

THE BRITISH PAST AND THE WELSH FUTURE: GERALD OF WALES,
GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH AND ARTHUR OF BRITAIN

IN 1197, Gerald de Barri, archdeacon of Brecon, in the course of revising an earlier work, launched a devastating rhetorical attack on a compatriot and fellow writer.¹

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

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

Successive readers of Geoffrey's 'History' have recognised Gerald's sentiments and no doubt allowed them to colour their perceptions of Geoffrey's work.² Yet few commentators have stopped to question whether Gerald's hostility was occasioned by anything more than his offended historical sense. This question lies at the heart of this paper.

At first sight, the answer looks self-evident. Geoffrey's work strikes most modern eyes as preposterous, an alleged translation of a British book providing an uninterrupted history of the monarchs of Britain from Brutus, the eponymous Trojan founder of the island's population, to Cadwaladr, the last British king, who died in the late seventh century, via such notables as Kings Lear, Cole, and Arthur.³ A later twelfth-century commentator, William of Newburgh, accused Geoffrey of 'concoct[ing] ridiculous things' from the myths of the Britons, 'either because of his love of unbridled lying or in order to please the Britons'.⁴ In the opinion of a

¹ *Itinerarium*, I.5. in L. Thorpe (trans.), *Gerald of Wales: the journey through Wales and the description of Wales* (Harmondsworth 1978), 116–8. On the revision see Dimock in J. S. Brewer (ed.), *Giraldi Cambrensis opera* I–VIII, ed. John S. Brewer (I–III) and James F. Dimock (VI), Rolls Series no. 21 (London 1861–91) VI, xii–xiii and xxxiv–xxxix; R. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales 1146–1223* (Oxford 1982), 216. The new dedicatee was Hugh, bishop of Lincoln.

² This is difficult to document but it an impression which I have gained from undergraduates and others in the ten years since I started work on Geoffrey's 'History'. See also E. K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain* (London 1927), 107–8.

³ N. Wright (ed.), *The historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, I: Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS. 568* (Cambridge 1984); L. Thorpe (transl.), *Geoffrey of Monmouth: the history of the kings of Britain* (Harmondsworth 1966).

⁴ William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum anglicarum*, proemium (R. Howlett [ed.], *Chronicles of the reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I* i–iv, Rolls Series no. 82 [London 1884–9], I, 11, 14) translation taken from N. F. Partner, *Serious entertainments: the writing of history in twelfth-century England* (Chicago 1977), 63 and A. Gransden, 'Bede's reputation as an historian in medieval England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32 (1981) 397–425, [repr. in *Legends, traditions and history in medieval England* (London 1992) pp. 1–29] p. 22.

recent expert, 'There has scarcely, if ever, been a historian more mendacious' than Geoffrey.⁵ Gerald, a near-contemporary with access to Welsh material, might be supposed to have perceived the extent of Geoffrey's fabrication and to have sought to expose it in this memorable jibe.

However, the exorcism-story, like other episodes in Gerald's work, while an absurd but highly effective caricature, conceals complex and contradictory sentiments.⁶ The passion with which Gerald impugned Geoffrey's 'History' seems misplaced in an author who at various stages of his career used Geoffrey's version of the British past for his own purposes.⁷ Nor was Gerald's acrimony directed at a professional rival. His victim was long dead.⁸ The cause of his antipathy towards Geoffrey, although long recognised, cannot therefore be regarded as self-evident. The situation is further complicated by consideration of Geoffrey's wider context. Earlier historians, like pseudo-Fredegair and Dudo of Saint-Quentin, without arousing controversy had rooted neighbouring peoples in the same Trojan past evoked by Geoffrey.⁹ In addition, since the ninth century the substance of Geoffrey's 'History' had been widely available to contemporaries in the *Historia Brittonum*, a work which circulated without comment on its historical worth.¹⁰ Indeed, many contemporaries were content to plunder Geoffrey's contribution uncritically.¹¹

Gerald's hostility also needs reassessment in the light of work on William of Newburgh, who once appeared Geoffrey's most authoritative and eloquent critic.¹² William's *Historia rerum anglicarum*, which deals with events from the Norman conquest to the time of writing, the 1190s, begins with an invective against Geoffrey's 'History' apparently quite divorced from the subject matter of the rest of the book.¹³ Antonia Gransden has now offered a convincing explanation: that, as

⁵ C. N. L. Brooke, *The church and the Welsh border in the central Middle Ages* (Woodbridge 1986), 95.

⁶ Other examples might include his attributing the failure of John's expedition to Ireland to the Normans having pulled the beards of the Irish: A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin (ed. and trans.), *Expugnatio hibernica: the conquest of Ireland, by Giraldus Cambrensis* (Dublin 1978) II 36, pp. 236–7. See also J. Gillingham, 'The English invasion of Ireland', in *Representing Ireland: literature and the origins of conflict, 1534–1660*, ed. Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (Cambridge, 1993), 24–42, pp. 33–4.

⁷ The latter point has often been noted, for example by Edmund Chambers: 'It must be added that Giraldus does not hesitate on occasion to use the *fabulosa historia* as a quotable authority', *Arthur of Britain*, 108. See also R. H. Fletcher, *The Arthurian material in the chronicles, especially those of Great Britain and France* (New York 1906) 180; A. Gransden, *Historical writing in England, c.550 to c.1307* (London 1974) 246; and Thorpe, *Gerald*, 280.

⁸ Gerald is known to have sniped at contemporaries: D. Knowles, 'Some enemies of Gerald of Wales', *Studia monastica* 1 (1959) 137–41.

⁹ Although their histories did not end there like Geoffrey's but continued into more recent history. On claims to Trojan origin see S. Reynolds, 'Medieval *origines gentium* and the community of the realm', *History* 68 (1983) 375–9, p. 377. See also B. Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages* (London 1974), 50–3.

¹⁰ Many twelfth-century readers would have believed it to be the work of Gildas: D. N. Dumville, 'An early text of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britannie* and the circulation of some Latin histories in twelfth-century Normandy', *Arthurian literature* 4 (1985) 1–36; reprinted in *id. Histories and pseudo-histories of the Insular Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1990), XIV, p. 5.

¹¹ Fletcher, *Arthurian material*, 170–77. See also J. Crick, *The historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, IV: dissemination and reception in the later Middle Ages* (Cambridge 1991), 218–22.

¹² See, for example, Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, 106–7.

¹³ For example, Partner, *Serious entertainments*, 62.

a response to immediate threats of Celtic resurgence, William had composed 'a piece of political propaganda' undermining a work which popularised the notion of ancient British glory.¹⁴ Certainly, William's entire project has political connotations. Although writing in the late twelfth century, he attempted to assert the continuity of *English* history, calling his work a history of *English* affairs and beginning it by invoking Bede, a historian imitated by other post-Conquest Northern writers conscious of their Northumbrian past;¹⁵ Geoffrey's un-Bedan, un-English account of early Insular history disturbed such a vision of history.¹⁶

If William can no longer be regarded as a dispassionate critic of Geoffrey's work, then further doubt must be cast on the nature of Gerald's hostility.¹⁷ Certainly we should not expect any historian, let alone one whose career aspirations were as frustrated as those of Gerald, to express straightforward opinions about a rival; attempting to rationalise and homogenise Gerald's wildly fluctuating allegiances and sympathies would prove a fruitless enterprise. Nevertheless, Gerald's attitude to Geoffrey and to the remote past repays attention. Gerald, although admirably qualified to judge Geoffrey's work as we shall see, did not eschew its contents.

Gerald's position as a privileged critic of Geoffrey owed much to the parallels between the lives and activities of the two men. Both are known by names which associate them explicitly with Wales, although both followed a Norman career-path. Geoffrey in his 'History' styles himself *Monemutensis*, of Monmouth, but he graduated from Paris, or some other Continental school, with the title *magister*, and he spent most of the last thirty years of his life in Oxford, probably becoming a canon of St George's.¹⁸ Geoffrey probably lacked a profound knowledge of Welsh. Monmouth may have been his birthplace but he left Wales at least for the central part of his life and may not have returned even when made bishop of St Asaph, shortly before his death in 1154.¹⁹ Norman French is most likely to have been his first language.²⁰ Considerably more is known about the career of Gerald, largely because he himself waxed eloquent on that particular subject.²¹ Though known as

¹⁴ Gransden, 'Bede's reputation', 20–3. Compare Partner, *Serious entertainments*, 62.

¹⁵ Richard of Hexham, for example, applied Bede's ethnic terminology to his contemporaries, calling them Bernicians and Deirans: see Gransden, *Historical writing*, 287–8. Gransden noted the indebtedness of Northern writers to Bede but in the context of monastic rather than specifically Northumbrian sentiment: 'Bede's reputation', 7–8, 12–8, but on Durham see 12–4. For the political role of seventh-century saints in post-Conquest Northumbria see W. M. Aird, 'St Cuthbert, the Scots and the Normans', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 16 (1993) 1–20.

¹⁶ Gransden, 'Bede's reputation', 18–23.

¹⁷ Chambers took the exorcism-story as 'a more humorous parallel' to 'the invective of William of Newburgh': *Arthur of Britain*, 107.

¹⁸ M. D. Legge, 'Master Geoffrey Arthur', in K. Varty (ed.), *An Arthurian tapestry: essays in memory of Lewis Thorpe* (Glasgow 1981) 22–7; H. E. Salter, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Oxford', *English Historical Review* 32 (1919) 382–5, p. 385.

¹⁹ L. Thorpe, 'The last years of Geoffrey of Monmouth', *Mélanges de langue et littérature françaises du moyen-âge offerts à Pierre Jonin* (Aix-en-Provence 1979) 663–72.

²⁰ Geoffrey professed competence in 'British'. His knowledge of Welsh is better attested than Gerald's: T. D. Crawford, 'On the linguistic competence of Geoffrey of Monmouth', *Medium Ævum* 51 (1982) 152–62, pp. 154–5, 157.

²¹ Many of his writings about himself were conveniently collected and translated by H. E. Butler (trans.), *The autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis* (London 1937). See also Bartlett, *Gerald*,

the Welshman, *Cambrensis*, Gerald was three-quarters Anglo-Norman: a member of a leading Marcher family, 'one of Dyfed's most formidable lineages',²² his much-vaunted Welsh connections derived from the marriage of his grandfather to the daughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr of Deheubarth.²³ Gerald spent a great part of his career in Wales, as archdeacon of Brecon and would-be bishop of St David's, but nevertheless he, like Geoffrey, studied abroad and sought ecclesiastical preferment in England.²⁴ He spent more than ten years studying and lecturing in the Paris schools in his twenties and early thirties (1165–74, 1177–79), returned to England as court-chaplain, and spent some years in Lincoln and at Rome. Again, like Geoffrey, Gerald seems not to have spoken Welsh, despite his claims that facility in the Welsh language qualified him for office at St David's.²⁵

In fact both Geoffrey and Gerald appear to have been Welsh primarily by osmosis, by virtue of residence or origin in the border-areas under Anglo-Norman control. They have become through their writings the most conspicuous of a number of Celtic-Norman clerics who inhabited the margins of the Anglo-Norman establishment. The entourages of Thomas Becket and Gilbert Foliot included clerics of Welsh extraction, for example, but few of these men achieved high office.²⁶ Walter Map, despite the fame which his writings won him, never attained a bishopric despite being mentioned as a candidate on two occasions.²⁷ Gerald twice failed to win election to the see of St David's, a circumstance which he blamed on his family connections with Welsh royalty.²⁸ Culturally, however, border connections proved an asset. These men had access to a body of lore and information enormously appealing to a twelfth-century audience²⁹ but inaccessible without the

especially 27–57, and M. Richter, *Giraldus Cambrensis: the growth of the Welsh nation* 2nd ed. (Aberystwyth 1976). For other references, see M. Lapidge and R. Sharpe, *A bibliography of Celtic-Latin literature 400–1200* (Dublin 1985), 22–3.

²² I. W. Rowlands, 'The making of the March: aspects of the Norman settlement in Dyfed', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 3 (1980) 142–57, p. 155.

²³ Gerald's maternal grandmother was Nest, daughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr: Richter, *Giraldus*, 4. On the marriage patterns of Marcher families see A. J. Roderick, 'Marriage and politics in Wales, 1066–1282', *Welsh History Review* 4 (1968/9) 1–20.

²⁴ On Gerald's education see Bartlett, *Gerald*, 5–6.

²⁵ Gerald liked to suggest that he was a Welsh speaker: W. S. Davies (ed.), 'The Book of Invectives of Giraldus Cambrensis', *Y Cymmrodor* 30 (1920) 1–248, 86 (*De inuectionibus*, I.2); but he may have exaggerated: Bartlett, *Gerald*, 14–5, 54.

²⁶ On Becket's clerk, Llywelyn, see John of Salisbury, letter 173: W. J. Millor and C. N. L. Brooke (ed.), *The letters of John of Salisbury, II: the later letters (1163–1180)* (Oxford 1979), 136–7 and n. 10. On Gilbert Foliot's clerk, Stephanus Walensis, see A. Morey and C. N. L. Brooke (ed.), *The letters and charters of Gilbert Foliot, abbot of Gloucester (1139–48), bishop of Hereford (1148–63) and London (1163–87)* (Cambridge 1967), 411, 447, 496.

²⁷ At Hereford in 1199 and St Davids in 1203: Brooke and Mynors in M. R. James (ed., revised by C. N. L. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors), *Walter Map, De nugis curialium: courtiers' trifles* (Oxford 1983), xviii.

²⁸ In a volume addressed to Stephen Langton, Gerald reports the king as saying that he (Gerald) 'was not a safe man to set over the see of Mynyw because he was akin by blood to Rhys, Prince of South Wales, and almost all the other great men of Wales': *De rebus a se gestis*, I.10 in H. E. Butler, *The autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis*, 61.

²⁹ See, for example, R. S. Loomis, 'The oral diffusion of the Arthurian legend', in Loomis (ed.), *Arthurian literature in the Middle Ages: a collaborative history* (Oxford 1959) 52–63.

mediation of Welsh-speakers.³⁰ Welsh tradition, past and present, provided both Geoffrey and Gerald with ample literary material. Geoffrey claimed that his major work, the 'History of the Kings of Britain', was a translation from an ancient British source.³¹ Gerald's writings were also indebted to his knowledge of matters Celtic. Four of his now most widely read books deal with Celtic ethnography and history: the 'Topography of Ireland', the 'Conquest of Ireland' and later the 'Journey through Wales' and the 'Description of Wales'. The equivalences between Geoffrey and Gerald, in education, experience, and, probably, aspiration, stop only at chronology. They were hardly contemporaries: Gerald would have been perhaps eight years only when Geoffrey died.

The degree of intellectual and cultural kinship between Geoffrey and Gerald of course lends weight to Gerald's assessment of his compatriot. One might assume that Gerald, who in many ways had inside knowledge of Geoffrey's working methods, regarded him as taking excessive liberties with his materials, a conclusion with which many commentators might concur. Such hypotheses can be tested only with difficulty, however. Almost total obscurity surrounds the working practices of those who dabbled in Welsh materials in the twelfth century. Norman contemporaries were blinded by the language barrier. Critics today are confounded by the dearth of information about just what materials these writers could have had access to and used, especially when much must be supposed to have been in oral form; our knowledge of oral tradition depends in part on the work of writers on the outside, like Geoffrey and Gerald.³²

Moving from Gerald's career to Galfridian references in his writings, one soon notices that Gerald expressed considerably more antipathy towards Geoffrey himself than towards his material. Although the most graphic expression of Gerald's sentiments towards Geoffrey comes from the exorcism-story, an earlier, and much more open, assault had been launched in the 'Description of Wales',³³ where Gerald accused Geoffrey by name of lying about the etymology of *Wallia*, Wales, in his 'fabulous history'.³⁴ As in the exorcism-story, the cause of Gerald's scorn can readily be appreciated. Geoffrey's etymologies are certainly fanciful and Gerald, having dismissed his predecessor's effort, substituted a much more acceptable version.³⁵ However, where Gerald mentions Geoffrey's 'History' without naming it or the author, his hostility vanishes. In the 'Descriptio' he lists a catalogue of British

³⁰ Even if not Welsh-speakers themselves, they would have had access to men who were. The degree of Walter Map's Welshness is disputed: A. K. Bate, 'Walter Map and Giraldus Cambrensis', *Latomus* 31 (1972) 860–75 and Brooke and Mynors in James, *Walter Map*, xiii–xiv. John of Salisbury abandoned an attempt to interpret the prophecies of Merlin, half-jokingly deferring to his Welsh clerk, Alexander (Llywelyn), 'Merlin's kin and a wiser interpreter of his oracles': W. J. Millor and C. N. L. Brooke, *The letters of John of Salisbury, II: the later letters (1163–1180)*, 136–7.

³¹ *Historia*, c. 2.

³² The problems have been set out by B. F. Roberts, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh historical tradition', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies* 20 (1976) 29–40, 29. See also R. Bromwich (ed.), *Triodd ynys Prydein: the Welsh triads* 2nd edn. (Cardiff 1978), xcvi–xcviii.

³³ The first recension is datable c.1194; the exorcism-story entered Gerald's text in the second recension of the *Itinerarium*, c.1197: see above, n. 1.

³⁴ *Descriptio*, I.7.

³⁵ *Wallia* meaning *extraneus* (compare Old English *wealh*); see remarks by Richter, *Giraldus*, 67.

heroes to counterbalance the opinion of Gildas, 'who *revered the truth* as every historian must', that the Welsh were cowardly in war and untrustworthy in peace.³⁶ Thus Gerald reminds his readers of the military prowess of their ancestors. Gerald's list included figures such as Arthur and Belinus and Brennius conspicuously absent from most historical sources, other than Geoffrey's History. One might therefore read this passage as a concealed assault on Geoffrey: Gerald could have been comparing Gildas, the *truthful* historian, with Geoffrey of Monmouth and his fabulous tales. Such an interpretation would square with the exorcism-story and with Gerald's earlier remarks in the 'Description of Wales' about Geoffrey's lying history. However, the episode demands a different interpretation. As becomes clearer later in the chapter, Gerald's target was not Geoffrey for fabricating heroes but Gildas for having denigrated the achievements of his countrymen. According to Gerald, the strongest evidence for the cowardice of the Welsh was Gildas's reluctance to speak good of them, an attitude born out of vengefulness: King Arthur had caused the murder of Gildas's brother and so, Gerald relates, Gildas destroyed several works written in praise of the Britons and of Arthur himself.³⁷

It might be argued that one can never take Gerald at his word. Why should any more credence be attached to his championing of British heroes than his stories of demons? The passage is certainly ambiguous. If not read at face value, it could be taken as some sort of elaborate parody designed to undermine Geoffrey's 'History', an attempt to ridicule that work by producing even more far-fetched stories about Arthur. However, the context will not allow this interpretation. Gerald never mentions Geoffrey or his 'History'; his concern is with defending the Welsh against their historical reputation. One cannot argue otherwise without doing damage to Gerald's text.³⁸

Gerald's tendency to use material perilously close to Geoffrey's own, exhibited both in the catalogue of British heroes and, more strikingly, in the Gildas-story appended to it runs deep into his work. Various examples illustrate how Gerald responded to the challenge of Geoffrey's History by building on it and attempting to outdo it, even emulating two aspects of it which have stretched modern credulity beyond its limits: the use of prophecy and the notion of a Trojan origin for the British population.

To modern eyes, one of the most incongruous parts of Geoffrey's History is the lengthy section of prophecies found at the heart of the work.³⁹ They occur at the time of the first Saxon incursions into Britain, as Geoffrey reaches the threshold of what might now be regarded as the historical. Vortigern, the British king who betrayed his people to the Saxons, seeks advice and finds it from the lips of the boy Merlin who utters a long and obscure series of prophecies, predicting the future

³⁶ *Descriptio*, II.2.

³⁷ On Arthur and Gildas as contemporaries, see D. N. Dumville, 'Celtic-Latin texts in northern England, c. 1150-c. 1250', *Celtica* 12 (1977) 19–49, 45.

³⁸ Bartlett, for example, far from detecting any irony here, noted that *Descriptio* II.2 exemplifies Gerald's use of scholastic techniques to reconcile opposing authorities: *Gerald*, 206–7.

³⁹ On their function see J. Crick, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth, prophecy and history', *Journal of Medieval History* 18 (1992) 357–71.

from Vortigern's fate to the end of Geoffrey's 'History' and beyond, into Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman times.⁴⁰ Geoffrey's claims that his 'Prophecies of Merlin' represented a Latin translation from the original Brittonic might be taken as one of his more obvious departures into fantasy, although not all commentators have agreed.⁴¹ Nevertheless, Gerald not only used the 'Prophecies' frequently as a source, but boasted of a comparable translation project. The claim comes at the end of his account of Henry II's conquest of Ireland, *Expugnatio hibernica*, a work which he also referred to as the prophetic history, *Uaticinalis historia*.⁴² Gerald recounts that after a long and extensive search for the hitherto obscure prophecies of Merlin Sylvester of Celidon, those of Merlinus Ambrosius being already published (by Geoffrey, although he is not named),⁴³ he found a book in farthest Gwynedd and undertook its translation with the help of various experts in the British language.⁴⁴ The *Expugnatio* then breaks off with the promise that Gerald will wait for the right time to publish, lest he offend those in power.⁴⁵

Michael Richter, who undertook a lengthy study of Gerald's work, detected no trace of irony here. In his view, Gerald's treatment of Merlin was primarily that of an antiquarian.⁴⁶ However, at first sight, a more complicated interpretation of Gerald's Merlinian researches looks possible. His alleged discovery of some prophecies but last-minute failure to produce them seems almost a parody of Geoffrey who claimed that his prophecies, and indeed entire history, were translated from mysterious (and elusive) Brittonic originals. Such cynicism may not be warranted, however. Gerald's excuse for not publishing his 'Prophecies' has some credibility: on other occasions he expressed nervousness at incurring royal displeasure.⁴⁷ Secondly, he had already deployed prophetic material extensively in the earlier part of the text. Had he regarded all prophecy with ridicule, then to scatter it so liberally though an account of a recent royal enterprise would have been impolitic. Thirdly, some of the prophecies which he cited, those attributed to Merlin Sylvester, can be identified with known Welsh tradition, notably the 'Prophecy of the Eagle of Shaftesbury'.⁴⁸ Admittedly, when Gerald came to revise the *Expugnatio*, he omitted or toned down many of the prophecies.⁴⁹ However, their inclusion in the first

⁴⁰ *Historia*, c. 112–17.

⁴¹ For example L. Fleuriot, 'Les fragments du texte brittonique de la "Prophetia Merlini"', *Études celtiques* 14 (1974/5) 43–56, 44–5.

⁴² Although Gerald seems to have come to favour the title *Expugnatio*, he used the name *Uaticinalis historia* as late as 1216 (in his *De principis instructione*): Scott and Martin, *Expugnatio*, lxii.

⁴³ 'Ambrosio uero dudum exposito, nondum Celidonius britannicam exutus barbariem usque ad hec nostra tempora latuit parum agnitus': *Expugnatio*, III (Scott and Martin, *Expugnatio*, 252).

⁴⁴ Scott and Martin, *Expugnatio*, 254–7.

⁴⁵ 'Aliquamdiu tamen suppressa lateat, quam in lucem cum maiorum offensa prepropere pariter et periculose prorumpat': Scott and Martin, *Expugnatio*, 256.

⁴⁶ Richter, *Giraldus*, 77.

⁴⁷ Bartlett, *Gerald*, 63–5. However, Gerald later freely criticised King John: Scott and Martin, *Expugnatio*, lxiii.

⁴⁸ Scott and Martin, *Expugnatio*, lxxv. This prophecy was apparently known to Geoffrey himself and, intriguingly, scorned by him (*Historia*, c. 29). There is a fourth reason to credit Gerald's seriousness, as R. R. Davies has pointed out to me: irony was not his style.

⁴⁹ His editors suggest that he had either lost faith in them or had ceased to have access to the source for his translation: Scott and Martin, *Expugnatio*, lxiii–lxiv.

place, and the title which Gerald chose for his book – *Uaticinalis historia* – point to his serious interest in vaticination.⁵⁰

A second, equally fundamental, element in Geoffrey's History which Gerald reproduced was that of a Trojan origin for the island's population. Modern critics might be tempted erroneously to label this story mischievous but the paradigm was well established, as we have already noted, and outlived Geoffrey by many centuries.⁵¹ Gerald endorsed the tradition, although ultimately the interpretation which he placed on it differed from Geoffrey's.⁵² Commenting on the racial superiority of the Welsh over the English, he explained that the Britons, like the Romans, were descended from Trojan stock.⁵³ Elsewhere he recorded that after the fall of Troy three peoples came from Asia Minor to Europe: the Romans under Aeneas, the Franks under Antenor, and the Britons under Brutus.⁵⁴ On two occasions Gerald elaborated this story using etymology, one of Geoffrey's favoured techniques for constructing links between places and their history.⁵⁵ Geoffrey had noted that the Welsh language was known as crooked Greek.⁵⁶ Gerald famously explained the etymology by translating it into Welsh: Latin *curuum graecum*, 'crooked Greek', became *cam* (*g*)*raec*, *cymraeg* being the Welsh word for the Welsh language.⁵⁷ He declared himself unconvinced by the derivation, but expressed his reservations only hesitantly: 'This is arguable and quite possible but I do not think that it is the correct derivation'.⁵⁸ Moreover, Gerald took various opportunities to list Welsh names and nouns allegedly derived from Greek, the language to which the ancestors of the British would of course have been exposed during their travels in the East after the fall of Troy.⁵⁹ Gerald's etymology of *cymraeg*, like other silent allusions to Geoffrey's work, could perhaps be construed as a clever joke, designed to amuse a knowing audience united in their scepticism about Geoffrey. Such an interpretation presupposes a considerable degree of inside knowledge on the part of the audience, however, if Gerald did not even need to name the butt for his jokes. The resulting hypothesis seems not only unnecessarily complicated but anachronistic.

Whatever one's view of the earnestness or otherwise of Gerald's use of prophecy and the British origin-story, other signs of intellectual proximity between Geoffrey and Gerald are unmistakable. Their working methods bear more than a passing

⁵⁰ On Gerald and prophecy see also Parry and Caldwell, 'Geoffrey', 76–7, and Southern, 'Aspects', 169. Southern ascribed to him (*ibid.*) 'The idea of making a complete fusion between contemporary history and ancient Celtic prophecy'.

⁵¹ See, for example, C. Beaune (trans. Susan Ross Huston), *The birth of an ideology: myths and symbols of nation in late medieval France* (Berkeley 1991), 226–44 and above, n. 9.

⁵² On Gerald's use of this material see Bartlett, *Gerald*, 201, 210.

⁵³ Davies, 'The Book of Invectives', 15 and 94: *De inuentionibus*, I.4.

⁵⁴ *Descriptio*, I.15.

⁵⁵ See, for example, J. S. P. Tatlock, *The legendary history of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia regum Britanniae and its early vernacular versions* (Berkeley 1950), 82–3.

⁵⁶ *Historia*, c. 21.

⁵⁷ On this passage see Richter, *Giraldus*, 70–1. On Geoffrey's use of the derivation, see Crawford, 'On the linguistic competence', 155.

⁵⁸ *Descriptio*, I.7.

⁵⁹ In *Descriptio* I.5, he noted that Welsh *halen* was equivalent to Greek *hals*, 'salt', and supplied other examples and a list of Latin loanwords. Similar comparisons of Welsh and Greek may be found in *Itinerarium*, I.8. See Bartlett, *Gerald*, 210.

similarity: both were exploiting their materials and aiming to impress. Several critics have attached some significance to what they see as Geoffrey's dishonest treatment of sources.⁶⁰ Geoffrey, for example, cited Gildas to lend weight to statements not derived from Gildas at all and then, when it suited him, used Gildas's work without acknowledgement. This indeed looks like intellectual dishonesty: Geoffrey's sending up a smokescreen when he had something to conceal. However, Gerald transgressed in the very same way, claiming to be quoting where he was not, quoting without acknowledgement or misattributing quotations. James Dimock, one of Gerald's nineteenth-century editors, attributed Gerald's cavalier treatment of his sources to his having quoted from memory.⁶¹ However, Gerald was at least as culpable as Geoffrey in matters of attribution.⁶² In his catalogue of Galfridian heroes, Gerald name-dropped, apparently fraudulently, citing Ambrosius Aurelius, 'whom even Eutropius praises'.⁶³ This comment caused Dimock to remark, 'I can find nothing of the sort in Eutropius'.⁶⁴ Neither does one find anything of the sort in Geoffrey, Gerald's ultimate source for the passage: Gerald's casual reference to this particular Classical authority looks like a case of embroidery.

Gerald led his readers astray repeatedly, even in his treatment of Geoffrey's own 'History'. In some of the passages in which Gerald attacked that work, he also derived material from it uncritically and without acknowledgement. The denunciation of the etymology of *Wallia* found in Geoffrey's 'lying history' comes at the end of a chapter borrowed directly from Geoffrey's first pages: Brutus's descent and the division of the kingdom of Britain between his sons after his death.⁶⁵ Indeed, Gerald often used Geoffrey's 'History' to corroborate a statement of his own, without naming the author but by making an oblique reference to *Historia Britonum*, *Britannica historia*, or the like. Gerald, while protesting hostility to Geoffrey, was using his victim's material.⁶⁶

The equivalences between Geoffrey and Gerald, then, extend beyond their common cultural background into their writings in which they employed comparable material and resorted to mild deception of a similar character. The similarities between their writings are the more impressive as the two were writing very different kinds of history, Geoffrey's being based in the remote past, Gerald's in his own time. More striking still is the fact that Gerald publicly championed

⁶⁰ Brooke, *The church and the Welsh border in the central Middle Ages*, 96–7, Gransden writes of 'intellectual dishonesty', *Historical writing*, 203; N. Wright, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas', *Arthurian literature* 2 (1982) 1–33, p. 24.

⁶¹ Dimock, in Brewer, *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, VI, lxx. It should also be noted that Gerald used *Florilegia* and was therefore likely to know certain authors only from passages of their work quoted out of context: Goddu and Rouse, 'Gerald'.

⁶² Gerald, for example, incorporated into his *Gemma ecclesiastica* without acknowledgement passages taken almost verbatim from the work of Peter the Chanter: A. Boutémy, 'Giraud de Barri et Pierre le Chantre: une source de la *Gemma ecclesiastica*', *Revue du moyen âge latin* 2 (1946) 45–62; and E. M. Sanford, 'Giraldus Cambrensis' debt to Petrus Cantor', *Medievalia et humanistica* 3 (1945) 16–32. Gerald also plagiarised Walter Map: Bate, 'Walter', 874–5.

⁶³ *Descriptio*, II.2.

⁶⁴ In Brewer, *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, VI, 208, n. 1.

⁶⁵ Although here Gerald silently and mischievously emends – Kamber, founder of Wales, is promoted from third to second son: *Descriptio*, I.7.

⁶⁶ Whether consciously or not.

Galfridian history (concealing the source, of course) in two debates impinging on Anglo-Norman authority in Wales. Thus his commitment to Geoffrey's mythical history was tested in a way unparalleled by anything which we know about Geoffrey himself. The two instances are both celebrated and need only brief rehearsal here: the debate over the establishment of a Welsh metropolitan and the discovery of Arthur's tomb at Glastonbury.

Gerald, as archdeacon of Brecon and contender for the bishopric of St David's, was instrumental in reviving an old dispute about the status of that church. The controversy had first arisen as the Normans were attempting to consolidate their conquest of Wales in the early decades of the twelfth century.⁶⁷ The clergy of St David's appealed to ancient precedent to demonstrate that their church should hold archiepiscopal status within Wales. Such a claim heralded not only the preeminence of St David's within Wales but independence from, and indeed superiority to, Canterbury. The idea of an independent metropolitan of Wales held a certain logic.⁶⁸ A twelfth-century churchman might naturally suppose that the British church must have had a metropolitan. As the writings of Bede and Gildas had established that the British church existed long before the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons and the founding of the English metropolitan see of Canterbury in the early seventh century, the Welsh church, as the direct descendant of the British, could claim to be the oldest church in Britain and its metropolitan see, consequently, the most ancient archbishopric.

However, the site of this alleged metropolitan occasioned some debate. In 1119 the church of Llandaf put in a bid, later shored up in the so-called *Liber landauen-sis*, in which their founder, Dubricius (St Dyfrig), was credited with authority over all Welsh bishops.⁶⁹ This claim was actively contested with some success by the chapter of St David's under the leadership of a Norman bishop, Bernard (1115–48).⁷⁰ After Bernard's death the claim remained largely dormant for the next half-century.⁷¹ It did not flare up again until 1199, during a disputed election to the see. Gerald, by his own account, was elected by the chapter of St David's on 29 June, 1199, unanimously but in defiance of the English church.⁷² The chapter then attempted to secure its independence from Canterbury by having Gerald consecrated by the pope. Gerald travelled to Rome for this purpose and was there allowed to put St David's case for metropolitan status.

Gerald's arguments on behalf of St David's necessarily rested on British prehistory of the sort propagated by Geoffrey of Monmouth. On arriving in Rome and

⁶⁷ The whole dispute was described by Davies, J. C. Davies *Episcopal acts and cognate documents relating to Welsh dioceses 1066–1272*, I–II (Cardiff 1946/8) I, 101–232. See also M. Richter, 'Canterbury's primacy in Wales and the first stages of Bishop Bernard's opposition', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 22 (1971) 177–89, and M. Richter, 'Professions of obedience and the metropolitan claim of St. David's', *National Library of Wales Journal* 15 (1967/8) 197–214, and R. R. Davies, *Conquest, coexistence, and change: Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford 1987), 179–91.

⁶⁸ Although, of course, it lacked historical justification: Davies, *Conquest*, 190.

⁶⁹ Davies, *Episcopal acts*, I, 159–63, 172–6.

⁷⁰ Davies, *Episcopal acts*, I, 176–9. In 1144 Lucius II was promised a legatine commission to investigate the claims of the church of St David's.

⁷¹ It was temporarily revived by the chapter in 1176–9: Davies, *Episcopal acts*, I, 288 (D.225). Gerald of Wales, *De rebus a se gestis*, II, 3, in Brewer, *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, I, 48–9.

⁷² Richter, *Giraldus*, 105. For an account of the case, see Davies, *Episcopal acts*, I, 210–29.

being invited to examine the archives, he allegedly discovered material used by the chapter in the 1120s which closely resembles part of Geoffrey's own history. Gerald, summarising this material, drew attention to the antiquity of his church and its founders, Fagan and Duuianus, emissaries sent by Pope Eleutherius at the request of the British king Lucius, thus suggesting not only that Britain was converted in the second century but that at that date it was organised as a monarchy.⁷³ None of the figures mentioned, with the exception of Pope Eleutherius, can have any claim to historical credibility, although Lucius, the British king under whom conversion allegedly began, had admirable historical credentials having first entered Insular history through Bede.⁷⁴ According to Gerald's account, the organisation of this church also followed broadly Galfridian principles.⁷⁵ The five provinces of Britain each acquired metropolitan sees, each with twelve suffragans. The Welsh metropolitan was originally archbishop of Caerleon but was subsequently transferred by St David to the see which took his name and which thereafter enjoyed a long and glorious history. This account departs from Geoffrey's in some respects: Geoffrey organised the British church into twenty-eight sees under three archbishops⁷⁶ and said nothing about the see of St David's, noting only that St David had been archbishop of Caerleon, Geoffrey's favoured site for the ancient British metropolitan.⁷⁷ However, his work had made provision for the creation of the archbishopric of St David's: one of Merlin's prophecies states that 'St David's shall be clothed with the pallium of Caerleon'.⁷⁸

Gerald's involvement in the debate over St David's impinges on our argument in two ways. First, it attests a surprising level of commitment to Galfridian history. Given how much depended on his presentation to the pope, one would not expect him to have jeopardised his case by the inclusion of elements which he considered flippant or incredible.⁷⁹ On this occasion he sought in earnest to endorse Geoffrey's 'History', not to undermine it. Secondly, the dispute at St David's has been used to explain Gerald's hostility to Geoffrey.⁸⁰ Geoffrey, it has been suggested, succeeded in mangling the rival claims of St David's and Llandaf by introducing an entirely new candidate for the metropolitan seat, Caerleon.⁸¹ In 1927, E. K.

⁷³ Davies, 'The Book of Invectives', 55 and 91 (*De inuectionibus*, I.2). Compare Davies, 'The Book of Invectives', 130–5 (*De inuectionibus*, II.1). See Richter, *Giraldus*, 41–2.

⁷⁴ B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (ed.), *Bede's ecclesiastical history of the English people* (Oxford 1969), 24 (*Historia ecclesiastica*, I, 4).

⁷⁵ Davies, 'The Book of Invectives', 130–5 (*De inuectionibus*, II, i).

⁷⁶ *Historia*, c. 72 (Wright, *The historia*, 46–7).

⁷⁷ *Historia*, c. 157 (Wright, *The historia*, 112).

⁷⁸ *Historia*, c. 112.3 (Wright, *The historia*, 74).

⁷⁹ Gerald even claimed to have volunteered to abandon his claim to the see if its archiepiscopal rights were restored: Davies, 'The Book of Invectives', 62–3 and 138.

⁸⁰ Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, 107–8.

⁸¹ Brooke, *The church and the Welsh border in the central Middle Ages*, 98–9. The creation of havoc may have been incidental to Geoffrey's immediate purpose. Control of the Welsh church and its property was a key element in the Anglo-Normans' consolidation of their conquest of Wales: see, for example, Davies, *Conquest*, 179–81. For Geoffrey to have circulated a history which fuelled the arguments for an independent Welsh metropolitan by giving clear precedence to Llandaf or St David's would have amounted to a political act from which he would not have derived obvious benefit. He had no apparent stake in the progress of either cause and he addressed his work to Anglo-Norman, not Cambro-Norman, patrons.

Chambers had suggested that the hostility displayed by Gerald towards Geoffrey resulted directly from Gerald's involvement in the case for the see of St David's. Gerald had been incensed by the scorn of opponents who dismissed the claims of that see as Arthurian fable and who may have been confirmed in their opinion by 'Geoffrey's preference for the unhistorical Caerleon'.⁸² However, Gerald seems hardly to have been deflected from his purpose by Geoffrey's mention of Caerleon. He managed to construct his case without difficulty, using the text supplied by Geoffrey. Merlin's prophecy lent all the authority necessary for the claim made by the church of St David's.⁸³

Chambers's argument also founders chronologically. Gerald launched his sharpest attacks on Geoffrey in works written before 1198, *before* he became involved with the case for St David's.⁸⁴ The *Descriptio* was completed c.1193/94. The exorcism-story entered the text of the *Itinerarium* in its second edition, completed c.1197. Gerald's commitment to the independence of the Welsh church seems to have developed relatively late in his career, only in the course of the dispute which followed the death of Peter de Leia, bishop of St David's, in 1198.⁸⁵ Hitherto Gerald had protested his loyalty to the Anglo-Norman hierarchy. Gerald boasted that in 1176, when nominated on the death of the previous bishop, his uncle, David fitz Gerald, he had withdrawn his name on learning that the chapter had not obtained the king's consent to the election.⁸⁶ Even after the death of Bishop Peter, Gerald still showed no sign of militancy about the independence of St David's. In a letter to Hubert Walter, archbishop of Canterbury, he professed himself willing to agree to any election made unanimously by the chapter of St David's *with the consent of the archbishop and king*.⁸⁷ Thus, before he became directly and personally interested in securing the independence of St David's during the disputed elections after 1198, he trod a consistently conservative path, upholding loyalty and showing, where necessary, due deference to the English crown.

One must look earlier to find a cause for Gerald's display of antipathy towards Geoffrey. Gerald's first recorded involvement with Arthurian matters was at Glastonbury in the early 1190s.⁸⁸ It is ironic that Gerald, who pilloried Geoffrey's History so successfully, should have supplied one of the earliest accounts of the

⁸² *Arthur of Britain*, 107–8.

⁸³ *Historia*, ch. 112.3 (Wright, *The historia*, 74). Quoted by Gerald, for example, in *De inuentionibus*, II, 1 (Davies, 'The Book of Invectives', 131): noted by Brooke, *The church and the Welsh border in the central Middle Ages*, 23 and n. 30.

⁸⁴ He was commissioned by the chapter to revise Rhigyfarch's Life of St David but appears to have been largely ignorant of the extent of St David's claims before 1200: M. Richter, 'The Life of St. David by Giraldus Cambrensis', *Welsh History Review* 4 (1968/9) 381–6, p. 382.

⁸⁵ On Gerald's Norman sympathies see Bartlett, *Gerald*, 15–6. R. R. Davies has pointed out to me that Gerald, late in his career, encouraged the archbishop of Canterbury to pay regular visits to St David's 'to keep in check the barbarous customs of the Welsh': *De iure et statu Meneuensis ecclesie*, Prologue: Brewer, *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, III, 113–4.

⁸⁶ *De inuentionibus*, II, iv (Davies, 'The Book of Invectives', 38).

⁸⁷ 'In quamcunque personam idoneam, assensu unanimo regis et uestro, capitulum nostrum Meneuense canonica electione consenserit. . .': *De rebus a se gestis*, III, 7 (Brewer, *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, I, 102). Richter, *Giraldus*, 100.

⁸⁸ See the account by J. A. Robinson, *Two Glastonbury legends: King Arthur and St Joseph of Arimathea* (Cambridge 1926), 8–10.

staged discovery of Arthur's bones there, near the supposed site of Avalon, where Arthur was said by Geoffrey to have retired mortally wounded after the battle of Camlann.⁸⁹ Gerald's avowed hostility to the very work which effectively first advertised Arthur's existence as a historical figure makes his purposes in becoming involved in the exhumation the more intriguing. Two main parties profited from the exhumation: the monks of Glastonbury and the king. The monks stood to gain by the enhancement of the prestige of their house. The exhumation established Glastonbury as a necropolis of ancient British royalty and thereby created a special relationship with the king which proved invaluable in later jurisdictional disputes with the local bishop.⁹⁰ The advantages to the king who, according to Gerald, initiated the search for Arthur's bones,⁹¹ lay most obviously in demonstrating the mortality of a politically potent figure.

By this date, Anglo-Norman fears that the Celts were attaching messianic hopes to the figure of Arthur are well documented. In the 1120s, William of Malmesbury, in his *Gesta regum Anglorum*, wrote in reference to the Britons – probably the Insular Britons (Welsh, Strathclyders and Cornish) – that Arthur had 'long sustained his failing country and urged the unbroken spirit of his fellow-countrymen to war'.⁹² John Gillingham has argued that as early as the 1140s, 'there can be no doubt that the figure of Arthur was perceived as a threat to the Anglo-Norman rulers'.⁹³ In the later 1190s, Hubert Walter voiced to the pope his concerns about the historical claim of the Welsh to rule over Britain⁹⁴ and, in the same decade, William of Newburgh wrote the lengthy denunciation of Geoffrey's treatment of Arthur that Antonia Gransden has convincingly argued was probably politically motivated.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ *De principis instructione*, I, 20 (written 1193 x 1199), in Brewer, *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, VIII, 128–9. Several earlier versions of the story have been identified by R. Barber, 'Was Mordred buried at Glastonbury? Arthurian tradition at Glastonbury in the Middle Ages', *Arthurian literature* 4 (1985) 37–69, pp. 44–55. The exact date of the exhumation is unknown.

⁹⁰ J. Crick, 'The marshalling of antiquity: Glastonbury's historical dossier', in L. Abrams and James P. Carley (ed.), *The archaeology and history of Glastonbury Abbey. Essays in honour of the ninetieth birthday of C. A. Raleigh Radford* (Woodbridge 1991), 217–43, pp. 219–20, 242.

⁹¹ *De principis instructione*, I, 20: Brewer, *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, VIII, 128. Some, possibly prior, accounts of the excavation ascribe the same role to a monk. Later Glastonbury legend follows Gerald: Barber, 'Was Mordred buried at Glastonbury?', 51. Lewis Thorpe suggested that the introduction of the king's name into the narrative was an attempt to lend it weight: Thorpe, *Gerald*, 282–3, n. 632. Whatever the circumstances, the activities at Glastonbury soon served royal interest; the case was put most strongly by W. A. Nitze, 'The exhumation of King Arthur at Glastonbury', *Speculum* 9 (1934) 355–61.

⁹² *Historia regum Anglorum*, I, 8: W. Stubbs, *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis monachi De gestis regum Anglorum* I–II, Rolls Series no. 90 (London 1887/9) I, 11: translation taken from Brooke, *The church and the Welsh border in the central Middle Ages*, 106. William of Newburgh had recorded in connection with the uprising of 1157 that the Welsh were descendants of the Britons: *Historia rerum anglicarum*, II, 5 in Howlett, *Chronicles* I, 107). Further instances were quoted by C. Bullock-Davies: 'Expectare Arturum: Arthur and the messianic hope', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 29 (1980–2) 432–409, pp. 437–9. See also Loomis, 'The legend'.

⁹³ 'The context', 112.

⁹⁴ In a letter to Pope Innocent III: Davies, 'The Book of Invectives', 84–5 (*De invectionibus*, I, 1).

⁹⁵ See above, n. 14.

The parading of Arthur's bones at Glastonbury thus demonstrated the futility of British aspirations.⁹⁶ However, in undermining belief in Arthur's return, the Anglo-Norman establishment necessarily endorsed the existence of the historical Arthur. The degree of cynicism which one imputes to those who masterminded the scheme must remain largely a matter of personal preference except in one respect. The solemnity with which they conducted the operation suggests that Arthur cannot have been the subject of widespread ridicule. Moreover, the English crown was gradually appropriating Arthur, just as Geoffrey seems to have intended.⁹⁷ By 1278, King Edward I, who made such inroads into Welsh independence, came to Glastonbury with Queen Eleanor and in a symbolic act witnessed the opening of the tombs of Arthur and of Arthur's queens, Guinevere, their distant predecessors as rulers of Britain.⁹⁸

Gerald's involvement in the campaign at Glastonbury provides a key to his treatment of Geoffrey and his 'History'. Gerald here was actively propagating Arthuriana, in effect endorsing Geoffrey's 'History', as he had already done in other writings and was to continue to do.⁹⁹ However, at Glastonbury he set out to neutralise an item in the History about which Geoffrey had been dangerously unguarded, consciously or not. Geoffrey's account of Arthur's end had left that king fatally wounded but not actually dead. Arthur is last seen returning to Avalon to have his wounds healed. Confusion ensues: were the wounds fatal or curable?¹⁰⁰

After Geoffrey's death the answer became critical as political pressure from the Celtic-speaking regions mounted.¹⁰¹ William of Newburgh in the 1190s complained of Geoffrey's failure to quash the rumour that Arthur would rise from his sleep and lead the British peoples to victory.¹⁰² Moreover, Geoffrey's treatment of Arthur constituted only one of the potentially problematic elements in his history. Although Geoffrey ended with an image of the just and civilised dominion of the Saxons in Loegria (England),¹⁰³ he did not completely dash hopes of a Welsh

⁹⁶ For differing interpretations see Nitze, 'The exhumation', p. 356; A. Gransden, 'The growth of Glastonbury traditions and legends in the twelfth century', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (1976) 337–58, repr. in *Legends, traditions and history* pp. 153–74, pp. 168–9; C. T. Wood, 'Fraud and its consequences: Savaric of Bath and the reform of Glastonbury', in Abrams and Carley, *The archaeology*, 273–83, pp. 276–7; P. Johanek, 'König Artur und die Plantagenets: über den Zusammenhang von Historiographie und höfischer Epik in mittelalterlichen Propaganda', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 21 (1987) 346–89, p. 376.

⁹⁷ His picture of British kingship offered the Anglo-Normans a model: see, for example, the comments of Tatlock, *The legendary history*, 306–14.

⁹⁸ R. S. Loomis, 'Edward I, Arthurian enthusiast', *Speculum* 28 (1953) 114–27, pp. 114–6.

⁹⁹ For example in the *Descriptio Kambrie* of 1194.

¹⁰⁰ *Historia*, c. 178 (Wright, *The historia*, 132).

¹⁰¹ In 1166–7 Henry faced revolt in Brittany and Wales, for example. See W. L. Warren, *Henry II* (London 1973) 103–6. See also J. S. P. Tatlock, 'Geoffrey and King Arthur in Normannicus draco', *Modern Philology* 31 (1933/4) 1–18.

¹⁰² *Historia regum anglie*, Proemium: Howlett, *Chronicles*, I, 18. In certain manuscripts of Geoffrey's History, however, an added phrase makes it clear that Arthur was dead: Wright, *The historia*, lix. A commentary on the prophecies long erroneously attributed to Alain de Lille makes a similar point. While the author of this commentary credited the prophecies and the account of Arthur, he expressed reservations about Welsh hopes for Arthur's return: Alanus de Insulis, *Prophetia anglicana, Merlini Ambrosii Britanni, ex incubo olim (ut hominum fama est) ante annos mille ducentos circiter in Anglia nati, vaticinia et praedictiones* (Frankfurt 1603), 96–101.

¹⁰³ *Historia*, c. 207 (Wright, *The historia*, 146–7).

recovery. Near the end of the work an angelic voice (*uox angelica*) announces to Cadwaladr, the last king of Britain, that it is God's will that the Britons should not rule the island of Britain again until the time prophesied by Merlin to Arthur.¹⁰⁴ Predictably, as Arthur and Merlin never meet in Geoffrey's 'History', the reader is left to guess when this mysterious time might come.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the prophecy would fan any hope for Welsh recovery already present in the mind of a Welsh reader. Equally, given strengthening anti-Norman sentiment in Wales and Brittany in the twelfth century, later Norman readers might construe these sections of Geoffrey's 'History' as simply inflammatory.

The problem was resolved by Gerald of Wales. Having sought to undermine the legend of Arthur's return at Glastonbury, Gerald took care to put it to rest. In the closing chapter of the 'Description of Wales' completed by 1194, he made another attempt to demonstrate the futility of the wider Welsh aspirations which Geoffrey had encouraged, directly or indirectly.¹⁰⁶ In this chapter Gerald systematically undermined the vision with which Geoffrey had concluded his History.¹⁰⁷ The attack was disguised, presented as advice to the Welsh on how best to resist the Normans. Like Geoffrey, he ends with a vision but not the Galfridian picture of past Welsh defeat but of current Welsh defiance. This defiance is limited in scope, however. Far from entertaining hopes of recovering the lordship of Britain, the Welsh merely seek refuge in the least attractive corner of the land which they once held.¹⁰⁸ Gerald, like Geoffrey, employs a prophetic spokesman: however, his is not an angelic voice but an old man. The message, too, is oddly unambitious: 'I do not think that on the Day of Direst Judgement any race other than the Welsh, or any other language, will give answer to the Supreme Judge of all for this small corner (*angulus*) of the earth' (viz. Wales). The modest tone of this episode belies its innovatory nature. Geoffrey's vision of a unified kingship of Britain both past and, more hazily future, accorded with well-established Welsh lore.¹⁰⁹ This continuity was severed by Gerald who actively sought to discredit Geoffrey's vision: the Welsh can hope for not more than their survival in reduced circumstances. Gerald had silenced any resonances of wider Welsh aspirations in Geoffrey's text.¹¹⁰

Further investigation, then, establishes that the obvious interpretation of the exorcism-story – Gerald as the outraged compatriot offended by Geoffrey's appropriation of Celtic material and unhistorical creativity – cannot be sustained. Over a number of years Gerald devoted much time and many pages to upholding the vision of the British past which Geoffrey promoted. Arguably propagandist motives directed Gerald in his major advocacy of Galfridian

¹⁰⁴ *Historia*, c. 205 (Wright, *The historia*, 146).

¹⁰⁵ On the lack of coincidence between Arthur and Merlin, see Thorpe, *Geoffrey*, 282 n. 1. The two do meet in other, admittedly later-attested, legends: Crick, *The historia*, 92.

¹⁰⁶ *Descriptio*, II.10.

¹⁰⁷ I am indebted to Huw Pryce for drawing to my attention the parallel between the ending of the two works and its significance.

¹⁰⁸ *Descriptio*, II.10.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, Roberts, 'Geoffrey', 35–8.

¹¹⁰ Huw Pryce has pointed out to me that the *Descriptio* does not seem to have found favour with the Welsh, perhaps not surprisingly. While Geoffrey's text enjoyed great popularity in Wales, being found in three medieval Welsh translations, there is little sign that Gerald's text circulated there and it was not translated into Welsh until the twentieth century.

history at Glastonbury and St David's. However, Gerald adopted and emulated Galfridian material on many other occasions. It is tempting to assume that Gerald's overt hostility to the 'History' of Geoffrey of Monmouth condemns that work as mendacious, fictitious, or at least outside the literary traditions within which it claimed to rest. Such a view represents a considerable oversimplification. Gerald contributed to the British origin-story himself, he quoted from Merlin's prophecies, both Geoffrey's and others, he endorsed the picture of Arthur as a powerful British king which Geoffrey had promoted. Geoffrey and Gerald in many respects can be viewed as counterparts. Both traded, more or less disreputably, on a British heritage and exploited their sources whether Brittonic or not. Both put British material into the service of the Anglo-Norman king – Geoffrey in his saga of the kingship of Britain, Gerald in his involvement with royal appropriation of the Arthurian myth at Glastonbury.

Geoffrey's treatment of the British past, though far-fetched in many respects, did not present Gerald, any more than many other early readers, with an impossible construct, although certain details exceeded belief. The credibility-gap only began to yawn wide when the two authors looked at the British *future*. Here, Geoffrey adhered to the traditional model, although he took care to veil it in obscure prophecy. Gerald could not pursue the same course. Politics had moved on and expediency, conviction, and self-interest dictated that he distance himself as far as possible from the traditional course adopted by his predecessor.¹¹¹

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