of the conquest of Wales in 1282. Williams suggests that the tale's fourteenth-century redactor is suggesting that Wales can easily engage with and become competitive in the growing English market economy of the late Middle Ages. I would like to augment William's ideas by directing my conclusions away from his thesis that the tale encourages the Welsh to enact expedient complicity with their English neighbors.²⁴⁸

Instead, I read Manawydan's actions as a response to English criticism of the Welsh as animal, and out of place in the animacy spectrum. Essentially, I see the text's redactor as portraying Manawydan as co-opting economic practices valued by the English, importing the practice most valued by the English, and showing that the Welsh can supersede English expectations about Welsh ability to harness the natural world's resources. Manawydan shows that the "savage" Welsh could choose to follow English conventions if they desired to, and could fully succeed in those pursuits. But, ultimately, Manawydan renders agriculturalism useless in south Wales. The tale ends with Manawydan exposing the sorcerer who brought the cursed mist down on Dyfed. It turns out that Pryderi had offended this sorcerer in a previous tale—but with Manawydan holding the sorcerer's wife as hostage, the sorcerer has no choice but to restore Dyfed to its former state. The human population reappears and Manawydan can thus dispense with his quest for a trade. There is no more mention of Manawydan's fields, and it is assumed that he and his companions resume a comfortable court life, circulating throughout Dyfed and

²⁴⁸ Jon Kenneth Williams, "Sleeping with an Elephant," 2008.

living on its inhabitants' taxable goods. Manawydan thus shows his superiority within the system of animacies which the English value and returns victoriously to his former and preferred lifestyle.

3.7 Welsh Representation of the Irish

As a conclusion to this chapter, I read how the Second Branch racializes the Irish themselves, using the concept of civilization itself to animalize all of Ireland. This would appear to be a Welsh deployment of the human-as-animal racial rhetoric which we see in the *Gesta*. I thus argue that Middle Welsh texts are fully capable of representing race through animality, as the *Mabinogi*'s tragic tale of Branwen suggests.

The tale of “*Branwen ferch Lyr*,” or “Branwen, Daughter of Lyr,” depicts a cross-cultural marriage which goes terribly awry. Thirteen ships arrive on Britain's coast; they belong to an Irish king, Matholwch, who desires to wed Branwen, sister of the benevolent, giant king Bran. The Welsh princess marries the Irish king happily. Angry that he was not consulted regarding the marriage, Branwen's brother Efnysien maims the horses of the Irishmen, who leave angrily. In Ireland, Branwen faces retribution for her brother's insult. She is locked away and beaten daily. In desperation, she teaches a bird to speak. It relays her message of desperation to Bran, who comes to her aid by wading across the Irish sea. A massive battle between the Welsh and Irish ensues, during which Efnysien murders Branwen's young son but ultimately sacrifices himself to defeat the Irishmen. Branwen dies of a broken heart and Bran's wounds require a magic solution: his men cut off his head and return to Britain, where they live in a contented enchantment where time does not pass. The outcome is less fortunate for the Irish. If the *Mabinogi* are quasi-mythological, the Welsh mythos of the Irish “creation story” is an insulting one:

En Iwerdon nyt edewit dyn byw, namyn pump gwraged beichawc ymywn gogof yn diffeithwch Iwerdon. A'r pump wraged hynny, yn yr un kyfnot a anet udunt pum meib. A'r pym meib hynny a uagyssant, hyt ban uuant weisson mawr, ac yny uedylyssant am wraged, ac yny uu damunet gantunt eu cafael. Ac yna, kyscu pob un lau heb lau gan uam y gilid, a gwledychu y wlat a'y chyuanhedu, a'y rannu y rydunt yll pump. Ac o achaws y ranyat hwnnw y gelwir etwan pymp ran Ywerdon. Ac edrych y wlat a wnaethant ford y buassei yr aeruaeu, a chael eur, ac aryant, yny ytoedynt yn gyuoethawc.

In Ireland no one was left alive except for five pregnant women in a cave in the wilds of Ireland. Those five women, at exactly the same time, gave birth to five sons. And they reared those five sons until they were big lads, and their thoughts turned to women, and they lusted after them. Then each lad slept promiscuously with each other's mother, and lived in the land and ruled it, and divided it between the five of them. And they searched the country where battles had taken place, and found gold and silver until they grew wealthy.²⁴⁹

According to the mythology of "Branwen ferch Lyr," the Irish come from highly inauspicious origins. This mythos operates in contrast to the Welsh, who are descended from brave warrior companions of the noble Bran (and according to the popular history circulated by Geoffrey of Monmouth, from noble Trojans). The composer of this tale, or at least this section of the tale, knew that Ireland was traditionally divided into five *túatha*, or petty kingdoms. It is unsurprising that the tale seeks to provide a history for a geo-political concept, as much of the

²⁴⁹ Williams, 47-8; Davies, 34.

Mabinogi is concerned with important political figures, place-name etymologies, and geographical histories. But it is fairly remarkable that the tale seeks to provide an origin myth for an entire group of people. Welsh writers of the high and late medieval periods would not have seen the Irish as related to them, as the concept of a pan-Celtic culture is one existing only outside the world of Celtic language speakers. This tale, then, provides what I characterize as a racist origin story for the Irish.

The notion of the Irish people as being born in a single cave implies that the Irish are more animal than human. After all, their foremothers depended on a wild refuge, typically used by animals, to give birth to their children. This literary tradition operates far afield from the hagiographic tradition which lauds the eremitic life in the wilderness; on the contrary, the *Mabinogi* places great importance upon internal nobility expressed through the trappings of wealth. The ancestors of all Irish grew up in a cave, proof of their innate defectiveness as a people. Furthermore, they only gained wealth and riches by scavenging through areas where the Britons had passed. The Irish, according to “Branwen ferch Lyr,” lack the ability to mine for natural resources, the crafts to refine metals, and the artistry to turn metals into precious belongings. Furthermore, they sleep with their companions’ mothers. While Welsh sexual mores were (in)famously less stringent than Anglo-Norman and English ones, this Welsh author seems to be accusing the ancestors of the Irish of even worse sexual habits. It is impossible to know whether this Welsh author knew that William of Malmesbury had characterized the Welsh as “wolves,” but it is certainly telling that this Welsh text applies that insult to the Irish.²⁵⁰ The sons

²⁵⁰ Catherine Karkov discusses the Irish-as-wolf stereotype as established by Gerald of Wales. Karkov’s post-colonial reading of the Irish *Acallam na Senórach* shows how Irish writers spoke back to colonial representations of Ireland, “Tales of the Ancients: Colonial Werewolves and the Mapping of Postcolonial Ireland,” in *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval through Modern*, eds. Patricia Clare Ingham and Michelle R. Warren (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 93-109.

do not take wives nor seem to have any rules governing their sexual behaviors. This passage goes beyond accusations of mere barbarism in the origin of the Irish people. It portrays them as little more than animals, breeding senselessly in caves and scavenging for what they had formerly been able to create themselves.

As the texts across the languages of Britain make clear, human relationships to the natural world play a significant role in cultural perceptions of the animacy hierarchy. As a result, we cannot ignore the role that forests, fields, plants, and animals play in the sociological development of post-Conquest Britain. This study has shown that perceptions of plants and animals have long been intertwined with the development of ethno-racial hierarchies. Just as modern postcolonial studies must be attentive to the signification of the sign of the animal, so medieval studies must also take into account the roles plants and animals have in the creation of medieval human systems. Ultimately, Anglo-Norman writers seem to have perceived Wales as out of time, out of space, and also outside of the proper animacy hierarchy established within this “collaborative” period. While English men harnessed animals in order to exploit the land for its plant-producing capability, Welsh men were overly dependant upon animals, and moved alongside them as they grazed. “Welsh” Wales, furthermore, did not exploit the land for its plant-producing capability at all. In this way, the Welsh exhibited improper relationships to the natural resources around them. Because relationships to non-humans were key to Anglo-Latin perceptions of humanness, the Welsh’s failure to build “proper” relationships resulted in their representation as less than human.

CHAPTER 4: Conceptualizing the Female King in Twelfth-Century England

4.1 Introduction

This chapter shifts focus from the politics of race to those of gender. By ending the dissertation with a transgender reading of the Empress Matilda, I demonstrate that high medieval Anglo-Norman historiography sought to develop biopolitical regulations for a range of bodies, not only racialized ones. This chapter was developed as part and parcel of Chapter 3, with both chapters originating from a single paper on transgressive boundary-crossing in the *Gesta Stephani*. It quickly became clear that that paper's discussion of the *Gesta*'s animal Welsh and the Welsh-affiliated Empress Matilda required fuller treatment in two separate pieces. From the outset, I wish to clarify that the *Gesta*'s regulatory rhetoric cannot truly be parceled out into thematically discrete portions. The *Gesta* truly seeks to establish a British kyriarchy, in which racialized and gendered²⁵¹ identities are linked and hierarchized. The following discussion claims that in order to fully understand regulatory systems of gender of medieval Britain, we must turn to transgender theory.

As Susan Stryker has shown, the concept of “trans,” a term referring to a wide variety of transgender and transsexual phenomena, is a moving target between other culturally determined moving targets of sex and gender, a statement which reminds us that trans phenomena are not confined to the postmodern or the contemporary.²⁵² Stryker has also established the centrality of trans studies to humanist research in general:

²⁵¹ My use of the term is deliberate and “gendered” operates in the same way as the term “racialized.” It suggests that an external entity places an identity upon the subject, objectifying that very subject. The term “transgendered” is problematic in contemporary terms, often deployed to castigate transgender individuals, so I avoid it throughout the remainder of the chapter.

²⁵² Stryker, Susan, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore, "Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?" *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3-4 (2008): 11-22, 4.

Ultimately, it is not just transgender phenomena per se that are of interest, but rather the manner in which these phenomena reveal the operations of systems and institutions that simultaneously produce various possibilities of viable personhood, and eliminate others. Thus the field of transgender studies, far from being an inconsequentially narrow specialization dealing only with a rarified population of transgender individuals, or with an eclectic collection of esoteric transgender practices, represents a significant and ongoing critical engagement with some of the most trenchant issues in contemporary humanities, social science, and biomedical research.²⁵³

By explicitly pulling the Empress into the orbit of trans studies, this study enhances our understanding of the poetics of medieval gender in key formative years of English history. Furthermore, it aids in the rehabilitation of a trans history, one which has been deliberately occluded in the contemporary academy.

This chapter makes a case for the inclusion of the identity of the female king, specifically as inhabited by the early twelfth-century Empress Matilda, in trans studies. As scholars are increasingly discovering, investigation of premodern texts reveals a richness of information about cultural forms of normativity. It is well-known that patristic and medieval discourses regarding women treat female morphology and the social woman as aberrant, following Aristotelian notions of the female as a failed male. But Karma Lochrie further complicates our understanding of medieval normativities of sex and gender, revealing that medieval medical discourse saw female genital morphology as varied—and that a hypertrophied clitoris (or other genital growths misread as clitorises) indicated a masculine woman, inclined to homoerotic

²⁵³ Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3-4.

behaviors.²⁵⁴ Indeed, trans phenomena reach beyond postmodern normativities, and in some moments may resonate strongly with contemporary notions of what constitutes the trans. Conversely, medieval ‘transness’ may appear foreign from the modern point of view. In both situations, historical scholarship itself has struggled with and against the transgender figure, exhibiting symptoms of a methodological and critical blind spot.²⁵⁵ This blind spot is not innocent, however. In fact, claims of anachronism seem to be more about foreclosing discussions of trans altogether, prohibiting or erasing trans history under the idea that trans persons were “invented” in the twentieth century. Just as the academy has designed new methods to uncover little-documented lives (those of the underclasses, women, persons of color, and queer persons), it behooves our field both intellectually and ethically to further medieval trans research.

This chapter is interested in the concept of the female king, turning a new critical eye toward the unique career of the Empress Matilda, who carved out a public trans space in twelfth-century England. By reading the nearest-contemporary record of Matilda’s life alongside her strikingly unusual royal seal, we see that Matilda’s gender status became the liminal site upon which a seventeen-year-long civil war was fought.²⁵⁶

Analysis of Matilda’s career as a female king necessarily draws on contemporary chronicle sources with varying interest in her gender; this necessity creates slippage between

²⁵⁴ Karma Lochrie, “Before the Tribade: Medieval Anatomies of Female Masculinity and Pleasure,” *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, eds. Susan Stryker and Aren Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013), 335-49. Excerpted from Chapter 4 of Lochrie, *Heterosyncracies*.

²⁵⁵ Mary Weismantel’s account of ways in which archaeologists have sought to render non-binary skeletons as normative within a modern Western binary exposes the gendered biases inherent in studies which purport to operate from an objectivist, empiricist orientation. See Weismantel, “Towards a Transgender Archaeology: A Queer Rampage Through Prehistory,” *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, eds. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013), 319-34.

²⁵⁶ We lack the evidence to argue that Matilda would have personally identified as a man or a woman in the modern senses of those terms. For this reason, I use the term “gender status” instead of “gender identity,” to describe Matilda’s social gender as far as we can understand it through literary and material evidence.

Matilda as a self-styled king and as a literary character of sorts, gendered and sexed according to the whims of a chronicler. While it is impossible to extricate the “real” from the literary Matilda, a spectrum of source materials point to the necessity of discussing her in a transgender context. The *Gesta Stephani*, with its virulent castigations of Matilda’s embodied person, her political allies, and her rulership, is a fascinating trove of literary information about Anglo-Norman social normativities. With the *Gesta* as a basis of study, it is possible to compare testimonies and to draw conclusions about societal perceptions of gender and Matilda’s failure to engage with her given categories appropriately.

While the *Gesta* insists angrily upon Matilda’s trans status, and attests to her gender transgression from a third-person perspective, we do have a visual text which is arguably nearer Matilda’s first-person perspective. Matilda’s royal seal is the second earliest surviving seal of a royal English woman, after that of her mother Matilda of Scotland. Extant materials provide rare glimpses of self-representation by women, and so this study looks to Matilda’s royal seal as a moment of such self-representation. Little critical attention has been paid to Matilda’s seal, an unique object and a gendered prosthetic which attests to her trans status. The seal itself is antithetical to the design of a typical woman’s seal in twelfth-century Norman England: while women’s seals almost invariably featured a standing figure on a vesica, or pointed oval, shape, Matilda’s seal is round and portrays a seated figure. This “exceptional” seal has yet to be fully understood in its range of epistemological possibilities: it is an extensible embodiment of Matilda herself, a trace of herself, and a trans object.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ I take the adjective from Elizabeth Danbury, “Queens and Powerful Women: Image and Authority,” *Good Impressions: Image and Authority in Medieval Seals*, eds. Noël Adams, John Cherry, and James Robinson (The British Museum Research Publication, 2008), 17-24. My theorization of the seal draws on the work of Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, “In Search of a Semiotic Paradigm: The Matter of Sealing in Medieval Thought and Praxis (1050-1400),” in *Good Impressions: Image and Authority in Medieval*

Working from a critical orientation attentive to moments of gender construction and disruption, I re-read these traces of Matilda's life to argue for the transgender nature of her career. First, I posit that scholarship on Matilda has struggled to navigate her trans position, and as such, Matilda has subverted the gendered assumptions on which modern studies of the medieval are based. By nature of Matilda's own life, it is thereby necessary to explore representations of her from a de-gendered, or re-gendered perspective. The second part of this chapter, operating from this vantage point, re-views the *Gesta Stephani's* indictment of Matilda, which, as I will argue, does not take issue with Matilda's subversion of gender roles so much as with her gender comportment. This slight distinction provides a major intervention within scholarship on Matilda's career to date. The final part of this chapter shows how indictments of her gender comportment, and other contemporary complaints about Matilda, are linked to her self-representation as sampled on her royal seal. Matilda, fighting to transform the very concept of Anglo-Norman queenship and playing out a gendered drama in the public sphere of her world, reveals the very conditions of the British society and government against which she fought.

As a character in the narrative of Western history, Matilda has done battle with a patriarchal set of narrators. As historian Charles Beem notes, "The quasi-religious and juridicial sovereignty vested in kingship was gendered male; the kings of England were represented as lions, whose image threatened blazingly from the royal arms. Thus, when a woman was vested with the sovereignty of kingship, the state did not temporarily become a queendom; the lions of England did not suddenly shed their manes upon the accession of a female ruler."²⁵⁸ As a

Seals, eds. Noël Adams, John Cherry, and James Robinson (The British Museum Research Publication, 2008), 1-16; and that of Dorothy Kim, "Reframing Race."

²⁵⁸ Charles Beem, *The Lioness Roared: The Problems of Female Rule in English History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2.

deceased, historical person, she refuses to be gendered within the existing binary within which scholarship on English monarchies desires to operate.

This refusal has contributed to her liminal status in studies of both kingship and queenship. Few scholars, until recently, would have thought to place her among English kings. Recent feminist scholarship is comparatively attentive to Matilda, though interest in non-royals still dominates recent studies of medieval women. What studies of royal women have appeared recently are still troubled by Matilda's presence. Queenship studies, for example, have focused (not unduly) on the *consors regni*, the queen consort, who acted as "counselors, intercessors, and authorities, and companions" in patriarchal political systems.²⁵⁹ This focus is perhaps justified, if we look to the sheer number of queens consort in western European history. As Amalie Föbel states, "female ascension to the throne was rather an infrequent dynastic accident," an exception to the rule of medieval queenship.²⁶⁰ Early iterations of feminist medieval scholarship looked to new modes of understanding medieval women and their *common* social roles, a project which led to productive studies of feminine roles such as motherhood and typical queenship.²⁶¹ Thus, in the case of English queenship, Matilda is relegated to the margins. For example, Lisa Hilton's *Queens Consort: England's Medieval Queens* discusses Matilda under the rubric of Matilda of Boulogne.²⁶² Hilton seeks to relegate Matilda's presence to the periphery of Matilda of

²⁵⁹ Katherine Olson, "Gwendolyn and Estrildis: Invading Queen in British Historiography," *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality* 44, no. 1 (2008): 36-52, DOI: 10.17077/1536-8742.1708.

²⁶⁰ Amalie Föbel, "The Political Traditions of Female Rulership," in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, eds. Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 68-83, 77.

²⁶¹ See John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, eds., *Medieval Mothering* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996); Marjorie Chibnall, "The Empress Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, eds. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996); John Carmi Parsons, ed., *Medieval Queenship* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 279-94.

²⁶² Lisa Hilton, *Queens Consort: England's Medieval Queens* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 2008). Hilton, like Charles Beem and Fiona Tolhurst (as I discuss below) has recently picked up the thread of

Boulogne's centrality. It is revealing, however, that Hilton's study of Matilda of Boulogne becomes a comparative analysis of the two Matildas, showing that the Empress Matilda can neither be dismissed nor wholly integrated into our understanding of English queenship. In fact, Matilda troubles the gender binary of historical scholarship altogether, just as she destabilized that binary in her own time.

The rarity of medieval European reigning queens, and the difficulties scholars have had integrating their presence into the larger historical narrative, point to the queerness of their position in history and in scholarship. It seems, in fact, that their queer historical presence is apt; such presence points to their idiosyncratic points on the map of medieval gender. Their high-status positions make them key figures for study not for an interest in a glamorized view of a historical monarchy, but for the wealth of contemporary sources and controversial perspectives regarding these complex figures.

Some recent studies have sought to acknowledge Matilda's outlier status as a particularly useful moment for feminist historical or literary study. Enabled by Marjorie Chibnall's landmark biography, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English*,²⁶³ historians Charles Beem and Therese Martin have brought Matilda into larger analyses of European female rulership. Martin's close study of Queen Urraca of León-Castilla (d. 1126) shows that the reigning queen's atypical role can result in her "falling through the cracks of history," since she is not a king nor a proper mediatrix.²⁶⁴ Martin traces resonating patterns

scholarship which brings the transgendered nature of female kingship to the forefront of historical analysis. Unlike Beem and Tolhurst, Hilton's market is decidedly popular. Also see Hilton, *Elizabeth: Renaissance Prince* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015).

²⁶³ Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

²⁶⁴ Therese Martin, *Queen as King: Politics and Architectural Propoganda in Twelfth-Century Spain* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2006). In Urraca's case, her transgender career (to use my own term, interpreting Martin's description), resulted in posthumous defamation. As Urraca's behavior did not suit

between the three queens regnant of the twelfth century: Urraca of León-Castilla, Matilda of England, and Melisende of Jerusalem, concluding that the twelfth century was the last moment when the notion of a queen as king was possible. An additional resonance between Urraca and Matilda is the fact that modern scholars of these figures have indicated displeasure with sexist readings of these rulers. In a mode of critique similar to that which Martin used regarding scholars of Iberian medieval studies, Fiona Tolhurst calls for a shift in our readings of Matilda, saying “What is ironic about modern historians’ characterizations of Matilda is that she is always wrong: she is both too feminine in her weaknesses and too masculine in her aggressive exercise of power.”²⁶⁵ Tolhurst, working from within the school of feminist literary studies, seeks to rectify what she views as gendered bias in modern readings of the medieval Matter of Britain. Tolhurst’s works *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend* (2012)²⁶⁶ and *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Translation of Female Kingship* (2013) pull Matilda into the orbit of literary studies and builds upon the notion of the queen as king. This queer notion, in addition to manifesting in Martin’s 2006 book, also appears in Beem’s study published in the same year: *The Lioness Roared: The Problems of Female Rule in English History*. In this text, Beem coins the term “female king,” a term which Tolhurst treats thoroughly in her feminist literary analysis. Moving away from operating within Western gender binary systems, these studies show an academic move toward the deconstruction of those systems.

the sensibilities of historians working a century after her death, her career was de-emphasized and her sexuality amplified. Martin shows that modern historians, excepting Bernard Reilly, have been too distracted by early modern views of Urraca to conduct truly useful scholarship on her (28). See Bernard Reilly, *The Kingdom of León-Castilla under Queen Urraca, 1109-1126* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

²⁶⁵ Fiona Tolhurst, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Translation of Female Kingship* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 21.

²⁶⁶ Fiona Tolhurst, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

The designation “female king,” as opposed to “queen regnant” or “reigning queen” is useful in its encapsulation of the fragmented, gendered identity of a woman who reigned not alongside a king, but as one. While Beem poses the term as a simple oxymoron, it points to the transgendered nature of the position in which Matilda found herself. In fact, much of the self-designated feminist scholarship by Beem and Tolhurst points to trans phenomena, although neither writer pursues this vein of critique. Tolhurst highlights some of Beem’s analysis which points to Matilda not as a queen, but as a ruler with a gender outside of the normative binary. Tolhurst echoes Beem, saying that Matilda “went through a gender-bending process, drawing through time upon contemporary notions of manhood and womanhood embodied in the distinct gendered roles of kingship and queenship” and concludes that his analysis of Matilda’s combination of male and female roles “reflects the potential fluidity of gender roles in Matilda’s time.”²⁶⁷ Indeed, textual and material evidence points to Matilda’s insistent participation in multiple gendered behaviors and to her contemporaries’ frustration with this transgressiveness. The transgressive nature of Matilda’s status as a female king has not been lost on scholars, medieval or modern, although until at present that scholarship has sought to operate from a feminist theoretical perspective. This foundational scholarship allows for the development of the transgender theoretical approach towards which Matilda’s life points us.

The cultural matrices of power, sex, and gender are so deeply entrenched in modern, mainstream Western thought that we may be tempted to assume that Matilda’s political struggles were based purely on her female sex and her assigned gender.²⁶⁸ The gendered political and

²⁶⁷ Tolhurst 2013, 23 (quoting Beem) and 23 (original to Tolhurst), respectively.

²⁶⁸ As Stryker et al. ask, “Hasn’t Hillary Clinton been called mannish because she is politically powerful?” (“Introduction,” 13). It is undeniable that misogyny and transphobia have informed critiques of both Clinton and Matilda, and productive comparisons can be drawn between the careers of these people. Theoretically, there are no official strictures prohibiting a female president in the United States of America and, for Matilda, there were theoretically no political barriers prohibiting a female king.

social dynamics which women politicians must navigate, however, show that there is much more to the question of female power than is reflected in official policy. Officially, Henry I's declaration of his daughter as heir was perfectly legitimate and was indeed accepted by his barons prior to his death. An understanding of 12th-century England's legal system is not sufficient basis on which to understand Matilda; to approach Matilda herself, we must turn to the sources which most closely approach her unique position in medieval history.

4.2 Matilda in the *Gesta Stephani*

Matilda's fiercest critic, the author of the *Gesta Stephani*, developed a portrayal of Matilda which, for much of history, stood as the official record of why her king/queenship failed. As I discuss in Chapter 3, the chronicle was composed as a political panegyric to Stephen of Boulogne by an anonymous English bishop, perhaps Bishop Robert of Bath, in two major parts.²⁶⁹ The first part covers the years 1135-1147 and was composed circa 1148; the second part includes years 1148-54 and, composed over a period of time after 1153, acknowledges Stephen's defeat while still praising him. While the outcome of the war forced the text's author to conclude the chronicle with praise for Matilda's son King Henry II, the author staunchly refuses to acknowledge Matilda's role in Henry's victory over Stephen. True to its original intention, the text foregrounds Stephen's masculine, cisgender excellence whenever possible.

The text begins with the death of Matilda's father, Henry I, who had declared Matilda his heir and twice had his barons swear fealty to her. According to the *Gesta*, however, England is thrown into chaotic violence after the death of the king, with its people rioting in a state of uncontrollable anarchy. Fortunately,

²⁶⁹ Davis, "Introduction," xxxvii.

. . . *Stephanus Bulonicensis comes, uir praeclara nobilitatus prosapia, Angliam cum paucis applicuit. Erat enim idem uir pacifico regi Henrico omnium nepotum solus carissimus; eo quod non solum ei germana contribulis lineae consanguinitate coniunctus, sed multimode esset uirtutum coruscamine praecipue insignitus.*

. . . Stephen Count of Boulogne, a man distinguished by his illustrious descent, landed in England with a few companions. For this same man was by far the dearest of all his nephews to King Henry the peacemaker, not only because of the close family relationship but also because he was peculiarly eminent for many conspicuous virtues.²⁷⁰

Like a second Brutus, the purported Trojan harbinger of civilization to Britain, Stephen appears on the British shore with a glorious destiny.²⁷¹ The *Gesta* implies that Stephen could be a second Henry: an illustrious, peace-making king, and the text is dedicated to upholding this image throughout the historical narrative. Even after Stephen was forced to name Matilda's son and not his own as royal heir, the *Gesta* closes with praise of Stephen. Although the last passage notes that Henry II was crowned amid praise and applause of all, the author slips in one more bit of tribute to Stephen, saying

. . . *postquam rex Angliam pacificauit totumque regnum in manu habuit, leui febricula tactus ex hac uita discessit. . .*

²⁷⁰ Potter, 5.

²⁷¹ The *Gesta*-author fails to admit that Stephen's first two attempts to land at Dover and Canterbury were unsuccessful, since, as Orderic Vitalis notes, Robert Earl of Gloucester controlled both of those castles. The *Gesta*'s narrative is much more graceful than the convoluted historical narrative. Potter, 5.

. . . the king, after he had reduced England to peace and taken the whole kingdom into his hand, caught a slight fever and departed this life . . .²⁷²

The *Gesta* was composed as a political tool, by a bishop whose loyalty to Stephen appears to have wavered very little. The text's portrayal of Matilda, then, is strategically calculated, but no less useful in an investigation of gender.²⁷³ In fact, the author's obvious hostility toward Matilda is useful, leading him to reveal what he thinks would harness maximum ill will toward Matilda. In literary terms, she operates as a useful foil for her cousin Stephen, who our author was sure would successfully claim the crown.

Unsurprisingly, Stephen is portrayed as a beacon of excellence—and ideal gender performance. Upon his arrival in Britain, he hastens to London, the *regina* of the kingdom,²⁷⁴ which receives him with excitement, an event which is narrated in sexualized and gendered terms. Here the trope of land as feminine manifests as a precursor to the text's depiction of Matilda as transgender: Stephen performs the sexually dominant, masculine role to England's waiting, passive femininity. The king's relationship to the land operates in a strict binary, adhering to the natural order of gender as set forth in a near-contemporary text, Alain de Lille's *De planctu Naturae*.²⁷⁵ Alain's Nature laments the monstrous nature of men who pervert natural law by subverting what is feminine and what is masculine, but the *Gesta* suggests that Stephen is subject to no such perversions.

²⁷² Potter, 240-1.

²⁷³ Compared to the chronicles of William of Malmesbury, Orderic Vitalis, Robert of Torigni, Henry of Huntingdon, Gilbert Foliot, Walter Map, and the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, the *Gesta* is obsessed with Matilda in the most negative way possible. See Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, for overview of this point, especially page 3.

²⁷⁴ Potter, 4-5.

²⁷⁵ Alain de Lille, *Literary Works: Alan of Lille*, ed. Winthrop Wetherbee (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); *The Complaint of Nature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1908).

The same could not be said for Matilda. Indeed, if Stephen figures as a sexual aggressor, penetrating the willing, feminine figure of London, Matilda's desire to replicate this penetration is precisely the perversion of gender which Alain would come to lament. As scholars such as Boyd and Karras have noted, medieval writers disparaged homoerotic actions, specifically sodomy (or the "unmentionable vice"). However, fear and hatred of homoeroticism was less about the sins of fornication or sexual deviance, and largely about "gender *transgression* and *conflation*" (emphasis added).²⁷⁶ Building upon the work of Judith Butler, Boyd and Karras show that, for many medieval writers, sodomy disrupted "the "natural" order and use of male bodies and orifices, and was condemned, for it turned men into women through the performance of a sexual act. Thus, this disruption of masculine and feminine gender differences becomes an offence not only against nature but against the "natural" social order as well."²⁷⁷ Carolyn Dinshaw, following Lochrie, agrees that "nonprocreativity in itself is not—or not the only—criterion of unnaturalness; acts that do not follow the proper position and form of intercourse, man on top performing vaginal penetration, are unnatural, and as Karma Lochrie stresses, these criteria of naturalness have everything to do with proper gender roles."²⁷⁸ Although the *Gesta* does not claim that a woman could not possibly take the crown for herself, the author's conception of London as feminine *regina* to Stephen as masculine *rex* positions Matilda's bid for the crown as an expression of lesbian desire, in a system which conceived of homoeroticism as

²⁷⁶ Ruth Mazo Karras and David Lorenzo Boyd, "Ut Cum Muliere: A Male Transvestite Prostitute in Fourteenth-Century London," in *Premodern Sexualities*, eds. Louise Fradenburg, Carla Freccero, and Kathy Lavezzo (New York: Routledge, 1996), 99-116, 106.

²⁷⁷ Karras and Boyd, 109.

²⁷⁸ Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 7.

an innately trans-ing phenomenon.²⁷⁹ Thus the desiring, lesbian Matilda becomes a transgender person aspiring to male status and kingship. The *Gesta*'s implied notion of a queen regnant, then, is very much the notion of a female king: a person sexed as female who, through homoerotic desire for a *regina* of her very own, transforms into a man. While Karras and Boyd emphasize medieval England's anxieties about a man's potential to lose his superior position and transform into a woman, the *Gesta* reveals deep-seated social anxieties about the potential of a woman to transform into a man.

The *Gesta* author further betrays his anxiety about the delicate nature of gender, and his desire for social maintenance of a gender binary, with a tale about one of Stephen's allies. Chapters 8-11 of the *Gesta* are concerned with the increasing threat of the rebellious Welsh, who seek to negotiate England's civil war to their own benefit. It is important to note that many Welsh areas were affiliated with Matilda's cause. At the least, they rebelled against the *de facto* King Stephen, taking advantage of England's insecure political and military situation. At most, they fought for Matilda, following her half-brother and general Robert of Gloucester²⁸⁰, an influential Marcher lord, into battle. The Welsh are portrayed as bestial, more animal than human, and so when Welsh achieve political sovereignty, proper ontological boundaries have been severely violated. After a series of successful rebellions, the Welsh manage to kill the most powerful Marcher lord, Richard Fitz Gilbert. This victory leads to the Welsh possession of baronial lands and castles. The *Gesta* regrets that the Welsh “. . . *quibus paulo ante flexa ceruice*

²⁷⁹ See Lochrie for a detailed analysis of how lesbian desire was frequently construed the result of a phallus-like clitoris. This hypertrophied clitoris, according to some medical writers, made a woman manlier in both body and disposition (what we might term gender).

²⁸⁰ While not the subject of this chapter, Robert's career merits remark. He provided much of the military might behind Matilda's campaign and, in effect, selected the king. While Robert initially backed Stephen, his transfer of loyalty to his half-sister resulted in her and her son Henry's ultimate victory. Robert also patronized the arts, including Geoffrey of Monmouth's *De gestis Britonum*, a version of which describes Robert's support.

subiciebantur, eorum nunc uersa uice rigide dominabantur;” “were now by a reversal of fortune the stern masters of those before whom a little earlier they had bent compliant necks.”²⁸¹ The Welsh have, almost literally, cast off their yokes. The racialized hierarchy of human over animal has been violated, just as the gendered hierarchy of man over woman is also in peril.

Just as the *Gesta* posits gender as a source of comforting social order in the text’s beginning, with Stephen arriving as the masculine partner to London’s welcoming, grammatically feminine arms in the face of England’s anarchy, the chronicle presents (strikingly modern) gender role performance as a mode of defense against the subversion of the human-animal hierarchy. In this way, the author seems to offer some recuperation of an ontologically sound world where patriarchal and human/English authority are secure.

As the savage Welsh lay siege to the castle of the recently-slain Richard Fitz Gilbert, Richard’s wife, the sister of the Earl of Chester, hides and weeps inside. The *Gesta*’s appeal to the audience for pity of the helpless woman is clear:

. . . clausa delitebat, quae multimodo cruciate anxia torquebatur, quia uiri solatio carens, feminea desperatione frangebatur, escarum immunis, ambientibus eam cum plurimo suo collegio inimicis, strictissime includebatur, totius ad se refugii superuenientis expes, tristitia et maerore atterebatur.

She was vexed and tormented by all manner of anxieties because through the loss of a husband’s consolation she was a prey to womanly despair, was very closely invested,

²⁸¹ Potter, 18.

without supplies, by the enemy in great force, was worn out with grief and sorrow at the absence of hope that any succor could arrive.²⁸²

The *Gesta*-author has just revealed that the Welsh are ravaging houses and churches alike, killing all people they encounter, and violating women of all ages. In this passage, Richard's unnamed widow behaves properly like a woman without hope, which is to say that she displays womanly weakness. She performs her role well, comporting herself as femininely as possible: enclosing herself, weeping weakly, and lamenting. Luckily, Miles the governor of Gloucester, bravely undertakes her rescue. We learn that

. . . se et suos dedit periculo, interque medios hostes, per opaca nemorum lustra, per montium prominentia capita, ad castellum fortiter iuit, eamque cum suis sane reducens, uictoriose et cum Gloria rediuit.

He and his men advanced boldly to the castle through the midst of the enemy, through the fastnesses of dark woods, over the high peaks of mountains, and bringing her safely back with her company returned triumphant and with glory.²⁸³

Here, the *Gesta* offers a narrative of a military event which follows a recognizably gendered script, almost drawn from the realm of romance (a genre emerging around the timeline of the Civil War). While the Welsh seek to violate the proper hierarchy of power in Britain, and threaten the sexual safety of an English woman, an English man reasserts his racial superiority

²⁸² Potter, 18-19.

²⁸³ Potter, 18-19.

and sexual prowess by rescuing the helpless woman. This episode reflects an emergent chivalric ethos which posits the man as subject and the woman as object, entrenching a deeply binary notion of gender in the text.²⁸⁴

The *Gesta*'s paradigm of gender, as shown in the case studies above, generally insists upon a binary operation. The violence and nonconsensual nature of social gendering is garnering increasing academic and social awareness. As Stryker has shown, "A gendering violence is the founding condition of human subjectivity; having a gender is the tribal tattoo that makes one's personhood cognizable."²⁸⁵ While Stryker's critique draws on contemporary practices of infant-gendering, the paradigm which Stryker provides also operates within the practice of textual representation. The *Gesta* itself seeks to enact this violent mode of gendering in its portrayal of Matilda. While Matilda had performed the gendered roles expected of her, in her marriages to the Holy Roman Emperor and to the Count of Anjou, the *Gesta* does not see the performance of only a few roles as sufficient for the requisite performance of her assigned gender. The text seeks to continually reify her female, feminine, and subservient societal space. If non-consensual gendering is the "universal cultural rape of all flesh," the *Gesta* enacts this violence toward Matilda.²⁸⁶ Not only did the historical Matilda experience the same programmatic gendering which most Western individuals have endured (and she may or may not have recognized this

²⁸⁴ While medieval discourse of gender as a scientific and spiritual phenomenon did not always reflect a trenchant binary, as Kimberly A. LoPrete has shown, the *Gesta*'s depiction of gender does indeed draw on a binary in its indictment of Matilda. In fact, the *Gesta* seems to be an exception to quite a few general statements about lordly women which appear in LoPrete. See "Gendering viragos: medieval perceptions of powerful women," in *Victims or Viragos? Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Women 4*, eds. Christine Meeks & Catherine Lawless (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 17-38.

²⁸⁵ Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, Vol. 1, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 244-56. Stryker's blasé equation of gender to a "tribal tattoo" is problematic, but her point that personhood is predicated upon gender holds.

²⁸⁶ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal, 2008), 253.

violence as such), but her historic legacy is built upon insistent re-gendering of her figure. Even the *Gesta*'s assigned name for Matilda, *comitissa Andegauensis*, or Countess of Anjou, itself demonstrates the text's disregard for Matilda as an agentially gendered subject, since she famously referred to herself only as *imperatrix*, or Empress. Matilda's desire to emphasize her political status in choice of self-referential terms went ignored by the *Gesta* author, in his eagerness to relegate her to the position of a submissive feminine object. At no point does Matilda's most vehement detractor state explicitly that a woman cannot possibly rule, but instead relegates her to the realm of female political leadership which ensures a careful split between the *rex regni* and the *regina consors*: the ruling king and the queen consort.

In fact, the *Gesta*'s representation of Matilda begins by portraying her as a subject who is absent altogether; rather than narrating her actions directly, the *Gesta*-author introduces her as the subject of conversation between Stephen's supporters and William, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was reluctant to crown Stephen. William, whom the *Gesta* previously castigated for his penuriousness, balks at Stephen's request for a swift crowning, saying that ratification by committee is necessary for the crowning. Furthermore, "[a]diecit et regem henricum, cum adiuveret, primus totius regni artissimo constrinxisse iureiurando, ne quem post illius discessum, nisi aut filiam," or "he added that King Henry in his lifetime had bound the chief men of the whole kingdom with a most stringent oath not to recognize as their sovereign after his death anyone but his daughter."²⁸⁷ Such an introduction undermines Matilda's authority not only by orienting her first vocal supporter as a sinful miser, but also by relegating the powerful historical Matilda to the position of a passive, non-agential presence in the text. Stephen's supporters dismiss her problematic existence by portraying her in a feminine position

²⁸⁷ Potter, 10-11.

in which her very flesh is currency in their male-centered political designs. They claim that Henry gave his daughter to an Angevin, in order that her inheritance would unite Normandy and Anjou in the government of England, but that Henry never actually intended that Matilda inherit the crown. They claim that “*more Ezechielis, in diebus suis pacem reformare, perque unius mulieris coniugium multa hominum mila ad concordiae adsciscere glutinum,*” or “like Ezekiel, he wished to make peace in his own time and by one woman’s marriage to weld together many thousands of men in harmony.”²⁸⁸ The text insistently genders Matilda as a feminine object: a mediator of male authority, deployed as a political tool from her father to her husband. Matilda is entered into the *Gesta*’s representation of the royal register as an economized mass of feminine flesh, a unit of the feminine matter *caro* from which material bodies are made. As a unit of *caro*, then, Matilda resembles the Ur-female/woman who sprang not from the mind of God, but from the mere body of man.²⁸⁹ Her transgendered position, as the female heir to a male position, discomfits her enemies to the extent that they seek to regender her in order to negate the threat to their gendered ontology. Ultimately, their political and economic positions depend upon the preservation of this gender paradigm.

Even Matilda’s most vocal supporter, Gilbert Foliot, bases his praise for Matilda in admiration of what he perceives as Matilda’s submissive, filial actions. As Linda Hilton puts it,

Implicitly, Empress Matilda’s fitness to rule is grounded [by Foliot] in her obedience, meekness and submissiveness to her father (and, the repeated emphasis conveys, to her

²⁸⁸ Potter, 10-13.

²⁸⁹ LoPrete’s review of medieval theology regarding gender notes that, following Augustine, many medieval Trinitarian philosophers saw people as composed of the *animus* (masculine mind), *caro* (feminine flesh), and *anima* (grammatically feminine soul). I also draw on LoPrete’s idea of Eve as the Ur-virago, which builds upon Jerome’s punning translation of Adam’s Hebrew term for Eve. See 25-30.

Heavenly Father), and it follows that in pursuing her claim she was not acting with a ‘masculine’ lust for power, but motivated by the ‘feminine’ qualities of compliance and duty.²⁹⁰

Foliot also suggests that Robert of Gloucester, Matilda’s brother and chief supporter, was persuaded to fight for her inheritance after reviewing the Book of Numbers’s support of women inheriting what their fathers pass on to them.²⁹¹ The rhetoric of female kingship, whether produced by Matilda’s political allies or enemies, was rooted in a notion of divinely appointed and performative womanhood which Matilda herself seems to have rejected entirely.

This widespread convention of couching the notion of legitimate female power in subservient feminine roles plays a major role in the *Gesta*’s presentation of a queen consort. In a strange narrative twist, the *Gesta* presents Stephen’s Queen Maude of Boulogne as a foil to the Empress Matilda.²⁹² It seems that the *Gesta* acknowledges with pleasure the idea of a third gender, under very specific conditions. The Queen consort, unlike the so-called “Countess,” wields power in the name of her patriarchal governors and functions as the *Gesta*’s ideal virago: a powerful woman who operates in the service of men and upholds feminine attributes, but relinquishes her manliness at her first opportunity to do so.

When Stephen has been captured and the Empress Matilda has declared herself Queen in London, Queen consort Maude:

²⁹⁰ LoPrete, 81.

²⁹¹ LoPrete, 78.

²⁹² Both the Empress and Stephen’s queen consort share the given name Matilda/Maude. For the sake of clarity, I have chosen to use the Latin name Matilda for the Empress and the vernacular name Maude for the queen consort. Scholarship often uses the name Matilda to refer to both women. To add to this complication, Empress Matilda’s mother is also named Matilda; I follow the convention of referring to her as Matilda of Scotland.

. . . *astute pectoris uirilisque constantiae femina, nunciis ad comitissam destinatis, pro uiro ex carcerali squalor eruendo, filioque illius ex paterno tantum testamento hereditando, enixe supplicauit.*

A woman of subtlety and a man's resolution, sent envoys to the countess and made earnest entreaty for her husband's release from his filthy dungeon and the granting of his son's inheritance, though only that to which he was entitled by her father's will."²⁹³

Queen Maude is manly in her resolution, though this gendered transgression extends only so far as to lead her to make demands on behalf of her father, husband, and son. When the Empress turns the Queen away with insults, the Queen musters an army and prepares to attack London. But because the Londoners disliked the Empress as “. . . *noua illa domina discretionis metas transcendens immoderate se contra eos erigebat. . .*”; this “new lady of theirs was going beyond the bounds of moderation and sorely oppressing them,” they aid the Queen in expelling the “Countess” from the city.²⁹⁴ Queen Maude's transgressive actions, after she succeeds in chasing the Empress from London, are highly praised. The *Gesta* comments,

Regina autem a Londoniensibus suscepta, sexusque fragilitatis feminaeque mollitiei oblita, uirileter sese et uirtuose continere . . .

²⁹³ Potter, 122-3.

²⁹⁴ Potter, 122-5.

The queen was admitted into the city by the Londoners and forgetting the weakness of her sex and a woman's softness she bore herself with the valour of a man.²⁹⁵

The *Gesta* insulates its narration of Queen Maude's manly behavior in reminders of her dedication to father, husband, and son, thus excusing and even praising her gender transgressions as evidence of her elevated mental capacities. After all, her first actions in London are gathering allies to free her husband the King from his prison. Although the *Gesta*'s portrayal of the Queen seems to suggest that gender transgression is a laudable action for women, being the inferior sex and naturally aspiring to masculinity, such actions are in fact praised only for their serviceability to male-born men. Stephen's Queen displays manly valor at moments, but relegates herself safely into the realm of women, never seriously questioning the binary gender system of her society.

However, Matilda's refusal to affirm this ontological split quickly becomes a significant irritant to the *Gesta* author. According to this text, her gender transgression was consistent, insistent, and unapologetic. The problematic nature of her own identity spread to her court as well—implying that she imperiled Britain itself. As the following example demonstrates, Matilda's presence in London, at the apex of her political career, means that the geographical center of England is a transgender dystopia. At the text's beginning, Stephen entered the feminine London to praise and applause. After defeating Stephen in battle, imprisoning him, and winning many of his supporters to her side, Matilda accomplishes her own penetration of London. According to the figuratively gendered system of the *Gesta*, Matilda's entry into

²⁹⁵ Potter, 126-7.

supreme political power entails her girding herself with not only arms, but a phallus. In medieval terms, she figures here as a hermaphrodite, possessing multiple sexes and genders in one body.²⁹⁶

With a phallus-bearing woman on the throne, corrupt courtiers (some as ontologically troubling as she) flock to her side. Other former opponents of Matilda are forced to concede defeat. This is the result of the regime shift:

Istis itaque, sed et aliis nonnullis, qui regi paruerant, mutabilem infelicis fortunae aleam perpressis, aliis quoque sponte nulloque cogente ad comitissae imperium conuersis, (ut Robertus de Oli, ciuitatis Oxenfordiae sub rege praeceptor, et comes ille de Warwic, uiri molles et deliciis magis quam animi fortitudine affluentes), illa statim elatissimum summi fastus induere supercilium nec iam humilem feminae mansuetudinis motum uel incessum, sed solito seuerius, solito et arrogantius procedure et loqui, et cuncta coepit peragere, adeo ut in ipso mox dominii sui capite reginam se totius Angliae fecerit, et gloriata fuerit appellari.

So when these and likewise a good many other adherents of the king had endured the hazards of ill fortune, and others of their own accord and under no compulsion had

²⁹⁶ My use of the term is general. For its specific premodern instantiations (which varied), see Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, “The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 1 (1995): 419-438. Notions of hermaphroditism, today known as intersexuality, usually drew on the notion that an individual’s sex and gender operated on a sliding scale from whole man to whole woman. An intersex individual was centrally located on this spectrum and was not recognized as fully male or female. Freud would eventually come to a similar conclusion, as scholars such as Gayle Salamon have noted. See *Assuming a Body: Transgender and the Rhetorics of Materiality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). For differentiation between the hermaphrodite and androgyne, see Marian Rothstein, *The Androgyne in Modern France: Contextualizing the Power of Gender* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

transferred their allegiance to the countess (like Robert de Oilli, governor of the city of Oxford under the king, and the well-known Earl of Warwick, effeminate men, whose endowment lay rather in wanton delights than in resolution of mind) she at once put on an extremely arrogant demeanour instead of the modest gait and bearing proper to the gentle sex, began to walk and speak and do all things more stiffly and haughtily than she had been wont, to such a point that soon, in the capital of the land subject to her, she actually made herself queen of all England and gloried in being so called.²⁹⁷

The text accuses Robert de Oilli and the Earl of Warwick of being soft, weak, or effeminate. The gendered implications of the term “*molles*” are even clearer if we look at similar insults in the text. In a passage immediately preceding the one above, the author describes Miles de Beauchamp as a “*vir laxus et effeminatus*,” “a dissolute and effeminate man,” who properly loses his title and fortune.²⁹⁸ The only two named courtiers who join Matilda transgress their own gender boundaries. If the term *virago* could sometimes be deployed as a compliment to women who *transcended* their feminine weaknesses, the concept of effeminacy could never be complimentary if applied to men. Caelius Aurelianus’s *On Chronic Diseases* compares effeminate men with ‘tribades,’ women with hypertrophied clitorises.²⁹⁹ The historical baggage of male effeminacy in the learned Latin tradition, and its appearance in the *Gesta*, places masculine/morphologically “male” women in close proximity to feminine men. London, after its subjection to Matilda’s transsexual penetration, is a de-gendered, or perhaps re-gendered, dystopia.

²⁹⁷ Potter, 118-19.

²⁹⁸ Potter, 116-17.

²⁹⁹ Lochrie, “Before the Tribade,” 340.

The *Gesta*'s view of the corruptly gendered court develops with a keen scrutiny of Matilda's body. The text accomplishes this scrutiny with heavy emphasis on Matilda's gender comportment, an emphasis which has been interpreted as either an accurate representation of her personality flaws, or as a misogynist take on her failed efforts to appear authoritative. I provide a reading of Matilda's gender comportment as represented in the *Gesta*, with the aim to demonstrate that Matilda's detractors may not have hated the theoretical political idea of a crowned woman nearly as much as the reality of a masculine woman on the throne.

While many contemporary lay and ecclesiastical figures of varying social status did not see Matilda's kingship as a violation of her proper gender role (showing that theological misogyny did not always translate to the lived experiences of royal women), almost every extant source on Matilda takes serious issue with her gender comportment.³⁰⁰ Comportment, both modern and medieval, refers to bodily performance especially as relating to gender and includes micro-performances including vocal tone and inflections, bodily language such as leg crossing, and modes of engagement with clothing, such as how one wears high heels.³⁰¹ Since gender comportment is a culturally and socially specific way of measuring material iterations of abstracted notions of gender categories, it follows that what an element of comportment signifies in one society (or sub-society) will signify something quite different in another.

Matilda's transgressive comportment is clear in the passage above. After her entrance into London, she behaves differently than she had originally (though the question of how the *Gesta* author was familiar with her typical comportment is left unanswered). She puts on, or

³⁰⁰ This is not to suggest that female kingship was generally accepted, only that it was acceptable enough to a sufficiently numerous amount of people for Matilda's career as a female king to exist. Her supporting roles as daughter of Henry I, Empress to the Holy Roman Emperor, Countess of Anjou, and dowager queen to Henry II were readily accepted in a way that her kingship never was.

³⁰¹ This definition is based on and developed from Stryker's section on "Gender Comportment" in *Transgender History*, 12-13.

clothes herself, with a haughtiness which is above the expected lowness of feminine behavior. Her *motum* or *incessum* (gait or bearing), which Potter also translates as “demeanour” (in an apt rendering of the Latin sense) is distinctly masculine. Her physical body performs transgressively: she walks incorrectly, speaks incorrectly, and her general body language reads incorrectly. The medieval (and arguably modern) conceptual metaphor of Man/Masculine as greater than or above Woman/Feminine clearly plays here.³⁰² If modern historians seek to pay compliments to medieval women by characterizing them as having “transcended the social and political limitations imposed on their gender,” scholarship must be attentive to the verticality of the gendered system which we study.³⁰³ The *Gesta* links Man with Up and Woman with Down and depicts Matilda in unrelenting terms of excess in her determined Upwardly behaviors. Therefore, Matilda’s haughtiness is not merely a ‘personality defect,’ but a distinctly masculine mode of comportment.³⁰⁴

This general masculinity intensifies as the *Gesta*’s perspective moves closer to Matilda, bringing her body closer into the reader’s view and allowing for clearer scrutiny of her material embodiment. Matilda’s very facial expressions are suddenly the text’s focus. While in London, she is petitioned by citizens who request reparations for possessions lost in the war. However:

*Talia his modis ciuibus prosequentibus, illa, torua oculos, crispata in rugam frontem,
totam muliebris mansuetudinis euersa faciem, in intolerabilem indignationem exarsit . . .*

³⁰² For a foundational overview of how conceptual metaphors function, see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). This conceptual metaphor operates by positioning the conceptual domain of Man vertically above that of Woman.

³⁰³ Beem, 4. Beem seeks to provide a feminist reading of Matilda, which Tolhurst uses in her feminist reading of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Tolhurst quotes Beem on the concept of Matilda as transcending femininity, reiterating transcendence as a feminist goal.

³⁰⁴ Tolhurst reviews the tradition of focusing on Matilda’s supposed personality flaws. See 21-23.

When the citizens expressed themselves this way she, with a grim look, her forehead wrinkled into a frown, every trace of a woman's gentleness removed from her face, blazed into unbearable fury.³⁰⁵

This scrutiny of the royal body, while not unusual in twelfth-century chronicle, is rare in the *Gesta* itself. Even as critique of Matilda's refusal to forgive the citizens who had previously done her injury in favor of Stephen is implicit, critique of her gender comportment is explicit. Her eyes, forehead, and general facial movements transgress the correct gendered behavior of those organs. The text may be concerned with Matilda's political policies, but is more interested in her lack of femininity, the evacuation of her gender from view. Her bodily actions as well as her presence as a female king figure her as a trans ruler, ontologically transgressive and thus repulsive.

The *Gesta*'s criticism of Matilda's behaviors devolves into outright mockery when Matilda's tenure in London comes to an end. Eventually, the Londoners drive the Empress out from the city and Matilda faces a series of military defeats. At one point, she and her allied barons are forced to flee. The *Gesta* here points to the Empress's transgender behaviors to mock her failure to live up to masculine standards of bravery. The *Gesta* author writes,

Sed et ipsa Andegauensis comitissa, femineam semper excedens mollitiem, ferreumque et infractum gerens in aduersis animum, ante omnes . . . confugit.

³⁰⁵ Potter, 122-3.

The Countess of Anjou herself, who was always superior to feminine softness and had a mind steeled and unbroken in adversity, was the first to fly. . .³⁰⁶

The text relegates Matilda to the position of wife by designating her as countess and then revels in Matilda's military failure. Unlike William of Malmesbury's depiction of Matilda's mode of retreat from London as a calculated and peaceful move, the *Gesta* represents her as over-eager and cowardly in retreat.³⁰⁷ Her masculine identity, constructed in violation of gendered boundaries, is of little use in this particular military situation. Not only is Matilda defeated, but she reveals herself to be a feminine ruler, after all, and in the worst sense of the word. In a text riddled with the figure of the weak, weeping woman such as the widow of Richard Fitz Gilbert, her eager flight reveals her to be not as unlike these women as she would have had others believe. In sum, the *Gesta* desires Matilda to behave as a feminine woman, and expresses disdain for her trans-ing actions, which include the penetration of London and unacceptably masculine gender comportment during her time there.

4.3 Matilda's Self-Representation

Typically, historians have looked to Matilda's charter signatures as the key means by which we can understand Matilda's self-representation. The question as to whether or not Matilda ever called herself queen, for example, is decisively answered in Chibnall's discussion of the charter Matilda signed in preparation for her coronation in London. Chibnall observes that Matilda refers to herself as "daughter of King Henry and Lady of the English."³⁰⁸ While the *Gesta* claims that Matilda did indeed haughtily name herself queen, no written evidence exists that Matilda

³⁰⁶ Potter, 134-5.

³⁰⁷ Chibnall, *Empress Matilda*, 105.

³⁰⁸ Chibnall, 104.

officially claimed this title.³⁰⁹ It is widely recognized that Matilda frequently claimed the title of *imperatrix* for herself, in favor of the less prestigious title of *comitissa* which her husband Geoffrey of Anjou brought her. The importance of Matilda's signature is considerable in terms of political history as well as in our knowledge of Matilda's self-perception. Later in her career, Matilda's signature preceded her son Henry's on charters, even after his crowning in England. According to Chibnall, Matilda set much store in ceremonial representation, a personal interest which Henry respected in his lifelong treatment of his mother as an honored dowager empress.³¹⁰ As far as the historical record attests, Matilda was not eager to claim the title of *regina*, with the modifier *consors* either explicitly or implicitly attached to the title; instead, she sought to rule independently as *imperatrix* or *domina*, subverting English conventions of gender and power. Furthermore, she wished to operate as *rex*, while maintaining her grammatically feminine titles.

While literary scholarship might look to signatures as the key sign of Matilda's self-representation, I argue that we must turn to the rich significations that her royal seal reveals. This multi-disciplinary approach brings together gender theory, medieval history, and material culture studies. As Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson state, a "plurality of representations" on a single topic "signals a telling penetration of ideas into different social situations and a self-consciousness about them which gives us a sense of their contemporary social visibility."³¹¹

While no literary writing by Matilda survives, she has left us a work which contains text, image, and touchable and visual experientiality. Subhadra Mitra Channa and Kamal K. Misra remind us that "No one ever created anything that was of no use where 'use' refers not just to the

³⁰⁹ Potter, 119.

³¹⁰ See Chibnall, "The Empress Matilda and Her Sons," 288.

³¹¹ Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, "Introduction," in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings*, eds. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 1-26.

instrumental but to symbolic and emotional purpose as well.”³¹² In the case of medieval women, whose opportunities to leave behind written materials for posterity were relatively rare, we must be especially attentive to the symbolic and emotional purposes of those objects which we have. In the case of Matilda and her unique historical position, it is necessary to understand her from historical, literary, and visual perspectives.

Scholarship has yet to fully acknowledge the remarkably transgressive and transgender nature of Matilda’s seal. Feminist literary scholarship has taken some note of the seal. In her feminist reading of Matilda as discussed in Chibnall and Beem, Tolhurst notes that the shape of Matilda’s seal is unusual for a seal of a queen consort, following Elizabeth Danbury’s observation.³¹³ Beem does not discuss Matilda’s seal at all, and Chibnall is more interested in a lost seal, one which would have accompanied the charter by which Matilda famously became *domina anglorum*.³¹⁴ The cursory treatment of Matilda’s seal, compared with the amount of scholarship spent on chronicle representations of Matilda, supports Danbury’s general statement that little has been made of medieval women’s seals. While Danbury makes this observation as part of a call for more expansive sigillographic research in general, I suggest that Matilda’s seal is a rich source of information regarding her strategic representation of herself as a female king. To more fully understand the role that this seal played in Matilda’s life, I propose an analysis of this object from a material culture perspective. By working from a semiotic paradigm of medieval sealing in tandem with a theorization of gender prosthetics, I develop a system for reading a premodern transgender object. This reading shows that Matilda represented herself in a trans and transgressive fashion.

³¹² Subhadra Mitra Channa and Kamal K. Misra, *Gendering Material Culture: Representations and Practice* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2013), 4.

³¹³ Tolhurst, 41.

³¹⁴ Chibnall, 103.

The seal may not appear to be remarkable to a viewer unfamiliar with medieval English sigillography. The “standard” seal for a royal woman in England seems to have followed a typical design. This standard meant that, almost invariably, a royal English woman’s seal took the shape of a pointed oval, or vesica, and depicted a crowned woman in a standing position holding a scepter and orb, or perhaps a falcon, with a descriptive legend inscribed around the top edges. Typical examples include those of Queen Matilda of Scotland (1080-1118), Princess Joanna of England (1165-1199), Queen Isabella of Angoulême (1188-1246), Queen Eleanor of Castile (1241-1290), Princess Elizabeth of Rhuddlan (1282-1316), Queen Margaret of France (1299-1307), and Queen Philippa (1314-1369). These seals are vesicas with a woman standing in the center, crowned and holding one or two royal objects.³¹⁵ They also have in common that those royal objects consist of a scepter with a fleur-de-lis, a *globus cruciger*, and/or a falcon. The later seals are notably more elaborate, and conspicuously depict family arms, as we see in the seals of Queen Phillipa, Princess Elizabeth, and Queen Margaret. For example, Margaret’s seal portrays a standing woman flanked with two shields, one decorated with a field of fleurs-de-lis and the other with a lion. This difference reflects a trend of placing heraldry on the queen consort’s seal, a practice that arose in the middle of the thirteenth century.³¹⁶ Another variation can be seen in Joanna’s two-sided seal; one side portrays her as seated with a cross, while the other side shows her standing with a fleur-de-lis. However, these samples are all immediately

³¹⁵ Danbury provides excellent images of these seals: for Queen Matilda of Scotland (80 x 56 mm), Society of Antiquaries of London, seal cast case 1, see Figure 1, p 17; for Princess Joanna (72-46 mm), BM 1897,0508.2, see Fig 11 and 12, p 22; for Queen Isabella (93x62 mm), SAL, seal case A1, see Fig 8, p 20; for Queen Eleanor (8.0x5.6), National Archives of the UK, TNA DL 27/196, see Fig 5, p 19; for Princess Elizabeth (71 x 49 mm), Society of Antiquaries of London, seal case A4, see Fig 9, p 20; for Queen Margaret (85 x 55 mm), SAL, seal case A1, see Fig 3, p 18; and for Queen Phillipa (80 x 50 mm), Society of Antiquaries of London, seal case A1, see Fig 4, p 19. Note: Queen Eleanor’s seal is only partially preserved, accounting for its diminished measurements. The characteristic vesica shape and standing woman, as well as an obverse side with arms, is still clear.

³¹⁶ Danbury, 19.

recognizable as a set of standard queen's seals from medieval England in the eleventh through fourteenth centuries.

While Matilda of Scotland's is the earliest example of a woman's seal in England, Danbury suspects that the practice goes back further than we can tell; since the seal of Henry I's sister, Cecilia, Abbess of Caen, is similar, there may be an earlier prototype, perhaps belonging to Matilda of Flanders, wife of William the Conqueror and mother of Cecilia and Henry I.³¹⁷ Even with the relatively few surviving examples of women's seals from medieval England, we can draw conclusions about the standard design of a royal woman's seal. To discuss the period at hand more specifically, one survey has found that 87% of twelfth-century Anglo-Norman noblewomen had seals that were vesica- or oval-shaped. While noblemen's seals were round, and ecclesiastical bodies and laymen could employ both shapes, women's seals of the twelfth century were almost exclusively vesical in shape and nearly invariably showed a standing woman.³¹⁸ Even Joanna's seal, being a variation from the norm in its representation of Joanna as seated, depicts her as standing on its reverse side.

Matilda's seal thus represents a deviation from a strongly held tradition of seal design for royal women. The seal cast, kept by the Society of Antiquaries of London, is an unremarkable 63 mm in diameter.³¹⁹ It reveals a *round* seal with a *seated* figure bearing a scepter in the right hand and the left arm bent in front of the torso, palm upwards. A legend runs along the seal's circumference, encircling the enthroned and crowned Matilda. The only blank edge is at the seal's bottom, where a step for the figure's feet occupies the edge of the seal.

³¹⁷ Danbury, 17.

³¹⁸ Survey conducted by Susan Johns, as cited in Danbury, 17. Gradually, the standard royal woman's seal did change; late medieval and early modern seals became round and displayed arms instead of a representation of the woman herself. See images of examples as provided by Danbury; Queen Elizabeth Woodville (p 20), Cecily Neville (p 22), and Lady Margaret Beaufort (p 23).

³¹⁹ See Danbury, 18 for an excellent image of the seal cast.

The seal would be mundane from a historical point of view, if it were owned by a male ruler. However, this is clearly not the situation: Matilda's seal clearly replicates the design standard for male kings of England, while featuring a female figure where the man would usually be. What we have in Matilda's seal is a woman wielding a man's seal. It is undeniable that Matilda's seal follows in the tradition of seal design for English male kings. The Great Seal of Edward the Confessor, the purported predecessor of William the Conqueror, depicts the king seated and crowned on a round double seal. The Great Seal of William the Conqueror, Matilda's grandfather, shows the king crowned and seated on a round double seal.³²⁰ And, predictably, the Great Seal of Henry I, Matilda's father, portrays the king crowned and seated on a round double seal.³²¹ Matilda made a conscious choice to utilize a seal which harked to the male line of authority in which she was determined to participate. When faced with the choice whether to enact her authority through a symbol like that of her father, Henry I, or her mother, Matilda of Scotland, Matilda made the decision consistent with her entire career. She adopted a male symbol of authority, just as she enacted masculine modes of rulership and gender comportment. Matilda's seal confirms the testimonies of contemporary chroniclers who attest to Matilda's masculinism. In a powerful, material way, Matilda asserted her identity as a female king.

Although the medieval seal did function in a mundane, bureaucratic way, material culture scholarship shows us that these objects functioned as much more than that. A semiotic paradigm of medieval sealing reveals the constellation of social and spiritual truths that a medieval seal carried with it. As Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak has shown in her development of such a

³²⁰ These descriptions come from John Cherry, "Heads, Arms and Badges: Royal Representations on Seals," *Good Impressions: Image and Authority in Medieval Seals*, eds. Noël Adams, John Cherry, and James Robinson (The British Museum Research Publication, 2008), 12-16, 12.

³²¹ Image available in Joseph Noël de Wailly, *Eléments de paléographie*, Vol 2, (Paris: imprimerie royale, 1838), 369-70. Plate R.

paradigm, “Medieval seals . . . did not merely reflect the organizing principles of medieval culture and society nor did they simply represent reality; they were involved in creating a reality, that is, *veritas*, truth,” and in medieval culture, “truth was reality.”³²² Seals were markers of an abstract idea manifesting as a new truth within the reality of the world. The physical body’s role in the creation of a new truth was key to the function of seals. The language of charters frequently referred to the impressing of the seal itself, an action which physically signified the signatory’s *auctoritas* in enacting the abstract ideas contained in the document. In this way, the seal itself figures as body:

Such contemporary insistence on the seal as imprint highlights its indexical nature as the trace of an actual contact, not only between the matrix and the wax, but also between the seal and its user. The wax applied to the seal user’s matrix embodied his person as the true originator of the act in question—his presence often rendered even more tangible by the inclusion of bodily marks in the seal, such as finger prints, bite marks, or actual hairs plucked from his beard.³²³

Bedos-Rezak discusses only male kings here, and in these examples, the gendered nature of the seal is clear. Not only does she use masculine pronouns, suggesting that her sample set drew only on the seals of men, but she points to ways in which men imprinted their masculine *auctoritas* on these *veritas*-making seals. The example of a tooth-seal comes from a charter of a Norman knight (c.1150) who states that he will impress his teeth into the wax in lieu of a seal.³²⁴ This seal

³²² Bedos-Rezak, 1.

³²³ Bedos-Rezak, 2.

³²⁴ Bedos-Rezak, 6.

is not merely a mark of a bodily action, but the mark of the body itself—suggesting that the purpose of a seal was indeed to stand in for the body. In these cases, the body was male. The presence of beard hairs in a wax seal acts similarly; the seal functions as a proxy for the male body with all its secondary sex characteristics and social/spiritual *auctoritas* in society. Additional research on women's seals, especially in England, is needed to augment our understanding of a semiotic paradigm of medieval sealing, but it is clear that a seal not only functioned as an extension of the body, but as a specifically gendered extension of the body. Seals therefore function as extensions of the body itself, in a very literal sense when physical attributes such as teeth and hair reside in the wax. Far from being abject castoffs of a corrupt mortal body, medieval seals signify a political Truth only achievable by means of physical representation.

The signification of reality by means of physical objects has not been lost on scholars of medieval materialisms. Scholars such as Dorothy Kim have theorized how modes of extensible embodiment functioned in medieval discourses concerned with the material body, showing that mundane objects like the codpiece and the handkerchief have been used to create the *veritas* of identity itself. In her discussion of medieval race, Kim notes that multiple taxonomies of the body's malleability have productively described how identities could be produced. While Kim coins the term extensible embodiment, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen describes corporeal/somatic practices, Andrew Tyrell discusses body-idiom, and Will Fisher theorizes a prosthetics of gender.³²⁵ These studies show that objects are key tools in our understanding of the physical body and its various identities. Like the physical property of wax itself, identity is malleable, able to be shaped and re-shaped at will with the aid of external material forces, whether a

³²⁵ Kim, 56.

codpiece or a seal cast. In twelfth-century England, a seal was not a simple visual icon, but was an extensible embodiment of *auctoritas*, in its sexed and gendered corporeal manifestation.

The concept of extensible embodiment can thus contribute to our semiotic paradigm of medieval sealing. A seal, like that of Empress Matilda, functions as an extensible embodiment both indicating and formulating the social and spiritual *auctoritas* of Matilda's body upon her material and spiritual world. The new theorization of medieval seals which I here propose argues that physical manifestations of *auctoritas* did not function in an ethereal void, but in a material world where a body's sexed and gendered status *mattered*. A seal was an extensible embodiment which constituted the *veritas* of a person's gender, among other factors of identity.

This concept was not lost on Matilda, whose transgressive gender position was treated as a target by her detractors, the most vocal of whom to have survived throughout history is certainly the author of the *Gesta Stephani*. The seal which she used to represent herself is itself transgender, a combination of traditionally male and female markers which aptly resonates with William of Malmesbury's positive characterization of Matilda as having both her father's masculine *fortitudo* and *industria* and her mother's feminine *religio* and *pietas*.³²⁶ If we keep in mind the concept of the seal as a gendered extensible embodiment capable of imprinting itself on the material and spiritual world, Matilda's seal becomes a unique symbol of the concept of the female king in medieval England. By deploying her authority through what I term a transgender object, Matilda worked to consolidate and legitimate female kingship.

The seal's design is exceptional, as Danbury attests, in three main ways, two of which I list above.³²⁷ In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss these exceptional traits—shape, visual representation, and legend—in more detail, to demonstrate how the seal functions as a

³²⁶ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum, Volume 1*, section 438.

³²⁷ Danbury, 18.

transgender object. The seal's legend is not as visually striking as its other elements, but certainly signifies in a notable way. The legend is unusual in its relationship to other extant evidence of Matilda's titles and styles; it reads "+ MATHILDIS DEI GRATIA ROMANORUM REGINA," which diverges from her typical signature of "Matildis imperatrix regis Henrici filia," sometimes followed by "*eg et Anglorum Domina*" after her crowning in London in April 1141.³²⁸ The seal's legend references her favored title of *imperatrix*, which she gained through marriage to a Holy Roman Emperor, but it is unclear why Matilda approved this deviation from her standard operating procedure. Perhaps Matilda saw the two titles as functionally identical, but it is difficult to imagine Matilda allowing for slippery or careless title inscription.

The seal's legend does not name Matilda as queen of the English, but does indeed include the highly feminine title of *regina*. Since Matilda does not seem to have embraced this title in general throughout her career, its inclusion on her seal warrants some explanation. I posit that the title, placed prominently over the scepter and crown of Matilda's representation, insists upon the transgender status of the object itself, and thus Matilda's female kingship itself. At first glance, the seal looks like that of an English king. By including the title of *regina*, any witness of the seal is confronted with Matilda's unflinching determination to be recognized as the bearer of powerful, masculine *auctoritas* even while acknowledging her status as a social woman. While the seal offers up visual information to be *received* quickly by a witness, it also requires the witness to perceive its written information. A witness must comprehend the seal in two ways, through reception and perception, and these two modes of comprehension send the witness two different statements about the seal's gender. The faculty of reception attests to the seal's masculinity; that of perception attests to its femininity. By imprinting a feminine title (which

³²⁸ Danbury, 18.

almost always came with an implicit *consors* attached) upon a man's seal, Matilda manipulates the relationship between gender and authority and forces the witness to rethink the often-assumed masculinity of rulership. For Matilda's contemporaries, this transgender seal would have attested to the possibility of female kingship.

As I state above, the seal's shape is highly unusual, rejecting the feminine vesica in favor of the masculine circle. Although Danbury refutes the notion that the vesica was used for women's seals because of its ability to fit the shape of a standing woman in it, she offers no alternative explanation, saying only that "whether there may have been other reasons for the use of the vesica shape for women's seals is not clear."³²⁹ In terms of shape, the vesica resembles conventional depictions of the wound of Christ, which in turn resembles visually and figuratively female genital morphology. It is possible that the vesical seal resonated with cultural figurations of the feminine body, just as the round seals of men could resonate figurations of the masculine body. The extent to which the vesical seal was associated with the female body itself is unclear, though it's clear that this shape was indeed associated with women.³³⁰ The seal's shape is perfectly conventional, then, if we think of Matilda as a female king—which, in all practical ways, she perceived herself to be, for much of her career.

The final element of the seal I discuss here represents Matilda's own body. The practice of imprinting the royal body upon the seal was usual for both men and women, but as I argue, Matilda strategically designs her own body as a transgender icon of political authority.

Sartorially, Matilda's icon differs from that of her father, Henry I. While Henry I's icon portrays

³²⁹ Danbury, 17.

³³⁰ In addition to being a conventional characteristic of women's seals, it could be used for bishops, corporate ecclesiastical bodies, and some laymen; however, round seals could also be used for corporate bodies and laymen, as Danbury shows on 17. The vesical seal's association with abstinent and/or abstract ecclesiastical bodies consisting of men intensifies the shape's resonance with the wound of Christ.

a bearded man with exposed legs, his long robe tossed over a single shoulder and arm, Matilda's icon actually resembles that of Matilda of Scotland. Both figures are draped in robes which fully cover the legs; both have wide, sweeping sleeves which hang from the forearms; and both women wear large, prominent crowns. However, Matilda's posture—which we might term comportment, based on what we know about her physical presence and body language from the *Gesta*—mimics that of her father and grandfather. She sits, feet upon a low footstool and toes pointed outward, with her knees spread apart, raised slightly above her hips. This representation clearly mimics that of Henri I, with the simple addition of a woman's robes covering the legs.

To further contextualize the exceptional design of Matilda's figure on her seal, we must remember another social valence to the seated figure of a woman. Danbury states that this visual icon “almost invariably represented not an earthly sovereign, but the Virgin Mary” on seals in England after 1100.³³¹ This means that not only did Matilda deliberately follow the seal design conventions of English kings, but that she did so in a cultural milieu which would have associated her transgender seal with images of the Virgin Mary. It seems that Matilda here makes a reference to the ultimate source of feminine power: the Virgin herself. However, Matilda melds this reference to a symbol of male authority, bringing together signs of feminine and masculine power in crafting the seal by which her own power would be exercised. The seal is both kingly and feminine, a transgender object which serves as an appropriate extension of Matilda's own body, that of a female king.

4.4 Conclusion

Although feminist scholarship has made gains in our understanding of Matilda's difficult social and historical position, it is necessary to approach Matilda on her own terms. If her seal is any

³³¹ Danbury, 18.

clue to Matilda's identity, as new materialist theory and traditional sigillography show it may be, we must think of Matilda as a female king, inconvenient as that category may be to historical research. It is highly appropriate that her seal be as exceptional, and potentially troubling to binary notions of gender, as Matilda's own position was.

By way of conclusion, I offer a final anecdote. As I show above, the *Gesta* complains that Matilda's behavior, especially while ruling from London, was highly inappropriate for her gender. One particular scene from the *Gesta* well illustrates Matilda's transgressive comportment, which always accompanied her transgressive political actions. When the King of Scotland, Bishop of Winchester, and her brother Robert of Gloucester visit her court, the three being "totius regni primos," "chief men of the whole kingdom," she reacts to their respectful kneeling with a display of bodily transgression.³³² Although these three make their requests accompanied by bodily shows of deference, by kneeling and bowing, Matilda refuses "assurgere," to rise for them. Within the *Gesta*, this description of her physical refusal to enact ideal feminine behaviors is designed to undermine her kingly authority. While Matilda's career as a female king was indeed challenged and ultimately undermined, her seal fittingly represents her as seated. It is tempting to imagine that Matilda's seal illustrates the very scene which incited the *Gesta*-author to such anger: when she refused to stand in respect and deference for visitors to her London court. Just like the historical Matilda, the iconic Matilda refuses to follow the gendered protocol set before her.

This image of Matilda, which was used to extend her *auctoritas* through its embodied prosthesis of her own identity until the end of her life, represents her as obstinately sitting,

³³² Potter, 120-21.

positioned in a network of transgender associations. Ultimately, this category-troubling seal stands as an apt representation of the female king herself.

CLOSING

I opened this dissertation with John Gillingham's observation of a peculiar "attitude" which arose in Britain in the long twelfth century. As this project indicates, I agree with Gillingham that this "contemptuous attitude of self-consciously civilized peoples toward the more pastoral peoples on the fringes of twelfth century Europe" was "one of the most important ideological developments in medieval Britain," and my project seeks to augment our understanding of this attitude. The focus of my dissertation is thus diffuse, exploring how a sense of cultural superiority undergirded political movements in a postcolonial, twelfth-century Britain, and how individuals and groups on the margins of a burgeoning cultural hegemony fought to be included in the category of what Geraldine Heng has called the *homo Europeus*. The case studies contained in my survey of high medieval British identity show that race and transgender issues, two phenomena often mistaken as too "modern" for medieval studies, have much to teach us about the Middle Ages.

As I have argued, the accumulation of disciplinary rhetoric regarding race and gender in the high Middle Ages shows that twelfth-century historiographers worked to fashion a kyriarchy, a matrix of biopolitical regulatory systems. While the particularities of political agenda and identity affiliations differed between twelfth-century historiographers, each sought to establish a normative social system for a postcolonial Britain. However, this thesis also shows that writers outside the ethnic and political centers of Anglo-Norman Britain deployed textual methods to contest this hegemonic discourse of British identity. The case studies in this dissertation are loosely linked, showing a form of reading within a specific arena, rather than illuminating a particular author or genre, in order to map how this kyriarchy was established and challenged.

In sum, I have shown that the Norman-Welsh author Geoffrey of Monmouth subverted classical and Biblical forms of race in favor of a new system which allowed for cultural and ethnic hybridization, elevating the Welsh above the Anglo-Saxons, and facilitating the imperial vision of the Empress Matilda. Geoffrey's pseudo-chronicle may have been widely disparaged by his historian contemporaries such as William of Malmesbury, but nevertheless established a widely disseminated, new mode of representing medieval race.

Chapter Two showed that William of Malmesbury established an anti-Welsh racial paradigm, one which resonates with the *Gesta Stephani* in its portrayal of the Welsh as inherently inferior through the moral failing of treacherousness. This chapter shows that the political and social stakes of controlling British historiography were high, and that writers who dominated this genre constructed and revised systems of race in order to support their own ethnic group's claim to preeminence.

As I demonstrated in Chapter Three, the *Gesta Stephani* deploys a process of racial denigration which I call "animalization," a rhetorical strategy by which an ethnic group is portrayed as sub-human or animal. This well-documented modern phenomenon appears extensively in medieval British literature as a political tool by which one group could attempt to justify domination of another. Against this rhetoric, I read the *Mabinogi* as envisioning an ontology outside of the human/animal dichotomy, negating the hierarchical system which animalization requires. Furthermore, I examine Anglo-Norman and Welsh representations of human-plant relationships, showing that the burgeoning agricultural practices of medieval England contrasted sharply with Welsh pastoralism and transhumance, which required humans to follow the needs and desires of their animals.

The final chapter moved from race to gender as represented in the *Gesta Stephani*, drawing on the emerging field of transgender studies to illustrate how the Welsh-allied Empress Matilda designed a multi-gendered form of British sovereignty. For the author of the *Gesta Stephani*, both the Welsh and Matilda, to whom the Welsh were generally allied, were unnatural and had no place in English politics and society. This chapter shows that the creation of biopolitical systems in the long twelfth century was not only racial, but also gendered.

The afterlife of the intersectional kyriarchy born in the high medieval period is long and broad, much more so than I have room to cover here. Ranulph Higden's authoritative fourteenth-century *Polychronicon*, translated by John Trevisa and printed by William Caxton, attests to the survival of Welsh stereotypes, fixating upon the bare legs of the Welsh as they fight, play, hop, leap, stand, sit, lie, and sleep without surcoat, gown, coat, kirtle, tabard, cloak, hoods, hats, or caps.³³³ Higden draws on Gildas to give authority to his diatribes, saying that the Welsh are "variable in peace" and never "stable"³³⁴ and triumphantly stating that English colonialism has done some good. Book I, Chapter 38 suggests that although the Welsh are still bestial, they have at least been improved through their contact with the English and their subsequent Anglicization.³³⁵ The stereotype of the Welsh as unsophisticated, impoverished, and even bestial survived beyond the twelfth century and is still in existence today. In the aftermath of English colonialism, Welsh identity is fraught with racial signifiers which have become largely class-based, resulting in near extinction of the Welsh language.

³³³ Ranulph Higden, *Monachi Cestrensis*, 403.

³³⁴ Higden, 403.

³³⁵ Higden, 411. See also Ronald Waldon, "Trevisa's Translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*, Book I, Chapter 38, *De Wallia: An Edition*," in *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales*, eds. R. Kennedy and S. Meechan-Jones, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 99-136, 113.

Indeed, the biopolitical logics which were theorized and tested in this period established a foundation for race in the so-called Age of Empire. Put simply, the concept of race which was forged in the fires of frantic, twelfth-century history-writing made English colonization of Wales ideologically possible. Such colonial mechanisms were then carried across the Irish Sea, then across the Atlantic, and beyond. Skin color would eventually become the main indicator of racial difference, as a convenient method by which Europeans could justify economic exploitation of colonial subjects in the Americas and Africa.

Welsh racial difference as perceived by the English changed significantly after the English Conquest of Wales in 1283 and the subsequent Laws in Wales Acts of 1535 and 1542, which consolidated English ownership of Wales. Although my work focuses on Wales as a colonial subject, and the Welsh as the victims of racialization and large-scale discrimination, the racial privilege enjoyed by the Welsh in later years should not be ignored. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, some later medieval Welsh texts adopted anti-black conventions of English and Continental literary sources. For example, the raced giants of the thirteenth-century Welsh romance *Peredur* are radically different from giants in earlier texts, such as Bran the Blessed or even the evil, though unraced, Ysbaddaden. Welsh fortune-seekers also participated in and benefited from English empire-building in the centuries after their loss of political independence to England. Today, while the Welsh are typically considered cultural and economic Others by the English, with their history as colonial subjects still unfolding, they are not subject to many of the dangers and racial hostilities faced by immigrants and refugees in the United Kingdom. The negotiation and re-negotiation of the Welsh within English society over time reveals the pliability of racial categories and stands as one of many pieces of evidence which prove that race is social, not biological.

While much of the project is concerned with the creators of hegemonic systems, I also discuss how groups and individuals who did not fit into the ontological model fashioned by high medieval Anglo-Latin historiography resisted their characterization as transgressive or barbaric. This project demonstrates that the Anglo-Latin chronicle tradition, while vital to our historical knowledge of post-invasion Britain, sets up ontologies that are subverted by texts across genre, language, and region. As a multiethnic, multilingual island, medieval Britain produced a fascinating cacophony of perspectives on British identity. Texts as diverse as Anglo-Latin pseudo-chronicle, Welsh chronicle, Welsh *fabulae*, and a female king's seal jostle for authority in determining how personhood and power ought to function in postcolonial medieval Britain.

It is no exaggeration to say that the writing of this thesis coincided with a paradigm shift in Anglophone medieval studies. At the completion of the project, the broad field of medieval studies is grappling with its own history, one plagued by implicit—often explicit—white supremacist and misogynist attitudes. Amateur and experienced scholars are combing not only through the archival records of the Middle Ages, but also through the modern socio-cultural assumptions and filters that have created the field with the goal of revising how we think about premodern race and gender. Global politics are playing out in medievalist circles, resulting in hotly contested debates regarding the place of social justice and “identity politics” in humanities classrooms and at scholarly conferences. Thus, this thesis is activist as well as academic. The four case studies contained in my dissertation show that the Middle Ages are not “safe” from the modern world's concerns about equal rights and fair representation. The twelfth-century “renaissance” is not only the purview of scholars of scholasticism and philosophy, but also scholars of race and trans/gender. This means that the professoriate must revise research, pedagogical, and professional habits. It is ironic, or perhaps entirely predictable, that the

phenomena I set out to explore in medieval texts—the creation and disciplining of racial and gender lines—are manifesting in the very academic circles within which we move. It is also true, however, that new voices are jostling for recognition and representation in medieval studies, as they did in the medieval milieux I have discussed in this dissertation.

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APPENDIX

Movement of the Trope of Treachery: Extra-Textual Evidence of Transmission

Because this dissertation is largely about close reading prose texts, not tracking the movement of individual texts throughout time and space, this appendix is included as a supplement to Chapter Two. It traces the textual histories which would have facilitated some aspects of the trope of Welsh treachery throughout England and Wales.

While scholars have established material and thematic evidence that the Cistercian creators of the *ByT* at Strata Florida would have had access to Gildas, Bede, and Geoffrey of Monmouth,³³⁶ scholarship has been less clear on whether or not the *ByT*-creators knew the work of William of Malmesbury. Our most obvious piece of extra-textual evidence that the *Gesta* may have circulated in Wales is the fact that Robert of Gloucester served as patron both for Geoffrey and for William. Considering the frequent military alliances between the Welsh and Robert in service of Robert's sister, the Empress Matilda, combined with the popularity of one of Robert's patronized writers (Geoffrey of Monmouth), it is plausible that William's work would have circulated through the same learned Welsh circles that Geoffrey's work did.

This is not to suggest that the *Gesta* may have reached even a fraction of the fame that the *DGB* did; the sheer number of extant redactions of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* shows that such a hypothesis would be untenable. The comparative wealth of extant manuscripts of the *Brut y Brenhinedd*, compared to the *Gesta*, demonstrates comparative disinterest in William's work on the part of the Welsh Latinate circles, were they even familiar with the text. Even so, twelve entries in the *Brut y Saeson* (a related chronicle) take from William's *Gesta*; while the Latin

³³⁶ Total lack of evidence points to distinct disinterest of the Welsh concerning some authors. For example, Brynley F. Roberts points out that the Welsh never translated Gerald of Wales or Water Map's history. See Roberts, "Writing in Wales," *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, David Wallace, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 182-207.

source of the *ByT* may have been separate from the Latin source of the *Brut y Saeson*, William's work certainly influenced the historians of high and late medieval Wales.³³⁷

However, one piece of material evidence lends credence to the notion that the creators of the *ByT* at Strata Florida may have been well aware of William's *Gesta*. It is well known that the Cistercian order found remarkable success in Wales, and that Strata Florida is one manifestation of this success. Along with the Benedictines, the Cistercians became responsible for a significant portion of the repositories of knowledge and manuscripts that were medieval monastic libraries. Sadly, the majority of these libraries were decimated during the Reformation, leaving behind few texts and few library catalogues. It is not possible to determine, by means of material evidence, what Anglo-Latin texts, if any, were present at Strata Florida during the composition of the *ByT*

What we do know, however, is that a copy of the *Gesta* was indeed owned by the Cistercian institution of Margam Abbey during the period which saw Strata Florida's production of the *ByT*. Extant manuscripts from Margam Abbey, in Glamorganshire, include Cambridge, Trinity College 1108; London, B.L. Arundel 153; and London, B.L. Royal 13 D. ii. The first contains the *Chronica abbatie*; the second a Domesday Book redaction; and the third, William of Malmesbury's *Gesta*, together with other materials.³³⁸ This third manuscript, inscribed as *Liber Monachorum Sante Marie de Margan*, includes not only Geoffrey's *DGB* in eleven books, but also William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum* and the *Novella historia*. MS London, B.L. Royal 13 D. ii shows the possibility that the Latin *Gesta* would have circulated in tandem with Geoffrey's wildly popular *DGB*.³³⁹

³³⁷ See J. Beverley Smith, 62.

³³⁸ See N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, 2nd ed (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1964), 129.

³³⁹ The popularity of the *Historia* is attested by approximately thirty Welsh vernacular redactions of the text, grouped under the name *Brut y Brenhinedd* [Deeds of the Kings], and of course the two hundred plus extant manuscripts of the Latin *Historia*.

The dating and provenance of Royal 13 D ii are quite clear. The manuscript was created in the second half of the twelfth century, predating the *ByT* by as much as a full century.³⁴⁰ The manuscript's earliest existence seems to be at St. Mary, Margam, Glamorganishire, which Robert of Gloucester founded in 1147. Interlinear glosses continue to chronicle the rule of Norman kings, and added lists of British, Norman, Saxon, and Welsh kings demonstrate the abbey's long-term dedication to record annals of large-scale political events as well as local transactions.³⁴¹

We also know that William's *Gesta*, and likely the *Gesta* of Royal 13 D. ii, was used in the creation of the *Annales de Margan*, which survives in a single manuscript, Cambridge, Trinity College, O.2.4. This manuscript, as Phillips records, is a thirteenth-century quarto of sixteen pages, with one or two missing pages, with a historical record running from 1147 to 1232. The first part of the narrative draws heavily on William's *Gesta*,³⁴² demonstrating not only that was the *Gesta* housed in Margam's library, but that this text played an active role in the abbey's understanding of British history and its own role in that history.

Evidently, Margam Abbey's duties included detailed attention to historical records, based not only on surviving manuscripts but on other extant documents. In fact, the abbey's collection of charters and deeds is remarkably complete.³⁴³ As D. Rhys Phillips notes, "The monks exercised jealous care in copying all their charter and muniments into small vellum rolls, so that they might be easily hidden in case of an attack on monastic property. The three raids that took place in the twelfth century naturally prompted this precaution."³⁴⁴ Margam Abbey's role as a

³⁴⁰ See "Detailed record for Royal 13 D II," *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*, British Library. Web. Accessed 29 Sept. 2016.

³⁴¹ Details of the manuscript from "Detailed record for Royal 13 D II."

³⁴² Henry Richards Luard, ed, *Annales Monastici, Vol 1* (London: Longman, 1864), xiii. See "Annales de Margan" in this volume, 3-42.

³⁴³ See Phillips, *The Romantic History of the Monastic Librarians of Wales from the Fifth to the Sixteenth Centuries (Celtic and Medieval Periods)* (Swansea: Published by Author, 1912), 37-8.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

keeper of records in post-Conquest Wales was not lost on medieval scholars. Gerald of Wales (whose denunciation of the monks at Strata Florida, prompted by their confiscation of a portion of his personal library, has become one of Gerald's calling cards³⁴⁵) recognized Margam Abbey publically for its generosity toward the community.³⁴⁶ It seems likely that this generosity, particularly toward Gerald, could have manifested in the lending of books or provision of library services. It is certain that books circulated between monastic Welsh libraries, as a documented dispute between Aberconwy and Basingwerk concerned the possession of five books.³⁴⁷

The abbey's documented reputation for munificence is just one aspect of the Cistercian house's larger identity. As Janet Burton and Karen Stöber write,

. . . Margam Abbey rose to become an important house in terms of its involvement in the life and politics, and the culture of medieval Wales . . . At its heyday Margam could boast a very extensive library, and during its later history the community was actively involved in the patronage of Welsh bards.³⁴⁸

Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan elaborates on Margam Abbey's prominence as a literary center in Wales, saying

³⁴⁵ During his journey through Wales in 1188, Gerald and the Archbishop Baldwin were housed at Strata Florida. Gerald spoke disparagingly of the monks' hospitality, and in 1202, Gerald's dislike for the house was cemented when the Abbot Cadwgan promised to lend Gerald money in exchange for some books as a pledge. Soon after, the abbot realized that Cistercian regulations would not allow such an arrangement, and so the Abbot kept the books, forcing Gerald into a sale. See Janet Burton and Karen Stöber, *Abbeys and Priors of Medieval Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015), 188.

³⁴⁶ As Philips puts it, "Margam was celebrated for its munificence as early as the twelfth century, as Giraldus Cambrensis has recorded" (33).

³⁴⁷ See David H. Williams, *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990), 12.

³⁴⁸ See Janet Burton and Karen Stöber, *Abbeys and Priors of Medieval Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015), 137.

According to the early fourteenth-century *Registrum Anglie de libris doctorum et auctorum ueterum*, the contemporary equivalent of a union catalogue of manuscripts in religious houses in England and Wales, the library at Margam Abbey then held 242 books on theology alone. This suggests the scale not only of one single section of a well-stocked monastic library, but also of what we have lost, for none of the items listed can be identified with extant manuscripts. Yet in Wales, as elsewhere, monasteries played a crucial role in the history of manuscripts, in the production, transmission and conversation of texts and in the development of literacy.³⁴⁹

Lloyd-Morgan also observes that, as Ker notes, few manuscripts from this well-stocked library are extant, but all of them are historical texts.³⁵⁰ These facts lead to the conclusion that a significant number of the abbey's works were historical, and that the abbey's "favourable reputation" could have been built partially on its extensive chronicle library.³⁵¹

The relationship between Strata Florida and Margam Abbey would have facilitated lending of books between the two houses. First, each house was of the Cistercian order. Furthermore, not only were Strata Florida and Margam Cistercian abbeys, but neither were Cistercian Savigniac nor Tironensian houses. These two abbeys were of the same kind in multiple degrees.³⁵² Second, each house was an important repository of historical information.

³⁴⁹ See Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, "Manuscripts and the Monasteries," *Monastic Wales: New Approaches*, Janet Burton and Karen Stöber, eds., (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), 209-227, 209.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

³⁵¹ Burton and Stöber, *Abbeys and Priors of Medieval Wales*, 138. The case may well be that post-Reformation antiquarians had interest only in conserving texts of historical interest; even Strata Florida's library did not have an especially high proportion of historical texts in its collection, these texts did have some significant presence there.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 11.

The discussion above demonstrates Margam Abbey's probable reputation as this kind of repository, and the very composition of the *Brut* at Strata Florida attests to that house's interest in chronicle, and to its dedication to its charge of maintaining principality records. Philips observes that "Guttyn Owain says that the monks of Conway and Strata Florida compared the entries in their respective chronicles every three years."³⁵³ Conway, more often known in contemporary scholarship as Aberconwy, was the daughter house of Strata Florida, and evidently shared Strata Florida's dedication to record-keeping for the realm. The fact that Strata Florida not only produced the *Brut*, but fostered the chronicle tradition at a younger abbey, demonstrates the fact that Strata Florida was a major center for historical records, as was Margam Abbey.³⁵⁴

Geographically, Margam and Strata Florida are not adjacent to one another. Margam is in the south in Glamorgan, while Strata Florida is in mid-Wales, in Ceredigion (formerly Cardiganshire).³⁵⁵ Such distance would not necessarily prohibit interaction between the two houses, though it may have inhibited frequent travel. It is important to note, however, that Aberconwy, Strata Florida's daughter house, is located in North Wales near Bangor, in Conwy (formerly Caernarfonshire). The distance between Conwy and Strata Florida is dramatic, as is the landscape between the two abbeys. However, the distance between Margam and Strata Florida is comparable—with gentler topographical variation. It is undeniable that the topography of Wales had a great influence on almost all aspects of medieval Welsh life, including politics, warfare, and society; therefore, we must take into account the effect topography had on religious and intellectual life. It may have been easier for a monk to travel between Strata Florida and Margam

³⁵³ Philips, *Romantic History*, 4.

³⁵⁴ This is not to say that other Welsh monastic houses were not record-keepers. Three of the four major extant versions of the *Annales Cambriae*, for example, originated in South Wales in the second half of the thirteenth century; see Dumville, *Annales Cambriae: AD 682-954*, vi.

³⁵⁵ Location references taken from Burton and Stöber, *Abbeys and Priors of Medieval Wales*, 2015. Also see the map of Cistercian abbeys, 11.

than for the same monk to make the journey from Strata Florida to Aberconwy. Still, that difficult northern journey seems to have been made every three years. Gerald of Wales attests to the difficulties of traveling near Bangor in his *Itinerarium Cambriae*, when the Archbishop must stop the arduous journey to rest his feet.³⁵⁶ It stands to reason that more frequent journeys between Strata Florida and Margam, both of them Cistercian abbeys with great concern for the keeping of historical records, would have occurred during the creation of the *ByT*. Ultimately, we must also remember that “the Cistercians were a closely knit order both nationally and internationally”; exchange between these houses most certainly facilitated textual transmission.³⁵⁷ These factors, when taken together, suggest that the creators of the *ByT* would have been aware of the anti-Welsh rhetoric contained in William of Malesmbury’s *Gesta regum Anglorum*.

³⁵⁶ Gerald of Wales. *Journey through Wales and Description of Wales*. Lewis Thorpe, ed. and trans. (Penguin Books, 1978).

³⁵⁷ William Marx, “Middle English Texts and Welsh Contexts,” in *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales*, eds. Kennedy and Meecham-Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 13-26, at 17.