

Lazamon's *Brut* and the March of Wales: Merlin, his Prophecies, and the *Lex Marchia*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Lazamon's engenderment of cultural unification for the explicit purposes of an Anglo-Welsh cultural resistance to the Norman overlords in the March of Wales. In essence, I examine some of the most important cultural signifiers in medieval English and Welsh culture and the methods by which the poet adapts and grafts them together to form a culturally amalgamated text—neither explicitly English nor Welsh but yet simultaneously both—and the political implications of this amalgamation. Though Lazamon's methodology emanates from multiple aspects of the text, I have concentrated here on what I feel are the most explicit manifestations of this theme: Merlin, his prophecies, and the Law of the March.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter One: Merlin-Voice in the Wilderness | 20 |
| Chapter Two: Lazamon's Merlin Prophecies | 42 |
| Chapter Three: Lazamon and the Law of the March | 62 |
| Conclusion | 87 |
| Appendix A: | |
| A Note on the Translations | 90 |
| Works Cited | 92 |

Introduction

*Seoððen comen Sæxisce men and Lundene heo cleopeden;
Pe nome ilest longe inne þisse londe.
Seoððen comen Normans mid heore niðcraften
And nemneden heo Lundres –þeos leodes heo amærden!
Swa is al þis lond iuaren for uncuðe leoden
Þeo þis londe hæbbeð biwunnen and eft beoð idriuen hennen¹*

It is largely accepted by historians that the English resistance to the Norman invasion petered out less than a decade after Hastings. Though some noble attempts at armed resistance were made, mostly in the border regions (see further below) in the years after the initial invasion, the now mythical and conflicting accounts of the Siege of Ely in 1071 is understood as the last major stand against the Normans by an English military force.²

Yet, as is obvious from this commentary by Laȝamon on the re-naming of London, written somewhere between 125 and 150 years after the Conquest,³ English dissension and sedition against Normandy is still present.⁴ To what degree this cultural resistance influenced historical events and cultural products has yet to be determined, and, since we must assume that the majority of texts from this and the surrounding eras have been lost, we shall never completely conceptualize it.

¹ [Then came the Saxon men and called it *Lundene*, that name lasted a long time in this land. Then came the Normans with their evil ways and named it *Lundres* –they ruined this nation! So has this land fared because of foreign nations that have won this land and were afterwards driven hence] (Laȝamon *Brut* 3547-3550). Line numbers, unless otherwise noted, are from Barron and Weinberg's edition of the Cotton Caligula A.ix manuscript.

² Rex (132-137), Freeman (463-477).

³ I accept the dates for the composition of the *Brut* as proposed by François Le Saux of 1185-1216 (10).

⁴ I conduct a more thorough analysis of this passage in its context in Chapter 3.

We can, however, make some conjectures about the nature of post-Conquest resistance to Normandy, at least as it is manifested in Lázamon's *Brut*. This is a work produced on the borders of England and the March of Wales, where colonial dissension had real potential to translate into military resistance. This potential was present both because of the region's proximity to Wales, where armed anti-Norman resistance was not only present but often quite successful,⁵ and also because of the strong *regional* history (both Welsh and English) of resistance and rebellion. The prospect of dispersing, *idriuen hennene*, the Normans was, indeed, a very real possibility—a possibility which should not be dismissed simply for its lack of fruition.

In this study of Norman resistance, I will argue that Lázamon's *Brut* is both product and producer of anti-Norman sentiment in the March of Wales,⁶ a sentiment that is readily apparent in the aforementioned passage. The sentiment goes well beyond that passage, however, and is significantly more complicated than casting Lázamon as an "Englishman" lamenting the defeat of his ancestors in a display of some sort of 'nascent nationalism'; such retrospective (or anticipatory?) patriotism is, frankly, not directly applicable to Lázamon. Instead, like most medieval people, Lázamon and his political views are more a product of his immediate region rather than any historical or ethnic nationalities. The cultural and military resistance that Lázamon seeks is a product and consequence of the Anglo-Welsh cultural unification in the borderlands, a unification that

⁵ Just upstream of Lázamon in the *Rwng Gwy a Hafren* [Between the Wye and Severn], the counties of Malienydd and Elfael were in a particularly strong state of revolt for much of the composition period of Lázamon's *Brut*. Lord Rhys's campaigns against the Normans in the Marches struck rather close to home with his victory at Radnor in 1196 (Davies *Age* 223).

⁶ Throughout this paper I will refer to Lázamon's poem, titled in the manuscript as *Hystoria Brutonum*, as the *Brut*, Wace's *Roman de Brut* as the *Roman* and Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britannie* as the *Historia*.

he helps to engender in his history through the poetic blending of English and Celtic cultural mores.

Historical Contexts and Precedents

This region, the Anglo-Welsh borderland, now termed the March of Wales, has historically been an area of ethnic and cultural integration, often peaceful, between the Welsh and English population. This was the case in *Lazaramon's* time and had been for as long as there had been an established borderland between the English and Welsh in the area.

Though the most consistent political relationship between the Saxons and the Welsh was one of violent antagonism and subjugation, especially in the north, political history is only part of the story. Archeological, anthropological, and historical sources all indicate that day-to-day life on the border was largely conducted in mutual respect and peaceful integration; and this seems to be especially the case in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia—of which *Lazaramon's* Arley Kings would have been on the western half.

One arbitrary example of cultural integration might be cited from Joan and Harold Taylor's archeological and architectural studies on pre-Norman churches on the Welsh border: "Although the early accounts of the history of Northumbria indicate clearly the bitter conflict between the Britons and the invading Anglo-Saxons... there seems by contrast to have been a certain degree of co-operation between the Welsh and their neighbours in Mercia, particularly during the reign of Penda (632-54)" (226). They go on to describe the construction of Offa's dike, traditionally seen as a militarized boundary between two peoples, as having likely developed during "a period of prolonged peace,"

probably in the latter half of the eighth century (226). Thus, this ‘military trench’ might be better characterized as a strong fence between two friendly neighbors, at least in its origin.

Evidence that this cultural integration continued through the Conquest and into *Lazamon’s* compositional time frame can be seen in many respects, from the integration of the law codes, which will be discussed in Chapter 3, to the intermarriage and rise in amateur linguists and interpreters in the area (Davies *Age* 100-103). By *Lazamon’s* time, and, indeed, likely long before, the area had undergone so much integration, according to historian Geraint Jenkins, that it “was such a diverse and nebulous frontier region that the innocent incomer could never be certain whether he had entered Wales or not” (66). A geographic and political region had emerged, beginning well before the arbitrary divide of the Norman Conquest, which must be considered as culturally distinct from both England and Wales.

Yet defining a region as culturally distinct does not necessarily define its potential for unified military and political action. By *Lazamon’s* day, the March was a land of the conquered, and the Marcher lords were very proud of their military advantage.

Nevertheless, as we see with *Lazamon’s* depiction of Penda’s alliance with Cadwallon (c. 640), discussed in more detail in chapter 3, some within the March obviously thought of such military alliances as having historical precedent, though it must be admitted that the reality for that particular historical precedent could not and cannot possibly be substantiated. Joan and Harold Taylor’s mention of a “degree of cooperation” during Penda’s reign, quoted above, does not necessarily substantiate *Lazamon’s* history—though it certainly does not preclude such an alliance either. The

more important point is that Laȝamon, and likely many others, *perceived* the alliance as being a historical reality.

There are, however, other precedents for a cultural and military alliance between the English and Welsh peoples in the March of Wales that carry much more historical credit. In the aftermath of the Norman Conquest, while most of Sussex, Essex, and East Anglia swiftly succumbed to the reign of William, in the Anglo-Celtic borderlands of Northumbria and especially Mercia, resistance continued for some time. These continued rebellions against the Normans have four characteristics that are particularly relevant to this study of Laȝamon: resistance to Norman hegemony 1) was most often conducted on the Anglo-Celtic borderlands, 2) was conducted by English *silvatici*, or ‘wild-men’ who 3) allied themselves with a Celtic, mostly Welsh, force and 4) this resistance continued well into the 12th century.

One intriguing historical figure who seems to have been particularly representative of the rebel forces in the borderlands is known to history as ‘Eadric the Wild’ or, as Oderic has it, *Edrico Guilda*. From his first mention in the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* of the British Library MS, Cotton Tiberius B.iv,⁷ Eadric is on the very edge of England, attacking from across the border with his Welsh allies: “7 *Eadric cild 7 þa Bryttas wurdon unsehte 7 wunnon heom wið þa castelmenn on Hereforda, 7 fela hearmas*

⁷ This manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (hereafter ASC), often called the ‘D’ text, is certainly not without its peculiarities and problems, which likely explains why ‘D’ is most often neglected by historians for the Peterborough Chronicle, or the ‘E’ text, Bodleian Library MS, Laud 636 (Classen v). However, ‘D’ most likely originated in Worcester, as can be seen by the dialect and additional material, and therefore provides the best manuscript for sources on local history (certainly applicable here) and, of the Chronicles, this one has the most potential to have been consulted by Laȝamon.

heom dydon” (1067).⁸ Though William eventually suppresses the rebellion, such rebellions by Eadric and other Mercian earls along the Anglo-Welsh border would continue for some time.

The following year, as reported by Oderic Vitalis, the native chronicler for the Normans, “*Guali et Cestrenses præsidium regis apud Scrobesburium obsederunt quibus incolæ ciuitatis cum Edrico Guilda potenti et bellicoso uiro aliisque ferocibus Anglis auxilio fuerunt. Idem apud Exoniam Exoniensis comitatus habitatores fecere, et undique coadunata turba ex Cornu Britannicæ*” (IV.194).⁹ Eadric has now moved farther north and, still allied with the Welshmen, attacked Shrewsbury. Perhaps as consequence of his actions and those of other *ferocibus Anglis*, an Anglo-Cornish alliance had arisen and rebelled against the Norman-held Exeter. Along the entire Anglo-Celtic border, Celts are allying themselves with ‘wild’ and ‘fierce’ English thanes to resist the onslaught of their French conquerors.

These particular alliances between assumed enemies, the Welsh and the Mercian earls, date back to well before the French had arrived, however. John of Worcester, who drew on numerous sources to compose his monumental chronicle, including the previously quoted ‘D’ text of the ASC and variant chronicles, makes this apparent.

Correcting the ‘D’ text’s slip of Eadric’s surname *cild* (most likely *se wilda*) to

⁸ [Childe Eadric and the British did unsettle and attack the castle-men in Hereford and did them much harm]

⁹ [The Welsh and the (citizens of) Chester laid siege to the stronghold of the king near Shrewsbury. The inhabitants of the city were helped by the powerful and warlike Eadric the Wild and other ferocious Englishmen. The same was done among the citizens of the county Exeter to the city of Exeter, assembled with a throng from the Horn of Britain (Cornwall)]

Siluatius,¹⁰ John notes that in his attack on Hereford, Eadric was allied with two very specific Welshmen, *regibus Walanorum Blethgento...et Riuuatlo*, or Bleddyn and Rhiwallon, half-brothers of the famous Gruffydd ap Llwelyn—one of very few kings before and after to be described as king over all of Wales (John 1067).¹¹

Bleddyn and Rhiwallon also resurface in the chronicles helping Edwin and Morcar, both sons of Earl Ælfgar and subsequent earls of Mercia, in various resistance movements and rebellions until their submission to William in 1069.¹² Their connection with the Mercians is, ultimately, through their brother Gruffydd, who had allied himself with Ælfgar in his quest to regain Mercia from King Edward after Ælfgar had been ‘outlawed’ in 1055.¹³ This alliance seems to have continued thereafter, and, when Ælfgar was again outlawed in 1058, he was able to regain Mercia “*regis Walanorum Griffini iuuamine*” (John of Worcester 1058, p. 584).¹⁴

At some point during these campaigns, as noted by Orderic, Ælfgar gave his daughter Ealdgyth to Gruffydd. Though she would go on to marry Harold Godwinson after Gruffydd’s death in 1063 (only to be widowed again shortly thereafter), their

¹⁰ Both modern historians and editors agree that the ASC ‘D’ text should read *Eadric se wilda*, Reynolds 102, Plummer and Earle i. 200, ii. 259

¹¹ ASC “D” text entry for 1063: “*kyning ofer eall Wealcyn.*” [king over all Welsh peoples]

¹² A submission which was not to last, however, as the brothers subsequently entreated the Scots to help retake the kingdom in 1071; why they no longer fought beside Blyddyn and Rhiwallon is not clear. Edwin was killed in route to the Scots by his own men and Morkar joined Hereward at Ely where he, presumably, either perished or returned to the woods as a *siluatici*. See John of Worcester (1070-1072, p. 10-20); Orderic Vitalis (256-258); Rex (116-119); ASC “D” entry 1072, p. 91.

¹³ See John of Worcester’s entry for 1055 (p 576). ASC “D” is non-specific about the particular allies of Ælfgar, mentioning only that he gathered a *micel genge* from *Hirlande and Brytlande* (1055, p. 80).

¹⁴ [with the help of Gruffydd, King of Wales]

marriage united the whole of Wales with Mercia, an alliance which apparently carried on after the Conquest.

The reasons for this alliance are not readily apparent in most of the historical sources; medieval chroniclers are notoriously and frustratingly sparse in recording motivations. And, likely due to its eventual lack of success, the nature of the alliance has remained relatively neglected by modern historians as well.

This does not mean, however, that it has been totally neglected by historians. Yet, like much of modern criticism concerning the March of Wales in any respect, the historians who do comment on this alliance are divided as to the ‘nature’ of it. Edward Freeman, in his six-volume history of the Norman Conquest, mentions the alliance—along with almost everything else that might have happened during the period. His characterization of it is, unfortunately, rather demeaning and probably politically charged. Of the allied attack on Hereford, Freeman tells us that “Eadric seems to have thought himself justified in dealing with lands which had submitted to the Normans as with an enemy’s country. Bleddyn and Rhiwallon would of course have no scruples” because, “the Welsh were always ready to step in on any pretext which promised a chance of fighting and plunder” (IV.109-110). Not only, in Freeman’s view, are the Welsh princes the mindless underlings of a proper English politician, but their motives can only be attributed to their ethnic tendency towards warfare and lawlessness.

Rees Davies’ characterization of the alliance, or lack thereof, is even more dismissive and just as political, however. In his canonical history, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415*, he does not even directly acknowledge the alliance between the Welsh and English under Gruffudd ap Llywelyn. His only hint at the alliance, given

parenthetically none-the-less, is that “Gruffudd ap Llywelyn had cleverly exploited [the separatism of the Mercian earldom] for his own ends,” and that Bleddyn and Rhiwallon were mere “puppet rulers” of King Edward (24-26). Here, there is no alliance mentioned and the Welsh princes’ decisions to engage a force that was militarily superior and vastly outnumbered them with a nearly defeated English ally could only be the product of political manipulation.

Though I have no doubt that there is some measure of truth to both of these characterizations—the Welsh soldiers, along with their English counterparts, probably *were* looking for spoils and Gruffydd most certainly found political advantages to supporting the Mercians—neither wholly represents the situation. There is a long history of peaceful interaction between these peoples, and mutually defending their region, the borderlands, from a separate invader is a smart and tactically sound decision.¹⁵

K.L. Maund’s descriptions and analyses of the connections between the Welsh and Mercians are considerably more thorough and refreshing. She first compares Gruffydd’s alliance with Ælfgar with Gruffydd’s connection with Swegn in the mid-11th century and determines that the Mercia-Welsh alliance was an important and serious alliance that continued well after Gruffydd’s death, while Gruffydd probably kept Swegn around as “a useful supply of cannon-fodder” (129). This alliance also, Maund determines, was not something solely linked with these two powerful rulers. Gruffydd’s half brothers “clearly continued Gruffudd’s Mercian alliance”, even though she argues

¹⁵ Indeed, as D.A. Whitehead points out, this concerted effort on the borderland to forge an alliance against a third, invading party has a precedent in the Anglo-Celtic alliances formulated to resist the Danish invasions of the 9th century (14).

that there is strong evidence that they may have played a part in the death of Gruffydd (139-141).

Though I am more hesitant than she to implicate Bleddyn and Rhiwallon as the murderers of Gruffydd, who was, by all accounts, an extremely powerful and effective ruler, I agree with Maund that the alliance was not simply the political machinations of one man, as Davies indicates. It seems that Oderic's sentiments concerning the event were probably more correct, at least in conceptualizing the connections:

*Tempore Normannicæ cladis quæ miniis oppressionibus Anglos immoderate conquassauit, Blidenus rex Gualorum ad auunculos suos suppetias uenit, secumque multitudinem Britonum adduxit... Legationibus quoscunque poterant per omnes Albionis terminos in hostes clam palamque stimulabant. Fit ex consensu omnium pro uendicanda libertate pristina procax conspiratio et obnixæ contra Normannos coniuratio.*¹⁶ (IV.184, p. 216)

Though the numerous rebellions would be quashed, Norman rule would eventually prosper, and the English thanes would either be exiled or would submit to the Normans, there is sufficient evidence that resistance to Normandy did not automatically disperse a decade after the Conquest. Though Oderic is slightly inaccurate here, Bleddyn was the half brother, not the nephew, of Gruffydd, as Maund says, "it is clear that this error represents a memory of some kind of link between the family of Leofric and that of Gruffudd" (140). I find Oderic's characterization of the events not only considerably more insightful (at least in concept) but also highly anticipatory of Lázamon's motives at the end of the century. There is a historic cultural and political link between the border

¹⁶ [In the time of the Norman defeat (conquest) which had disturbed the English with such immoderate oppression, Bleddyn king of the Welsh came to help his uncles, bringing a great multitude of Britons with him.... Missions, whatsoever they could, (were sent) through all the borders of Albion, inciting openly and secretly against the host. All consented to conspire to retrieve their former liberty and bind themselves earnestly with oaths against the Normans.]

English and the border Welsh, and Laȝamon is attempting to recall that link for his own political purposes.

Some scholars, such as Peter Rex and Susan Reynolds, have compared the post-Conquest resistance movement to the *maquis* movement in Nazi occupied France. Citing multiple primary sources, including but not limited to those cited here, both these scholars have both determined that there was probably an underground war against the Normans which lasted well into the twelfth century (Rex 76; Reynolds 104).

Rex particularly traces this movement through the reign of Henry II (1154-1189), which Laȝamon likely lived through part of and may have even written within. Rex sees the movement as having most likely been conducted by the previously-mentioned *silvatici*, or ‘wild-men’ such as Eadric, and likely as a “war of attrition.”¹⁷ This, according to Rex, caused William to introduce the *murdrum* fine, which levied a high price on the entire hundred if a Norman was killed and the killer escaped capture (65-66, 79).

Rex’s primary source for this commentary is the *Dialogus de Scaccario*, written most likely by Richard FitzNeal in the latter portions of Henry II’s reign (ca. 1180),¹⁸ an intriguing but vague document that provides a wealth of information about the role of the Exchequer, along with other legal oddities, under Henry II. The dialogue gives even further information about the nature of the *murdrum* fine during the latter half of Henry II’s reign. When the Disciple in the dialogue asks why the *murdrum* law does not judge

¹⁷ The *Silvatici*, especially in the context of their potential relationship to Merlin, known in some contexts as *Merlinus Silvestrem* (Gerald of Wales 192-193, 280), will be discussed further in the first chapter.

¹⁸ Dates and authorship not mentioned in Stubbs, but present in Henderson’s “Introduction” (3-4).

the occult death of the Anglo-Saxon as murder, the Master answers that although you cannot tell *free* Normans and Saxons apart anymore, due to intermarriage and such, that is most decidedly not the case for the lower classes: “...*exceptis duntaxat ascriptitiis qui villani dicuntur, quibus non est liberum obstatibus dominis suis a sui status conditione discedere. Ea propter pene quicumque sic hodie occisus reperitur, ut murdrum punitur. exceptis hiis de quibus certa sunt ut diximus seruilis conditionis indicia.*” (202).¹⁹ It is evident that the ‘*villani*’ were still very much segregated by ethnicity and were still prone to killing their French-speaking overlords over a century after the Conquest.

If the Normans found these *silvatici* so problematic that they deemed it necessary to alter the existing law codes (something they did quite sparingly in the first few generations), then it is obvious that political dissention against the Normans by the English, in addition to the Welsh, did not completely diminish in the eleventh century. Furthermore, the dissention was specifically translating into violence, at least in individual cases. Though we could not expect such a conquered, subjugated race to successfully overthrow the Normans on their own in the later twelfth century, had they been aided by another, more powerful force—such as the Welsh or the Danes—there may have been some potential for success. Regardless of historical ‘what ifs,’ there is sufficient evidence that the English and Welsh were expressing a strong anti-Norman sentiment and that that sentiment had potential to translate into violence, especially in volatile border regions such as the March of Wales.

Critical Contexts and Precedents

¹⁹ [Excepting only those who are bound to the soil, called ‘*villani*’ {villeins}, who are not free to decide their station against their lords. And for this reason almost anyone who is found slain today, it is punished as murder, except those {persons}, of which we have said, where there are certain indications of a servile condition]

In his broad study of medieval historical chronicles titled *Arthurian Material in the Chronicles*, Robert Huntington Fletcher makes a brief, though rather dense and generally favorable, study of Laȝamon's *Brut*. After the standard introduction of manuscripts and requisite remarks on Laȝamon's language and potential sources, Fletcher sums up Laȝamon's variations from Wace as such: "Long original passages are rare... The bulk of Layamon's additions to Wace consists of minor supplementary or modifying statements here and there throughout the poem" (151). Then, for the better part of five pages, Fletcher creates a detailed, though by no means comprehensive, list of Laȝamon's variations from Wace during the Arthurian section (about a third of the text).

Though Fletcher makes some important points and his list of differences in the Arthurian sections are helpful to any student of Laȝamon, his analyses and summations of the *Brut* betray an almost mathematical approach to studying Laȝamon which many, though certainly not all, take. Essentially, this involves quantifying the additions to, subtractions from, and variants of Wace's *Roman de Brut*, ignoring the more or less 'direct' translations and dividing it all by the cultural, ethnic and linguistic milieu that informs Laȝamon's work.

What is lost in this style of analysis, among other things, is the *comprehensive* change that is brought about by what Fletcher calls Laȝamon's "minor" supplementations. After Laȝamon's changes, the *Brut* no longer tells the same story that the *Roman* tells. Most of Laȝamon's characters have similar names and the plot is recognizable, of course, but each individual character and scene exists in a wholly different imaginative space in the *Brut* compared to that of the *Roman*. Even when Laȝamon directly translates a section of Wace with little variation, the substantive

variations that occur before and after that section force that scene to have entirely different significations. Therefore, more comprehensive analyses of the *Brut* as an individual entity, rather than as a supplement or product of Wace, are needed.

This project aspires to do just that; although how Lazamon's work has evolved from his 'source texts' is a major consideration, I have attempted to examine Lazamon's work as an individual poem and *not* as a "supplement" or "variation" to his predecessors. In doing so, I have focused on Lazamon's position relative to contemporary socially and historically significant texts, and precedent texts representative of the cultures he is drawing from.

I have tried to read Lazamon's text through multiple critical lenses in hopes of achieving the most thorough and satisfactory understanding of the text and the subject matter. These include, but are not limited to: present day historical analyses of the regions and cultures Lazamon would have been associated with and interested in, contemporary manifestation of significant cultural signifiers—especially relating to law and prophecy—and present day literary analyses and theories on Lazamon, his work, genre, and general subject matters.

It would be tedious and unnecessary to review the entire critical context of Lazamon's *Brut*, which, though the poem has certainly been neglected in comparison to other literary works of its significance and merit, is becoming significantly more diverse and extensive on a yearly basis. Yet, to argue that Lazamon's multi-cultural, anti-colonial political views are the intimate product and producer of the political sentiment within the March of Wales is to encroach upon a few trends in Lazamon studies that should be noted before proceeding. At the inevitable risk of being reductive with some of the more recent

scholarly views that have usefully informed and enticed my arguments, I would like to attempt to briefly situate my argument in relation to theirs.

One of the first intensive literary studies to situate *Lazamon* and his political sentiments within the March of Wales is that by Michelle Warren in *History on the Edge: Excalibur and the Borders of Britain, 1100-1300*. Warren's analysis extends far beyond *Lazamon* and is highly informed by post-colonial theory. Her study primarily traces the development of 'border writing' in relation to Arthur's famous sword, beginning, fittingly, in Monmouth with Geoffrey and continuing through many of his major insular and continental revisions. Her extended concept, that "swords write borders [and]... borders, however, also write swords," if at times a bit forced, is aptly demonstrated in every work she examines (22).

Lazamon, in her analysis, represents the 'Englishing' of the Arthurian narrative, snatching the power of Caliburn from Wace to re-colonize the Britons and "thus easily appropriates Norman colonization for a post-colonial England" (106). Yet, for Warren, *Lazamon*'s displays of animosity toward Normans and Norman culture, such as that which began this discussion, are more "neutral" and certainly not inclined toward revolt (123); he is, instead, content with "English settlement" (114). Though she begins her project with a discussion of the complexity of the Welsh March, *Lazamon*, for Warren, is singularly focused on his own entrenched 'nationalist' ethnicity, rather than his multi-ethnic regionalism: "Through his own resolutely monolingual composition, *Lazamon* presents a linguistic gloss on post-colonial experience that dismisses the polyglot condition of life, just as Norman conquerors dismissed English" (14). Though Warren has pioneered the study of Arthurian literature in relation to borders, the particular border,

along with all its complexity, which informs Laȝamon's region, politics and poem are subsequently lost to her all-inclusive "Englising of Briton history" (114, 117, 119).

Quite on the other end of the ethnic spectrum are Micheal Faletra's 2002 article "Once and Future Britons: The Welsh in Lawman's *Brut*" and Kelley Wickham-Crowley's various works on Laȝamon. Both, in contrast to Warren, emphasize the Welsh, or British, sentiments and aspects within Laȝamon's history. For Faletra, whose article provides a welcome break from the "providential" readings of Laȝamon, the poet "courts a nascent Welsh national consciousness" and is "anti-Norman" and anti-Orosion (providential) in tone (3). Wickham-Crowley, though she continues to attest that Laȝamon reads history from the Providential standpoint (*Future* 13), is similar to Faletra in that she represents Laȝamon as an Englishman who is intensely interested in Welsh culture, or, to use her analogy, an armchair anthropologist who has "gone native" in his research of the Britons ("Anthropological" 11-12).

The unifying factor for both—though with strikingly different implications—is Christianity. "Laȝamon's unity is Christian and ethical," says Wickham Crowley (*Future* 13) and his presentation of the Britons, though intrinsically infused with respect and cultural intrigue, will ever keep them silent "because Lawman speaks for them, translating *faithfully*, with the full Christian import of the word" ("Anthropological" 23, her emphasis). Wickham-Crowley's analysis, here and elsewhere, of Laȝamon's connection with Welsh prophecy and culture, along with her odd but effective application of anthropological theories to Laȝamon are solid, formidable analyses. Yet her emphasis on Christianity as the sole unifying factor to Laȝamon's presentation of history and

political outlook diminishes the radical complexity of his motives and the emphatic regionalism present in his text.

Similarly, though Faletra emphasizes that Lazamon breaks from the traditional Orosian (Providential) model of history (and thus does not accept Normandy as a justified colonizer), he still sees Lazamon as an emphatically Christian, rather than political, poet. For Faletra, Lazamon is a Quaker: “he strives to write a history that allows for a future that is less fraught with violence and conquest than the past, a goal that in the end leads him to regard peaceful coexistence as the only solution for the colonial struggles facing the island of Britain in the early thirteenth century” (5). Though I share Faletra’s skepticism at viewing Lazamon as a Christian priest blindly accepting his peoples’ fate as the judgment of God, I fail to see the peacefulness of Lazamon’s message. As will be discussed throughout, but especially in chapter two, Lazamon emphasizes and revels in violent retribution and tribal justice; were his political motives to have translated into military action, mercy and peaceful coexistence would not have been the result.

The mere presence of this critical tug-of-war concerning Lazamon’s ethnic/political sympathies adeptly illustrates the complexity and what seems to be the ambiguity of Lazamon’s presentation of history and culture. Lazamon most assuredly—as Warren, among others, demonstrates—infuses the historical narrative with English signifiers. His language is unabashedly English and the implications of some of his statements, especially when viewed out of context, certainly indicate his English heritage as the explanation to his politics. Simultaneously, Lazamon’s content is emphatically Welsh and he consistently sympathizes with their culture and history. He praises their

culture as paramount and educes cultural signifiers which seem to indicate Welsh nationalism or cultural sentimentalism as the primary motive for his politics.

In my view, Lazamon's sentiment is, indeed, both Welsh *and* English, but more importantly it is the sentiment of the March. Perhaps Françoise Le Saux's opinion on the subject, given in her canonical overview of the textual sources of the *Brut* well before any of the previously-mentioned authors, might shed some light on the subject: "the poet's loyalties are not expressed in ethnic terms, but proceed from a sense of institutional continuity, and the acceptance of cultural admixture. More than Germanic, English or Anglo-Saxon, Lazamon's outlook is already British, in the modern sense of the word" (227). Though I would contest that his "British" outlook is not entirely modern, as that would include the integrated French and their *niðcraften*, and also indicates an international plurality/inclusiveness not applicable to a medieval poet like Lazamon, there are some definite similarities of the modern British (English/Welsh/Scottish) and Lazamon's outlook (Border English/Border Welsh).

Some Context for the Text

This study explores Lazamon's engenderment of cultural unification for the explicit purposes of an Anglo-Welsh cultural resistance to the Norman overlords in the March of Wales. In essence, I examine some of the most important cultural signifiers in medieval English and Welsh culture and the methods by which the poet adapts and grafts them together to form a culturally amalgamated text—neither explicitly English nor Welsh but yet simultaneously both—and the political implications of this amalgamation. Though Lazamon's methodology emanates from multiple aspects of the text, I have

concentrated here on what I feel are the most explicit manifestations of this theme: Merlin, his prophecies, and the Law of the March.

The primary explanation for why these particular elements best demonstrate this conceptual theme is that *Lazamon* deviates more from his sources in these areas than in almost any other element of the history. Merlin, aside from Arthur, is developed significantly more than any other character in the text. In long sections of dialogue not present in *Wace* or *Geoffrey* and with intriguing and culturally significant variations, Merlin becomes a different character than has ever been seen in Arthurian literature. As well, his prophecies, the conceptual message behind the prophet and poet, are given much more emphasis and commentary than in *Wace* (who practically has none) and *Geoffrey* (who has a great deal more prophecy, but less clarity and emphasis).

Furthermore, as Christopher Cannon has pointed out, *Lazamon* gives 'Law' almost as much emphasis as he does prophecy (339-340). Yet my decision to examine regional legality in the *Brut* goes beyond *Lazamon*'s widely recognized interest in the subject. To more fully understand the distinctiveness of the March of Wales and the practical causes and results of *Lazamon*'s political message, we must look to the most explicit historical manifestations of contemporary border culture, the *Lex Marchia*, and its philosophical affinities with *Lazamon*'s history-writing.

Whereas Merlin's prophecies envision a future of who will govern, how they will govern, and what will happen to those being governed, the *Lex Marchia* reflects the exigency and inspirations for those prophecies. Therefore, these elements, Merlin, his prophecies, and the law of the March, best represent the character of *Lazamon*'s political, regional, and social agenda in the poem.

Chapter One: Merlin—Voice in the Wilderness

vox clamantis in deserto... (Isaiah 40.3)

It seems to be a truism of human culture that significant alterations in history originate on the fringes of human society and socially appropriate action. From Gilgamesh to Isaiah and, by proxy, John the Baptist and beyond, it is on the edge of civilization and sanity—in the wilderness—that prophecies and ‘voices’ for social and political change are born and where prophets and their mantic manifestations spring. Therefore, it is appropriate to begin a project concerning social, cultural, and political revolt from the fringes of three civilizations, Lazamon’s *Brut* in the March of Wales, with its most important ‘voice in the wilderness’: Merlin.

Lazamon’s Merlin has traditionally taken the figurative backseat to King Arthur in terms of scholarship on the *Brut* and Arthuriana in general. Yet, in the case of the *Brut* at least, if Merlin is in the backseat, he is definitely the ‘backseat driver’ for the conceptual and political underpinnings of the poem. Merlin is the political prophet, wizard, cultural intermediary and *scop* of the past, present, and future of Lazamon’s poem and contemporary historical-political context. In prophesying to the British kings and utilizing his supernatural powers, he seeks to shape history and bring about revolutions *mid worde* (*Brut* 14296)—goals equally applicable to those of his author. Though Arthur’s section may be the narrative climax to the pseudo-historical story, Merlin’s character and prophecies are the philosophical center of Lazamon’s conception of history and politics, and we would do well not to ignore him.

From his introduction in the text as a messianic prophet akin to the previously-quoted Isaiah, John the Baptist, Elijah, or Taliesin to his physical departure from the text after the conception of Arthur and Laȝamon's appropriation of Geoffrey's Merlin prophecies, Merlin maintains a pervasive spiritual, political, and prophetic presence throughout the work.

Furthermore, despite Merlin's importance to Geoffrey of Monmouth and, to a lesser degree, Wace, his importance to the *Brut* is not simply an inherited one. It has long been recognized that Laȝamon's Merlin is a different character who serves a more prophetic and supernatural role in the text than his predecessors,²⁰ and it is his character I am concerned with in the current section; his prophecies are the purview of the following section. Here, I argue that Laȝamon drastically reconfigures Wace's weak and subservient magician into a fierce and sagacious prophet-poet who has intrinsic connections to his audiences' English and Welsh cultural heritages for the purpose of anti-colonial cultural unification. Not only is Merlin significantly more powerful, influential, and ephemeral—akin to the *scops* and *awenyddion* of the Anglo-Saxon and Welsh traditions, respectively—but he more accurately reflects those traditions' portrayals of their prophet-poets and, contrary to current criticism on the character, their violent, tribal, and pagan origins.

One particular instance in the poem which is particularly representative of the new dimension that Laȝamon adds to Merlin's character can be found in his early dealings with Uther Pendragon, Arthur's father when Uther, preparing to attack

²⁰ Among others, Robert Fletcher noted Laȝamon's "supernatural conception" of Merlin in 1905 (162); Jeff Rider sees Merlin as the "linchpin of history" because of his prophetic powers (2); and Kelly Wickham-Crowley postulates that Merlin's potency "perhaps as prophecy exceeds [Laȝamon's]" ("Native" 22).

Vortiger's son Pascent, sees a complex sign of lights and dragon mouths issuing from a star. As might be expected, he and his men were "*seolliche auæred*" and considered not continuing with the attack for fear that it was an ill-omen on the upcoming battle.²¹

Luckily, Uther has Merlin with him and asks him to interpret the sign. He tells Uther, in brief, that his brother is dead, that he is to be king and sire a great son who "*scal moni kinelond mid compe biwinne.*"²² The substance of the prophecy, though much dramatized and expanded, is substantively derived from Wace; however, the description of the Merlin's actions is considerably different from those in Wace or Geoffrey. Wace, following Geoffrey, simply notes that "*Merlin mult se conturba./ Duel out al quer, mot ne sona/ Quant sis esperiz repaire,/ mult se plainst e mult suspira,*" the prophecy follows (8309-8312).²³ Laȝamon, on the other hand, presents the matter somewhat differently:

*Mærlin sæt him stille longe ane stunde
Swulc he mid sweuene swunke ful swiðe.
Heo seiden þe hit isezen mid heore aȝen æȝen
Þat ofte he hine wende sulc hit a wurem weore.
Late he gon awakien; þa gon he to quakien,
And þas word seide Merlin þa witeȝe.*²⁴ (*Brut* 8935-8940)

Following the prophecy, Laȝamon then tells us that "*And Merlin gon to slume swulc he wolde slæpen*" (*Brut* 8979).²⁵

Though Laȝamon is in the general habit of expanding and dramatizing Wace's narrative, many of his expansions, this included, are highly substantial and indicative of

²¹ [sorely afraid]

²² [shall win many kingdoms in battle]

²³ [And Merlin was very perturbed, utter dole in the heart, saying not a word; when his breath was restored, much he complained and much he sighed]

²⁴ [Merlin sat still for a long time very silently, such as he were dreaming. They who saw it with their own eyes said that often he turned such as he were a snake. Slowly he began to awake, then he began to quake and these words said Merlin the prophet]

²⁵ [And Merlin grew drowsy, such as he would sleep]

his general motivations and, possibly, supplementary sources. The vatic seizure endured by Merlin here is, as noted, unprecedented in any of his confirmed sources; therefore we must assume that Laȝamon either invented the episode or adapted it from another source.

François Le Saux, in her examination of the *Brut*'s sources, attributes the scene, and indeed most revisions of the character, to Laȝamon's having read Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini* (*Poem* 110-116). Her arguments on this matter are sound and I agree that there is some indication that Laȝamon might have consulted the *Vita Merlini* to fill out the portrayal of one his most important characters.

As others have noted, including Wickham-Crowley, Laȝamon's description of Merlin's seizure is quite akin to "contemporary accounts of Welsh seers" (115). One of those accounts is that given by Laȝamon's contemporary, Gerald of Wales:²⁶

Among the Welsh there are certain individuals called 'awenyddion' who behave as if they are possessed by devils. You will not find them anywhere else. When you consult them about some problem, they immediately go into a trance and lose control of their senses, as if they are possessed... Words stream from their mouths, incoherently and apparently meaningless and without any sense at all, but all the same well expressed: and if you listen carefully to what they say you will receive the solution to your problem. When it is all over they will recover from their trance, as if they were ordinary people waking from a heavy sleep, but you have to give them a good shake before they regain control of themselves... They seem to receive this gift of divination through visions which they see in their dreams. (*Description* 246-247)

Here, as in Laȝamon's description of Merlin, the poet-prophet appears to separate from his conscious mind and be spoken *through* and there is an intrinsic association with sleep and dreams (*Merlin gon to slume swulc he wolde slæpen*).

Yet, despite Gerald's claim that "you will only rarely find soothsayers of this sort among peoples other than the Britons, and, of course, the Trojans, from whom they

²⁶ Parts of this same report are reproduced by Wickham-Crowley at length concerning the same subject (Laȝamon's source for Merlin's seizure) but are not commented on (116).

descend,” mantic seizures, visionary dreams, and prophetic visions are far from exclusive to the Welsh tradition. Though commentators on *Lazamon* have widely discussed his “Englishness” and his “Saxon heritage” in addition to the potential inspirations for the prophetic element to his history,²⁷ I am aware of none who have considered his “Saxon heritage” to be a potential inspiration for the prophetic element in his story. Considering the vast amount of prophetic material in Anglo-Saxon literature and *Lazamon*’s obvious interest in the subject, a more thorough investigation into the potential English sources for *Lazamon*’s prophetic element is needed.

One potential source for prophetic material might be found in *Lazamon*’s English predecessor in the practice of historiography, Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*. Also, if we trust his prologue, *Lazamon* consulted “*þa Englisca boc þa makede Seint Beda*,” which is clearly a reference to the anonymous Anglo-Saxon translation of Bede’s text. Though the Anglo-Saxon Ecclesiastical History pales in poetic artistry to other Anglo-Saxon prophetic works, such as *Daniel*, *Exodus*, or *The Dream of the Rood*, it is one of the few works we have that contains descriptions of *how* prophets gave their prophecies. This, of course, would be of obvious interest to a poet writing on such a subject, such as *Lazamon*.²⁸

²⁷ Sir Frederic Madden, François Le Saux, Henry Pilch, Daniel Donahue, and James Noble, to name a few.

²⁸ *Lazamon*’s degree of exposure to this text or the Latin original is questionable, even doubtful according to Le Saux, and I find her arguments well reasoned (*Poem* 15-17). Ultimately, however, I find it difficult to believe, considering *Lazamon*’s interest in Anglo-Saxon warfare, history, prophecy, not to mention his poetics and lexicon, that he would not have sought out the prophetic texts of his ancestors, especially Bede. His lack of consistent use of this source might be better explained as political or philosophical differences with Bede, or a lack of opportunity for use due to manuscript access. Regardless, for the present purpose, his mention of Bede and his language and poetry

The contents of the prophecies in the Anglo-Saxon Bede are, typically, beautiful but highly didactic and apolitical Christian prose, much different from Lazamon's Merlin indeed. However, the prophets of the text reveal striking similarities to Merlin, at least in terms of the vatic 'process.' The standard structure for the production of vatic lore in Bede's history, of which there are at least seven occurrences, typically involves a sudden violent illness followed by apocalyptic dreams or visions, similar to the passage concerning Merlin above.

A typical example of such an episode, and one which would have likely piqued Lazamon's interest since it involves a Mercian prophet,²⁹ can be found in the fifth book of the text. Here Bede recounts the story of a layman serving under King Cænredes who was overly enthusiastic for "*weorldlicra dæda*." Though the king tells him he should repent of his sins, the man refuses until:

*wæs he gehrinen 7 gestonden sœamninga mid untrumnesse: 7 sona in bæd gefeol, 7 grymme sar ongon þrowian... Mid ðy seo adl swiðe woex 7 hefegade, eft se cyng ineode to him hiene to niosianne 7 to lærenue. Ða cleopode he sona earmlicre stæfne: Hwæt woldes ðu oðþe to hwon come ðu hider?... Ne wede ic: ah ða wyrrestan ingewitnesse me ic geseo 7 fore minum eagum hæbbe.*³⁰ (Bede 438, 3-20)

The vision, one of demons showing the man his evil deeds written in a book, follows, and then the man promptly exits mortality, assumedly to join his impish visitors. Though the

imply his awareness of a historical and prophetic tradition in Anglo-Saxon literature, of which Bede is just an example.

²⁹ The Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia covers much of the geographical boundaries of the March and Lazamon's native Worcestershire.

³⁰ [he was suddenly seized and struck by sickness; quickly he fell upon the bed and underwent violent throws... When the illness grew much and more grave, the king went to him again to visit and warn him. Then at once he said in a miserable voice: "What wouldst thou? or why come thou hither? I am not mad: but the worst consciousness I see and have before my eyes]

vision itself has little correlation with Merlin's prophecy, other than that it involves the foreshadowing of future events, the *untrumnesse* and *grymme sar... þrowian* the Mercian prophet endures before speaking, his prophecy has strong parallels with Merlin's quaking and writhing sickness noted above.

Considering the aforementioned examples, I think we can safely assume that *Lazamon* sought out supplementary descriptions of 'real' prophets to give his own description a more realistic edge. Furthermore, his description has strong correlations with various source texts concerning specifically Welsh prophets on one-hand and source texts concerning specifically English prophets on the other.³¹ The implications of this are, potentially, far reaching: *Lazamon* is reshaping Merlin from Wace's mere magician into a prophet whose character and actions strongly coincide with contemporary descriptions of both the Welsh and English prophets. A listener or reader familiar with such happenings on either the Welsh or English side would then give more credence to *Lazamon*'s history and Merlin's prophecies—along with their political agendas.

Other critics, especially Wickham-Crowley and Jeff Rider, have also seen Merlin as a supremely important figure in *Lazamon*'s poem. Wickham-Crowley's *Writing the Future: Lazamon's Prophetic History* is, indeed, the first thorough investigation of the function of prophecy in the poem and, also, Merlin's link to *Lazamon*'s locality and his correlations with Welsh *awenyddion*. Utilizing anthropological criticism, Wickham-Crowley does a laudable job "read[ing] history the way *Lazamon* would" (*Future* 13). Although I concur with a great deal of Wickham-Crowley's arguments throughout her

³¹ There are, indeed, further correlations between *Lazamon*'s presentation of Merlin and Bede's prophets. The story of Cuðbryht, a prophetic hermit sought out by other hermits and kings is of particular interest here (IV. 28-30).

text, her presentation of Merlin as “an embellished Christian prophet” who is “as divinely inspired as any in Scripture,” presents problems with some of the most intrinsic aspects of Merlin’s character (*Future* 135, 129). Furthermore, ascribing the “salvational and providential” model of reading history to *Lazamon* (*Future* 13), which sees “the Norman Conquest as a divine punishment of the English for their past misdeeds” (Rider 29), as both of these authors do, has strong inconsistencies with *Lazamon*’s philosophical and political motivations.

Part of the reason Merlin has, justly, attracted the attention of these scholars lies in the supreme degree of importance *Lazamon*’s kings place on him and their inability to immediately access him compared to previous versions. For Wickham-Crowley, part of this importance derives from Merlin’s characteristic similarity to Welsh hermits who, she explains, were considerably important in Wales and its borders (105, 116-117). Indeed, although she draws some notable parallels between 12th century hermetic monks and Merlin (he lives in the woods, he is sought out by other hermits, etc.), it is not immediately clear why this is a more preferable reading to the one she provides from Jan Ziolkowski, of Merlin as he is presented in Welsh literature and Geoffrey’s *Vita Merlini*:

One part a wild man engaged in shamanlike practices that were widespread in the pre-Christian era, one part a political prophet of a type still found in Wales when Geoffrey wrote, and one part a Christian prophet combining traits of Old Testament prophets and Christian saints. (Ziolkowski 154, qtd in Wickham-Crowley 110)

The first part of Merlin that Ziolkowski refers to is derived from the *Myrddin* of Welsh poems like *Yr Afallennau*, and *Ymddiddan Myrddin a Theliesin*, who, after the battle of *Arfderydd* (c. 573 AD), has gone mad and lives in the woods of Calidonia.

Gerald of Wales also describes this portion of the trichotomous Myrddin as such: “He is also called Silvester [*Silvestrem*], because once when he was fighting he looked up into the air and saw a terrible monster. He went mad as a result and fled to the forest where he passed the remainder of his life as a wild man of the woods” (*Journey* 192-193). Lazamon reinforces this connection of his Merlin to the untamed wildness by altering the nature of the British kings’ access to Merlin and the locations where they find him. This is especially the case after Uther becomes infatuated with Ygerne and seeks out Merlin for help.

Wace tells us that when Uther needs Merlin, he simply commands him to come: “*Li reis, par le conseil Ulfyn/ Fist mander e venir Merlin/ Tut li ad sun busuin mustre*” (8681-3).³² Wace’s Merlin requires little searching out; he is at the beck and call of the king—as a good servant should be. Lazamon’s Merlin, however, has a more independent and superior role. Ulfyn, here, also advises Uther to seek out Merlin, but the process is significantly more complicated. First Uther has to find the “*ærmite wel idon*” who swore to Ulfyn he knew Merlin’s location and “*whar he ælche nihte rested vnder lufte*” (9363-65). Then, Ulfyn has to bribe the hermit with land in order for him to bring Merlin to Uther. The hermit gladly seeks out Merlin, but the process is much more labor intensive than in Wace: “*Ʒe ærmite gon wende in þene west ænde, / to ane wilderne, to ane wude muchele / þer he iwuned hafde wel feole wintre, / and Merlin swiðe ofte þerinne sohte. / Sone þe armite com in þa ifunde he Mærlin / vnder ane treo stonden and sære him gon*

³² [The king, upon Ulfyn’s counsel, commanded Merlin to come and reveal all he needed]

longen” (9378-9383).³³ It is at this point that Merlin reveals his foreknowledge of the hermit’s intentions and a prophecy of the birth and greatness of Arthur.

Much like Old and New Testament prophets, along with prophets of other religions, Myrddin is intimately associated with the natural world. There seems to be a basic human tendency to associate significant sweeping social and cultural change with ‘wilderness’ and those who ‘live in the wild’—*silvestrem*. Lazamon’s presentation of Merlin here adds, first of all, depth and complexity to his relationship with the kings; he is not their suppliant magician and advisor but a sagacious ‘wild man’ whose location is enigmatic. Secondly, this further associates Merlin with his Welsh origins in that he more accurately resembles the Myrddin of folklore, thus educing an important cultural more for his audience members who are of Welsh descent.

Yet, as we have seen, associating significant social and cultural change with ‘wild men’ is not only a Welsh cultural more, but has very intriguing parallels with what would have been very local legends for Lazamon’s audience: the Mercian *silvatici* who continued to rebel against their Norman colonizers after the Conquest. As has been discussed, multiple sources indicate that the resistance to the Norman invaders after Hastings continued and was especially fierce on the border regions, where it was most often conducted by English rebels living in the wilderness, allied with the Welsh aristocracy.

One of the first descriptions of these *silvatici* is given by Oderic Vitalis in his overview of the post-Conquest Norman resistance movement: “*Seditiosi siluas, paludes*

³³ [The hermit went to the West End, to a wilderness, to a great forest where he had lived very many winters and had sought Merlin very often in there. Immediately the hermit came in and he found Merlin standing under a tree eagerly expecting him]

æstuaria et urbes aliquot in munimentis habent.... Plures in tabernaculis morabantur, in domibus ne mollescerent requiescere dedignabantur unde quidam eorum a Normannis silvatici cognominabantur” (IV.ii.184-85).³⁴ The Mercian, Eadric the Wild (*Eadric Silvaticus*), is one of the more important of these figures, and, as a fierce and resilient military rebel who allied himself to the Welsh kings Bleddyn and Rhiwallon, he is an intriguing study on the border culture and resistance that, I argue, informs Lazamon’s audience. Similarly, as a fierce and independent ‘wild man’ who attempts to engender sweeping cultural change and resistance to Normandy, he also serves as a great predecessor to Lazamon’s Merlin.

Though Lazamon never mentions Eadric specifically, or any other of the English resistance movement for that matter, there is evidence that their actions inspired folk legends among the conquered populace on the island. In her article on Eadric, Susan Reynolds suggests that the political and social effects of the *silvatici* are likely widespread, including instigating popularity for other outlaws, such as Robin Hood. Though she admits that Robin Hood likely evolved from real events in the early 13th century, she says that they probably “gained some of their unusual force from association with older stories of heroes who had once resisted foreign invaders” (104). I suggest that Lazamon is drawing upon that cultural force instigated by the *silvatici*, like Eadric, to inspire anti-Norman sentiment among the Mercian descendants of Eadric while, simultaneously, artistically refiguring the poet-prophet to more closely resemble the anti-colonial Myrddin of Welsh folklore.

³⁴ [These seditious persons had fortifications in woods, marshes, and estuaries... Many dwelt in tents, disdaining to rest in houses lest they become gentle/effeminate. For this they were named ‘wild men’ by the Normans.]

Wickham-Crowley's suggestion of Welsh hermits as a potential inspiration for Lazamon's Merlin should not be ignored, however. Lazamon's audience would, of course, have been very vigorously Christian, and his resemblance to persons of a widely-respected Christian occupation would have helped to engender the cultural unification Lazamon seeks.

However, medieval folk-Christianity of the British Isles more often than not was not the orthodox institution that we think of it today. It was still a religion in transition and retained many elements of pre-Christian Germanic and Celtic paganism. This, as well, is represented in Lazamon's Merlin. Though there are certainly Christian characteristics to Merlin, many of which Lazamon has introduced and Wickham Crowley has recognized,³⁵ Lazamon simultaneously introduces characteristics which recreate Merlin as a vicious and powerful prophet-poet of Germanic and Celtic pagan origin.

These are traits which would have been recognizable to Lazamon's contemporary audience, of course, but they are also interestingly noticed by characters within the poem. Consider, for instance, Uther's earlier reaction to the previously-mentioned Merlin prophecy (the one given after his *awakien* and *quakien*) and his potency as an advisor.³⁶ After Uther has won the battle against the Irish and shoved his sword down Pascent's throat ("*swulc mete him wes uncuð*"), he becomes king and Merlin leaves him:

*Merlin him ætwende, nuste he nauere whidere,
No nauere a worlde-riche to whan he bicom.
Wa wes þan kinge swa wes al his duzeðe,
And alle his hird-men þereuore murnende weoren.*

³⁵ Or, more accurately, *reintroduced*, since the Merlin of the *Vita Merlini* definitely has some Christian features, courtesy of Geoffrey.

³⁶ Pre- and post-Conquest poets, both *scop* and *bardd*, famously served to advise the king on prophetic matters; though they eventually mold into the model provided by the French courtier poets.

*De king lette riden wided and siden;
 He bad gold and gersume ælche farinde gume,
 Whaswa mihte finde Merlin an londe.
 Perto he læde muchel lof, ah ne herde he him nawhit of.
 Ða biðohte Vther whæt Mærlin him sæde ær,
 In þan here-zeonge inne Walisc londe
 Per heo isezen þene drake, ælches wurmes vnimake;
 And he þohte of þan tacnen þe Merlin him tahte.
 Ðe king wes swiðe særi and sorhful an heorte
**For ne les he næuere leouere mon seoððen he wes an liuen,
 Neouere nenne oðer, ne Aurilie his broðer.**
 Ðe king lette wurchen tweien imaken tweien guldene draken,
Al for Mærlines luue, swa swiðe he wilnede his cume...
 Nu wes Vther god king –ah of Merlin nefde he na þing.³⁷ (Lazamon 9070-9098,
 my emphasis)*

This is, as is typical in passages concerning Merlin, a strong departure from Wace. Wace notes neither the disappearance nor search for Merlin and though he does mention, following Geoffrey, that Uther had the dragon standards made, he attributes different motivations for Uther: *Pur enur e pur remembrance/ Del dragon ki fist demustrance/ Que pruz esteit e reis sereit,/ E eirs bien conqueranz avreit* (8393-8396).³⁸ Uther's memorial has shifted from the *prophecy* in Wace (and primarily as a means of self-aggrandizement) to the *prophetic person* in Lazamon.

I am not familiar with any situation in medieval or modern Christian practices where it would be acceptable to build golden idols to supplicate the return of a prophet

³⁷ [Merlin went away from him, he never knew where, nor did he know what became of him in the world. Woe was upon the king as well as his retinue, and all his household were in mourning over it. The king sent riders far and wide; he offered gold and treasure to all travelling men, whoso might find Merlin in the land. To that he dedicated a great price, but he heard not a whit of him. Then Uther thought of what Merlin said to him before, in the journey to the Welsh land where they saw the dragon, unfathomable serpents; and he thought of the token that Merlin had taught him. The king was very sore and sorrowful at heart **For he never lost a more beloved man since he was alive; nor any other, not even Aurilien, his brother.** The king had twin works made, twin dragons, **all for Merlin's love**, so strongly he yearned for his return.]

³⁸ [For honor and for the remembrance of the dragon which signified his worth and that he would be king and would have great conquerors as heirs]

who provides political advantages; in fact, I would wager a guess that it would probably be considered resurgent polytheism or, at the very least, idolatry. Uther's 'love' for Merlin, frankly, is suggestive of Germanic and Celtic paganism.³⁹ Though, following Wace for the most part, he adds that one of the banners is dedicated to the Winchester Church to accompany the holy relics, the fact remains that it was originally fashioned to honor a secular, political prophet who was fathered by an incubus.⁴⁰

Describing Merlin as primarily a Christian prophet (Wickham-Crowley *Future* 13) who is the "linchpin" for a Providential history (Rider 2), requires one to skirt the issue of Merlin's affinity for violence and tribal retribution, and also this resemblance to Germanic and Celtic paganism. Though I agree that *Lazamon uses* Christianity much more so than his predecessors, I feel he uses it in much the same way he uses violence, tribal law, and remnant paganism—to engender an anti-colonial political unification between the Welsh and English in the March to justify violent retribution against their Norman overlords.

Though it is certainly not the most violent scene in the text, I would like to examine Merlin's first speaking part in the poem. *Lazamon*, much like Shakespeare in his presentation of Hamlet, or Dante in his presentation of Beatrice, foreshadows what we should expect of Merlin in his speaking debut. Also, just as with Hamlet and Beatrice, we

³⁹ Perhaps *Lazamon* is attempting to cast Merlin as a descendent of druids who had great authority over Celtic kings (Koch 24-26) or the Anglo-Saxon *scops* who held strong influence over kings.

⁴⁰ It should also be noted that early medieval peoples of the British Isles tended to take their Christianity with a dose of heathenism anyway, so the interlacing of explicitly pagan ritual in an explicitly Christian locale (or vice-versa) is far from aberrant from contemporary religious practice in *Lazamon's* day.

are still taken aback by the intensity of emotion portrayed by their debut, an intensity which coats their characters for the remaining portions of their respective works.

After the infamous “Night of the Saxons,” when the Saxons, whom King Vortiger had invited to settle in Britain against the wishes of the Britons, murder hundreds of British nobles, Vortiger flees into Wales to hide and regroup. However, the stronghold that Vortiger attempts to build collapses every night, even though he has thousands of stonemasons working on the tower. The king consults his *witien* (counselors), particularly Ioram, a character Laȝamon has introduced to the text, who tells Vortigern that if he mingles the blood of a fatherless male child with lime then the wall will hold for all time. Merlin, who was spawned by an incubus and not a man, as we learn, is then summoned before the king for this purpose and immediately demands to know the king’s will (*Brut* 7522-7903). Then, in an aspect of the story completely new to Laȝamon, Merlin realizes that Ioram, his “*fulle ifa*,” has said this, and he makes a strange demand of the king:⁴¹

*Let cumen biuoren Iorem þine witie
and alle his iuere forðrihtes here
þa þeos lesinge talden þan kinge;
and ȝif ich þe sugge soðe mine worde
of þine walle and whi he adun falleð,
and mid soðe hit bitelle þat heore talen sinde lese,
ȝef me heore hæfden... (7914-20)⁴²*

He then reveals to the king the two dragons who live in a pool beneath the castle wall and fight every night, tearing down the walls. With each point of prophecy against Ioram, Merlin figuratively flexes his vatic muscle and reminds the king of his gory request:

⁴¹ Wace notes some antagonistic dialogue between Merlin and the unnamed *devins*, but Laȝamon, characteristically, expands on the dialogue, introduces Ioram, and Merlin’s request for their severed heads (7473-7520).

⁴² [Let Ioram your soothsayer, who told these lies to the king, come before you with all his associates; and if I tell you truly why your wall falls down and with truth it is told that their tales are false, give me their heads...]

“*King, hald me forward*” (7931, 7936, 7950).⁴³ Eventually, Merlin’s prophecies are proven true and Lazamon tells us that Vortigern holds to his promise and “*his hæfed him binam*” (7979).⁴⁴

Though commentators have noted the presence of this particular element of the story, there has been no attempt to explain Merlin’s requests for the severed heads of Ioram and his followers.⁴⁵ Lazamon, also unfortunately, does not inform us as to exactly what Merlin plans to *do* with these severed heads, but my assumption is that, whatever it is, the church probably would not have endorsed it. Indeed, Scott Pincikowski has shown that there was a growing clerical and social critique of these elements of the Germanic heroic tradition—unrestrained violence and the collection of enemy body parts—which manifests itself in the poems of Lazamon’s Middle High German contemporaries (106-110).⁴⁶ Yet, as Pincikowski points out and Lazamon demonstrates, these elements of the Germanic heroic tradition were not easy to efface, precisely because they were so ingrained in the perception of the German/Saxon hero (100-106).

Let us not forget how the most famous of heroes whose deeds are recorded in Anglo-Saxon, Beowulf, also collected the mutilated body parts of enemies, including heads. Among other instances, the poet notes that after Beowulf decapitates Grendel and

⁴³ [King, remember what you’ve promised me]

⁴⁴ [He took his head from him {Ioram}]

⁴⁵ Robert Fletcher mentions the additions twice without comment (152, 159). Barron and Weinberg note the additional material and comment that Lazamon is “personalising the conflict between Good and Evil, white magic and black, in terms of the enmity between him and Merlin” (“Commentary” 869 n. 411). Although I agree, I feel there is more explanation needed here; they do not comment on the potential Celtic or Germanic allusions nor attempt to explain why Merlin requests the heads.

⁴⁶ Similarly, specifically in the Anglo-Saxon field, James Earl has shown in reference to gratuitous violence that although “Anglo-Saxons enjoy a certain well-deserved reputation” there is also a growing and “unexpected ambivalence” towards violence, manifested in the works of Ælfric, among others (125-126).

triumphantly hauls the head out of the water (“*sælaca gefeah*” [delighted with his sea-prize]) and into Heorot, he furnishes it as a gift to Hrothgar: “*Hwaet, we þe þas sælac, sunu Healfdenes, leod Scyldinga, lustum brohton tîres to tacne, þe þu her to locast*” (1647-54 my emphasis).⁴⁷ Grendel’s decapitated head betokens the glory of the warrior and empowers the entrapped gaze of the king and community.⁴⁸

Severed heads serve important cultural functions not only for Lázamon’s ancestors, the Saxons, but also for the forbearers of Lázamon’s bilingual Welsh and mixed Anglo-Welsh audience.⁴⁹ In Welsh literature and culture, decapitated heads serve a similar ennobling and adulatory function for warriors. Indeed, the collection of decapitated enemy heads has been perceived as an intrinsic aspect of Celtic culture throughout its recorded history.⁵⁰

Though British warriors often take the head of the enemy, there is also an interesting departure from the Anglo-Saxon culture in that the heads of family members and leaders can also serve to pique the warrior to action and adoration, even when the warrior did not take the head himself.

This is the case for Peredur in the Middle Welsh romance *Historia Peredur vab Efrawg*. On his way to King Arthur’s court, Peredur by chance encounters his mother’s lame brother, like Chrétien de Troyes’ Fisher King, who offers to train him to become a

⁴⁷ [Listen, son of Healfdenes and ruler of the Scyldings, we have blithely brought to you this sea-prize, here for you to gaze upon—it **symbolizes glory**]

⁴⁸ A companion piece to *Beowulf* in the Nowell Codex, *Judith*, also famously presents a decapitation and community inspiration as a result.

⁴⁹ Davies notes the cultural assimilation in the frontier regions like Lázamon’s contained many bilingual speakers and amateur interpreters (*Age* 103).

⁵⁰ I refer, primarily, to the Classical authors’ descriptions of Celts both on the continent and the British Isles. These have been conveniently portioned off in pertinent sections and translated in John Koch and John Carey’s *The Celtic Heroic Age* (5-38).

great knight. After Peredur demonstrates his swordsmanship, his uncle tells him: “*Yn y teyrnas goreu dyn a lad a chledyf wyt,*”⁵¹ and indicates that he will help him to achieve the rest of his strength: “*Deuparth dy dewred ar gefeist, a’r trayan yssyd heb gahal, a gwedy keffych gwbyl ny bydy wrth neb.*”⁵² Though the uncle does not indicate precisely *how* he will help Peredur achieve his strength, immediately after this conversation, two maidens enter with a decapitated head on a salver (“Peredur” 19-20).

The author encourages us to connect the warrior’s progression with looking upon a decapitated head. Indeed, though at the time the head is ineffective in spurring the knight’s development, when Peredur finds out that the head belonged to his cousin, Peredur sends for Arthur and his war band to demolish the perpetrators, the witches of Caer Loyw, whom he is ‘destined to kill’: “*tyghet eu llad*” (“Peredur” 70). Like the *san graal* that will provoke multiple quests and progressions in the French Romance, the severed head of Peredur’s cousin incites Peredur to achieve his destiny.

It is not coincidental, then, that destiny and violent retribution are intimately connected in Merlin’s collection of Ioram and his followers’ heads. When he first learns of Ioram’s lies, he tells us in no uncertain terms, “*[Ioram] is mi fulle ifa... ich wes iscaepen him to bone*” [Ioram is my greatest enemy... I am destined to destroy him]; and, indeed, he does so in a very gruesome, but culturally significant, manner (*Brut* 7912-13).

Though we are not made privy to *how* Merlin uses the heads of Ioram and his followers, I think in light of these connections we can understand *why* Merlin takes them.

⁵¹ [In the land, you are the best man that strikes with sword]

⁵² [Two parts of your courage you have gained, a third is yet grasped, after you have obtained all of it there will nobody compared to you.]

I propose that Pincikowski's explanation for why Mabonagrín of Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* decides to keep the heads of his enemies is equally applicable to Merlin:

The heads possess a totemic quality; they embody Mabonagrín's prowess as a knight and act as a warning to other knights who come to challenge him. The medieval belief that one of the locations for the soul was in the head may indicate that Mabonagrín was aware of the importance of the head and the power it possesses. (108)

These 'prizes,' the heads of Ioram and his followers, encapsulate the glory of their taker and invigorate those who gaze upon them—both of which are essential functions for a warrior society, such as the one inherited by Lazamon's English and Welsh audience.

Lazamon educes English and Welsh cultural mores in more complex ways than head collecting, however. Not only does he change and introduce new punishments, as in the previous example, but he expands and redirects the circumstances surrounding particular punishments already in his source text to more creatively elicit English and Welsh cultural signifiers.

For example, after satisfying Merlin's request for the severed heads, Vortigern asks Merlin to tell him about his future. Merlin's response is an intense diatribe and personal condemnation of the king's crimes, emphasizing certain elements of the crime which have significant ramifications in traditional English and Welsh tribal law:

“King, king *bisiȝ þe!* Sorȝen þe bið ȝeueðe
of Constantines cunne –**his bern þu aqualdest.**
þu lettest slæn Constanȝ, **þe wes king a þis lond;**
þine Peohtes hine ladliche biswiken
þeruore þu ibidest alre baluwene mæst.
Seoððen þu tuȝen uuenon þe uncuðe leoden,
Saxes to londe –þeruore þu wurðest to sconde.
Nu beoð of Brutaine beornes ariued,
Hit his Aurilien and Vther –nu þu ært þærof war!
Heo cumeð tomærȝen fuliwis i þis lond at Tottenæs-
Ich do þe wel to witene— mid seouen hundred scipene
And un heo inne sæ seilieð biliue.

Pu hauest **heom** uchel uuel idon, and nu **pu** most þat lað onfon. (*Brut* 8009-8021, emphasis mine)⁵³

Some critics have attested that this speech might be construed as representing ‘divine’ judgment on Vortigern for his transgressions coming through the mouth of Merlin (Faletra 7-8). I fail to see the providential aspect in Merlin’s judgment on Vortigern, however. Indeed, Lazamon explicitly removes the multiple references to Vortigern’s sin present in Wace’s version of the passage (“*ton mal*” [your evil/sin] 7557, 58, 59), and instead emphasizes the familial and personal aspects of the crime, using some version of the second person singular pronoun twenty-four times in the diatribe (8007-8025).

The last line of the quoted passage seems straightforward enough (8021); Vortigern is personally to blame for his offences against *Constantines cunne* and not, necessarily, for his offences against God. Precisely because Vortigern has committed the greatest of crimes, the murder of a king (*þe wes king a þis lond*) and the betrayal of his people, he is to be punished by the family members of the deceased (*his bern þu aqualdest*). Both Anglo-Saxon and Welsh law permitted violent retribution by the family

⁵³ [King, King, bestir yourself! Sorrow will be given to you by Constantine’s kin— **you killed his son**. You let Constans, **king of this land**, be killed; your Picts despicably deceived him—therefore you shall bide the worst of tortures. Then you allowed foreign people to place over you—Saxons in this land! –for that you are worthy of shame. Now from Brittany the sons have arrived, it is Aurilien and Uther –now you are aware of it! They come tomorrow most certainly into this land at Totnes with seven hundred ships — I have prophesied well to you. **You** have done **them** much wrong and now **you** must accept the consequences.] Emphasis mine. A prophecy narrating similar, though not identical, events does occur in Wace (7548-7582), but the open disgust present in the speech and the direct personal blame placed on Vortigern by Merlin are thoroughly Lazamon’s inventions.

of the deceased in cases such as this. The consequences for Vortigern are, we find out later, being burned alive by Uther and Aurilien in his precious tower (8076-8081).⁵⁴

In the aforementioned scenes, both Merlin and the sons of Constantine have been dishonored—Merlin by Ioram and the sons of Constantine by Vortigern. These victims must avenge their dishonor by a *personal violent retribution* of the wrongs done to them. Though Lazamon is certainly not denying God’s role in shaping history and punishing people, his concentration is on the private retribution in accordance with the inherited customs of both the Anglo-Saxon and Welsh members of his audience. As we see with Merlin’s collection of the heads of Ioram and his followers, the style of retribution is evocative of those inherited mores as well. The emphasis Lazamon places here and elsewhere in the story on culturally significant graphic violence as the correct and justified means of righting wrongs is as much a political statement as his choice to include the prophecies of Merlin, which are the subject of our next discussion.

Though Merlin is as much a pagan prophet as he is a Christian one, as has been discussed, he has some strong correlations with the Biblical prophets he resembles. Much like Isaiah and John the Baptist after him, he flourishes on the fringes of society, *in deserto*, and attempts to usher in a widespread and revolutionary social change through the advent of a messianic figure. However similar their origins are in the anthropological sense, as are those of Gilgamesh and Nebuchadnezzar, their manifestations are ultimately

⁵⁴ The necessity of the family to exact compensation as either the *wergild*, *galanas*, or revenge killing for a murder is pertinent to both Anglo-Saxon tribal laws and the Welsh laws. See Wendy Davies (*Early* 135-7) and Seebohm (470-476). R.R. Davies notes the same and suggests that elements of *galanas* and punishment were “possibly influenced by Anglo-Saxon practice.” Interestingly, Davies also points out that the burning of the perpetrators’ houses was a popular manner of revenge (124). Lazamon may very well have known of this practice living as close as he did to the Marches.

different in tone and purpose. John is ultimately ushering in Jesus, and his message is primarily one of peace and his figuration is that of his message. Merlin, however, and Lazamon through him, call for a political revolution grounded in the violent, tribal cultural mores he and his messiah, Arthur, personify.

Chapter 2) Lazamon's Merlin Prophecies

“For [the Poet] not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time. Not that I assert poets to be prophets in the gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the form as surely as they foreknow the spirit of events: such is the pretence of superstition, which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy, rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry.”

- Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry” (677)

To speak of the character of Merlin, however interesting he may be, without regard to his message, would be an egregious fault. For what is a prophet without a prophecy? To revise a quote from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the characteristics of Merlin are ‘but the trappings and suits’ of a deeper discord, a political message more reactionary and extreme than any of Lazamon's contemporaries and most of his predecessors and descendents.

This message, as seen in Merlin's various prophecies throughout the poem, is derived from three distinct sources and, thus, may be divided into three categories: 1) Prophecies concerning events which happen in the later portions of the poem (for instance, the prophecy of Vortigern's death discussed above in the previous section), 2) Prophecies not found in Wace which indicate a direct influence from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, particularly the seventh book, *Prophetias Merlini*,⁵⁵ and 3) Prophecies not found in Wace with no direct correlations to Geoffrey's works which appear to derive from Lazamon's artistic and political motives. It is the

⁵⁵ Though Lazamon does not mention the *Historia* as a source, as he does the *Roman* in his prologue, multiple connections between the two works betray a direct influence if only through limited textual access. His access to the *Prophetias Merlini* (possibly independently from the rest of the poem) is generally accepted among critics. For a fuller discussion see Le Saux (*Poem* 94-110).

latter two of these divisions that have attracted the most critical interest and are also the topic of this chapter. I argue that Lazamon uses the prophecies, both those he appropriates from Geoffrey and those he invents, to further his goals of anti-Norman cultural unification in the March.

Much of the very warranted attention garnered by these prophecies may be attributed to a combination of their total absence in Wace and the great deal of emphasis that Lazamon places on them throughout his poem. Though there are multiple allusions to the prophecies throughout the Brut, in seven sections Lazamon deviates significantly from Wace to attribute vatic lore to Merlin.⁵⁶ As pointed out by Le Saux (117) all of these prophecies, except, of course, those he invents, are derived from three sections of the *Prophetias Merlini*: Arthur's dominance over Rome (*Historia* VII.39-43), Arthur as the 'boar of commerce' (*Historia* VII.127-131), and the destruction of Winchester (*Historia* 165-171). Lazamon's knowledge of the *Prophetias Merlini* is nothing unusual, considering their extreme proliferation in the Middle Ages, but his decision to include them (and the manner in which he does so) speaks volumes about his political motivations.

For, although the *Historia* in general and the *Prophetias Merlini* in particular were very popular for *most* in the Middle Ages, they were not particularly popular, as has consistently been noted by Jean Blacker, with the Norman rulers of Britain in 12th and 13th centuries. Though the prophecies in the *Historia* are generally vague and cryptic, Blacker notes that interpretations of them after Geoffrey's writing were decidedly not in favor of the Normans (39).

⁵⁶ (*Brut* 8026-41; 9403-17; 11489-517, 13526-13538, 13964-70, 14197-202, 14288-97).

Though Blacker concentrates on what is generally considered an early interpolation on Geoffrey's work and probably not Geoffrey's own, the *Vae tibi, Neustria, calamitatem intemptat* prophecy,⁵⁷ much of the rest of Geoffrey's Merlin prophecies are tinged with political reticence. Statements like "*enim utramque insulam amittet Neustria et pristina dignitate*" provided commentators who had an anti-colonial political agenda, such as John of Cornwall,⁵⁸ with a wealth of potential statements to gloss with seditious rhetoric (Blacker 41-44).

Merlin's prophecies did not need to be glossed in order to pose a political threat, however. Indeed, Wace refuses to translate the prophecies because he claims not to understand them. In the place in the poem where the prophecies would occur, Wace notes: "*Dunc dist Merlin les prophecies/ Que vus avez, ço crei, oïes,/ Des reis ki a venir esteient,/ Ki la terre tenir deveient./ Ne vuil sun livre translater/ Quant jo nel sai interpreter;/ Nule rien dire nen vuldreie/ Que si ne fust cum jo dirreie*" (7535-7542).⁵⁹ Blacker rightly recognizes that Wace is ardently conscious of his position in the Norman court, a position which would have been tenuous at best were he to have interpreted or even translated those prophecies (44-45).

It would seem, at first glance anyway, that Laȝamon is following suit with Wace by not including the prophecies where they occur in Geoffrey's text—that is, after

⁵⁷ [Woe unto you, Normandy, (it) threatens calamity...] Blacker does foreground the issue that this is likely a later interpolation on Geoffrey's text (39). The text and translation are from Blacker's article (40).

⁵⁸ [Normandy will indeed lose the islands on both sides, and will be stripped of her former merit] (Geoffrey 106-107).

⁵⁹ [Then Merlin said the prophecies which you have, as I believe, heard of the kings who were to come, who were to take the land. I do not want to translate his book when I do not know how to interpret it. I do not wish to say anything in case it does not happen as I would say].

Vortigern has seen the fight between the two dragons and requested to be informed of the significance of the event (*Brut* 7988-8004). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Merlin does not give the prophecies here but instead offers a scathing personal indictment of Vortigern, seeming to omit the prophecies altogether without even an authorial note on their absence. Indeed, although her article is not directly concerned with the *Brut*, Blacker offers “imitation [of Wace]” as a potential explanation for Lazamon’s neglect of the prophecies at this point (36). Following this line of reasoning, we must assume that Lazamon did not include the prophecies at this point in the text as the result of thoughtless mimicry rather than a calculated political stratagem: Wace did not include them and, therefore, as his translator, neither did Lazamon.

However, Lazamon *does* include portions of the prophecies after this scene, and they are certainly not slavish renderings of Geoffrey into English or vague glosses on even vaguer portions of the text. Instead he rewrites important portions of the prophecies and integrates them seamlessly into the most appropriate portions of the text. Other than this rather sweeping and dismissive aside by Blacker,⁶⁰ there has not been a sufficient explanation of *why* Lazamon integrates the prophecies throughout later portions of the text rather than present them together, as he would have seen in the *Historia*. I propose that his motives combined the political, practical, and artistic spheres.

As has been noted, though the Prophecies seem to have been ‘off-limits’ to politically conscious translators and glossers, the broader historical narratives based on Geoffrey’s *Historia* were quite popular among the nobility and would even be utilized to

⁶⁰ It should be emphasized that this is the only mention of Lazamon in Blacker’s article, and it does not inform her major points, which are well supported, finely argued, and have significantly informed my own arguments.

reinforce the colonialist agenda of the Normans.⁶¹ Therefore, to a suspicious Norman official who probably had only limited familiarity with Laȝamon's archaic English diction,⁶² flipping through the codex to the dragon scene and skimming for evidence of the Prophecies' presence would have been the most efficient method of investigating this version of the *Historia*. Laȝamon, anticipating this, likely saved the prophecies to be integrated into the text at a later juncture.

Also, though there is no doubt that Laȝamon had access to the Prophecies, and probably the *Historia* as a whole at some point, the relatively limited use of either of these works may potentially indicate that Laȝamon did not have *consistent* access to them. Instead he may have read them, remembered or written down especially interesting portions, and then proceeded to use Wace for the remainder of the narrative. Therefore, from a practical standpoint, if he only remembered or wrote down the portions of the prophecies he thought most important, then he could not possibly replicate the intense 270 line vatic diatribe present in the *Historia* and found it more fitting to assimilate the portions of the prophecies he did know elsewhere into the text.

The method by which he does integrate them turns out to be, arguably, more politically and artistically effective than in their original form. Whereas Geoffrey presents the *Prophetia* as a single, segregated and notoriously cryptic book in the narrative that foreshadows events as they happen in the future (both within and outside the text),

⁶¹ For a fuller discussion on Providential history theory, translation, and Laȝamon's complex resistance to this historical trend, see Kenneth Tiller's *Laȝamon's Brut and the Anglo-Norman Vision of History* (39-96).

⁶² Indeed, as evidenced by the numerous glosses on Anglo-Saxon texts by the "Tremulous Hand of Worcester," much of Laȝamon's diction would have proven problematic even for primary English speakers of the period. For more information on the Tremulous Hand, see Christine Franzen's comprehensive study.

Lazamon presents the prophecies *as they occur* in the narrative. This serves both to clarify Geoffrey's vague allusions and also to *legitimate* Merlin and his prophetic gift—including, by consequence, the prophecies Lazamon invents for Merlin.

Though this is the case with all the prophecies, or at least those that concern events that happen within the narrative, it is particularly effective with Merlin's prophecies concerning the downfall of Winchester and the defeat of Rome. As an example, I will concentrate on the shorter of the two prophecies, the one concerning Winchester.

In Arthur's quest to regain his kingdom, he pursues his usurping nephew, Modred, into the town of Winchester. Though Wace notes that Modred retreated into Winchester and then further south (*Roman* 13187-13200), Lazamon adds the following scene to the narrative:

*And Arður Winchestre þa burh bilai wel faste
And al þat moncun oflsoh –þer wes sorȝen inoh!
þa zeonge and þa alde, alle he aqualde.
þa þat folc wes al ded, þa burh al forswelde,
þa lette he mid alle tobreken þa walles alle.
þa wes hit itimed þere þat Merlin seide while:
“Ærm wurðest þu Winchæstre; þæ eorðe þe scal forswalȝe!”
Swa Merlin sæide –þe witeȝe wes mære.⁶³ (*Brut* 14195-14202)*

Though one might assume that there would be some harsh actions by a king so angered, this interpolation on the story presents military violence that is extreme even by medieval standards. It is not just the violence that is a stark departure from Wace, however, but the

⁶³ [And Arthur laid siege to the town of Winchester very strongly and slew all of the people –there was sorrow enough! The young and the old, all of them he killed. When those people were all dead and the burg completely burned, then he ordered all the walls to be demolished completely. Then it had passed there what Merlin once said: “You will be desolate, Winchester; the earth shall swallow you up!” So said Merlin, the prophet was powerful.]

fact that the quote from Merlin is nowhere to be found in Lazamon's French source makes this interpolation significant. It is most certainly taken from Geoffrey's Merlin

Prophecies:

*Excitabitur Daneum nemus et in humanam uocem erupens clamabit "accede, Kambria, et iunge lateri tuo Cornubiam, et dic Guintoniae 'absorbebit te tellus; transfer sedem pastoris ubi baues applicant, et cetera membra caput se quantur; festinat namque dies qua ciues ob scelera peruirii peribunt; candor lanarum nocuit atque tincturae ipsarum diuersitas; uae periurae genti, quia uis inclita propter eam ruet.'"*⁶⁴ (VII.165-171)

Though the only line that Lazamon takes from the passage is the '*absorbebit te tellus*,' which becomes '*þæ eorðe þe scal forswalze*,' I include the surrounding language to demonstrate the contrasts in clarity between the two passages.

Whereas in the *Historia* passage Winchester is told that it will be 'swallowed by the earth' by a talking forest, Lazamon attributes the line directly to Merlin, sparing himself of the attempt to seamlessly integrate an inevitably confusing and embarrassing image. Also conspicuously absent from the Lazamon's version of the prophecy is the attestation by Merlin in Geoffrey's text that the city will be rebuilt by a '*hericius oneratus pomis*' (VII.172). Though I suppose it is possible he wanted to emphasize the destruction of Winchester rather than its eventual rebuilding, I feel Lazamon also probably found it difficult to associate his vicious, prophetic demi-god with an apple-scented architect in the form of a hedgehog.

⁶⁴ [The grove of Dean will arise and in a human voice cry loudly: 'Approach, Cambria, and join to your side Cornwall, and say to Winchester: 'the earth will swallow you, transfer the seat of your shepherd to where your navy is placed, and let all the rest of the members follow the head. For it makes haste to the day when all your citizens will perish for their crimes of perjury. Harm has struck you because of the whiteness and various colors of the wool. Woe to the betraying people, because of whom the famous city shall fall''']

By decontextualizing the line from its surrounding confusion and associating it with a specific event he introduces to the text, Lazamon goes out of his way to establish the complementary nature of prophecy and validation: in Lazamon's text, Merlin's prophecies validate Arthur's violent action which, by its occurrence in history, in turn validates the prophet. Arthur's actions, or potential actions, are more legitimate in having been foretold by Merlin, and Merlin's prophecies are more legitimate in having been validated by history.

While Lazamon turns Merlin's prophecies into *realizable* occurrences legitimated by history, he also appeals to his audience's inherited fascination with prophecy and mantic lore. I emphasize that it is the inherited fascination of Lazamon's audience here, the Anglo-Welsh (often multilingual) population of the borderlands, rather than the Norman aristocracy. This is because the Norman interest in prophecy would have been a very recent phenomenon, beginning with Geoffrey of Monmouth, and is certainly not all-inclusive, as we can glean from the previously-mentioned aristocratic *resistance* to prophecy. On the contrary, prophecy and vatic visionary literature were staples of the cultural diet of traditional English and Welsh history and society in Lazamon's time and had been for centuries.

Though Lazamon's "Englishness" is often emphasized by critics,⁶⁵ his text's connection with English prophecy has been widely overlooked. In English literature prior to Lazamon, vatic insights by Anglo-Saxon poet-prophets served both to portend future

⁶⁵ Le Saux, Donaghue, Noble and Warren are among the more recent critics to emphasize the Lazamon's English origins and/or politics.

events and to illuminate past and even present affairs.⁶⁶ From Cædmon to the *Battle of Brunanburh* poet, prophecy serves many distinct and important roles in Anglo-Saxon poetry. With regard to the writing of ‘historical events,’ Edward Risdén notes that prophetic poetry “encourages the typically Anglo-Saxon placid, courageous acceptance of change and willingness to give up the cares of the present to Eternity” (19). This is definitely the case with the prophecies outlined by Lázamon’s attested source, *þa Englisca boc þa makede Seint Beda*, though, as might be expected, they have a significantly greater *moral* slant than Lázamon’s Merlin prophecies.

Arguably, even more so than the English tradition, Welsh literature has always placed a great deal of importance on the prophetic tradition. Works such as the *Armes Prydein* and the poems of the *Beirdd y Tywysogion* continuously emphasize the role of the *bardd* in interpreting the past, present, and future—not unlike the Anglo-Saxon *scops* and Lázamon’s *leod-scopes*.

Davies notes that political prophecy had been a popular genre well before the Norman Conquest but was especially prevalent during and just before the *Brut*’s construed compositional time frame:⁶⁷ “Hope was the great theme of the Merlinic prophecies... hope of the advent of a messianic deliverer who would once more restore the Britons to their rightful control of the Island of Britain.” Although candidates for this

⁶⁶ As Geoffrey Shephard explains in relation to Anglo-Saxon poets, Gregory the Great opened up the realm of prophecy to hidden things “in time or thought or place” regardless of whether those things were in the past, present, or future (117).

⁶⁷ Though, as mentioned, the Welsh prophetic tradition predates the Norman invasion by some time, the prophecies were malleable enough to be redirected towards the Normans after 1066 because, as Davies notes, the tradition was “augmented with the passage of each generation.” Indeed, anti-Norman Welsh prophecy was so prevalent during Lázamon’s era that it caused the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1199 to complain that the Welsh “boast of all Britain as theirs by right” (*Age* 79).

“messianic deliverer” varied according to the poet, *Lazamon* was not alone in explicitly postulating Arthur (Davies *Age* 78-79). The pervasiveness of prophecy in Welsh poetry, especially political prophecy which forecasts the rise of the Britons and their subsequent overthrow of their colonial rulers, provided an important cultural more for *Lazamon* to draw upon in writing his history.

Though these prophetic traditions of the English and the Welsh have often been opposed to each other, *Lazamon* is instrumental in *merging* the cultural traditions, both reflecting and instigating the merger of the two cultures in the March of Wales. Consider for a moment the Merlin prophecy that *Lazamon* writes into the narrative after King Arthur has quelled an outburst in his court and has the famed “round table” built as, ultimately, a means of controlling and silencing his rowdy thanes:

*And swa hit wes iuuren iboded, ær he iboren weoren
Swa him sæide Merlin, þe witeze wes mære,
Dat a king sculde cume of Vðere Pendraune,
Dat gleomen sculden wurchen burd of þas kinges breosten
And þerto sitten scopes swiðe sele
And eten heore wullen ær heo þenne fusden,
And winscences ut teon of þeos kinges tungen;...
Da zet him sæide Mærlin a sellic þe wes mare:
Dat sculde beon unimete care of þas kinges forðfare;
And of þas kinges ende nulle hit na Brut ileue...
For he seolf sæide to sele his Brutten...
Dat he uaren wolde into Aualune...
And þenne he weore al hal he wolde sone come heom.⁶⁸ (11492-11515)*

⁶⁸ [And so it was portended before, ere [Arthur] was born; Merlin himself said, who was a mighty prophet, that a king should come of Uther Pendragon; that minstrels should make a board of the king’s breast, and the best of poets would sit there and eat their fill ere they departed and take wine draughts of that king’s tongue... Then Merlin sad a wonder that was greater: That there should be unfathomable sorrow at this king’s departure; and of this king’s end, no British will believe it... for he himself said to the best of his Britons... that he would fare to Avalon... And when he was all healed he would immediately come back to them.]

This prophecy also is often traced back to Geoffrey's seventh book of the *Historia*⁶⁹ and his description of the "*aper commercii*" who will bring relief to the people:

*Redibit iterum fames,
Redibit mortalitas, et desolationem urbium dolebunt ciues. Superueniet
Aper commercii, qui disperson greges ad amissam pascuam reuocabit.
Pectus eius cibus erit egentibus, et linguaeius sedabit siceientes. Ex ore
Ipsius procedent flumina, quae arentes hominum fauces rigabunt. (VII. 127-
131)*⁷⁰

Lazamon reinforces this connection by referring to Arthur as the "*wilde bar iburstled mid stele*" [wild boar bristled with steel] who comes "*of Cornwaille*" (8031-2); linking, as have both modern commentators and Geoffrey's contemporaries (Curley 52-53), Geoffrey's "*aper commercii*" [boar of commerce] and his "*aper Cornubiae*" [boar of Cornwall], otherwise known as King Arthur, who will 'devour' the offspring of Vortigern (VIII.20-21).

Though the general substance of the passage is certainly drawn from Geoffrey, it is again obvious that Lazamon is not simply slavishly transcribing the Latin into English, or providing a vague gloss on an even vaguer image. Whereas the image in Geoffrey is, as usual, cryptic and likely equivocal, Lazamon makes the image considerably more meaningful and complex, as he does with all of the prophecies: it portends the

⁶⁹ Barron and Weinberg ("Commentary" n.485 874), Le Saux (*Poem* 117) and Bryan (33).

⁷⁰ [Famine will come back again, Death will come back, and the citizens will lament their forsaken cities. The boar of commerce will come over all, who will recall the dispersed peoples to their lost pastures. His breast will be food for the needy, his tongue (speech) will assuage the thirsty. Out of his very mouth will proceed rivers which will wet the parched gullets of men.]

problematic cultural response to Arthur,⁷¹ cultivates his audience's desire for a unified Britain, and evokes cultural folkways for both English and Welsh cultures.

For instance, this prophecy has very intriguing correlations with two of the most well-known and culturally important works of Anglo-Saxon and Welsh literature, *The Dream of the Rood* and *Armes Prydein*. Many critics have noted the obvious Eucharistic imagery in Merlin's prophecy;⁷² Merlin is, of course, describing Arthur as being consumed and propagated by *gleomen* as Christ is by Christians. Yet, at the same time, Arthur is unequivocally a warrior, a hero, and an impressive king. The two cannot possibly be separated in the context of the image, much as they cannot be separated in the Dream Poet's portrayal of Christ:

*Geseah Ic þa Frean mancynes
Efstan elne mycle þæt he me wolde on gestigan....
Ongyrede hine þa goeng hæleð— þæt wæs God ælmihtig—
Strang on stiðmod; gestah he on gealgan heanne,
Modig on manigra gesyhðe, þa he wolde mancyn lysan.
Bifode Ic þa me se beorn ymbclypte; ne dorste Ic hwæðre bugan to eorðan
Feallan to foldan sceatum, ac Ic sceolde fæste standan.
Rod wæs Ic aræred. Ahof Ic ricne Cyning,
Heofona Hlaford; hylðan me ne dorste.*⁷³ (33-45)

The 'hlaford' is simultaneously the messianic figurehead of Western Christendom and a warrior king, destroying enemies and ransoming his retinue. The Christ of the Dream

⁷¹ See especially Elizabeth Bryan (33-34) and, conversely, Kenneth Tiller (*Vision* 188-189, "Truth" 29-34).

⁷² See Otter (*Inventiones* 91), Wickham-Crowley ("Cannibal Cultures" 356), and Bryan (33).

⁷³ [I saw then the Master of Mankind hasten with great courage such as he would ascend upon me. There I did not dare, against the word of the lord, bend or burst when I saw the sheets of earth began to quake. I could have killed all of the fiends, but I stood fast. The young hero—that was God Almighty, strong and resolute—unclothed himself he ascended the miserable gallows, impetuous in the sight of many, as if he would ransom mankind. I quaked when the warrior embraced me. I did not dare to bow to the earth, fall to the earthly folds, but I had to stand fast. A rood was I reared. To raise high the powerful king, heaven's lord. I dared not to bend.]

poet, as an amalgamation of cultural mores who is powerful, complex, and inspirational, makes an apt comparison for Lazamon's Arthur.⁷⁴

Similar figures are found in Welsh culture as well. Even though the Welsh were converted long before the English, Welsh leaders often display pagan warrior characteristics merged with Christological characteristics in prophecies and literature. This is especially the case in the most famous of political prophecies, the *Armes Prydein Vawr*. Though the poem refers to casting out the Saxons, meaning it was originally composed before the Norman Conquest, our only record of it is from *The Book of Taliesin*, which is dated to 1275 (Williams xii). This means it was probably one of those prophecies that Davies says was "augmented with the passage of each generation," and was likely directed against the Normans (*Age* 79).

Regardless, the poem predicts that a saint returned from the dead, Saint David, will lead the Welsh nation to victory and cast out the invaders. Obviously, this has structural parallels with Arthur's forecasted return, and the explicit connections with Christ that the poet makes only reinforce the connection:

*Pan safhwynt galaned wrth eu hennyd.
Hyt yn Aber Santwic swynedic vyd.
Allmy ar gychwyn y alltudyd.
Ol wrth ol attor ar eu hennyd.
Saesson wrth agor ar vor peunyid.
Kymry gwenerawl hyt vrawt goruyd...
Iolwn i ri a grewys nef ac eluyd.
Poet tywryssawc Dewi yr kynifwyr.
Yn yr yg Gelli Kaer am Duw yssyd.
Ny threinc ny dieinc nyt ardispyd.
Ny wyw ny wellyc ny phlyc ny chryd.⁷⁵ (187-199)*

⁷⁴ Wickham Crowley mentions such a potential connection, but does not elaborate: "Cannibal Cultures" (355)

⁷⁵ [When the corpses stand against their enemy/ as far as Port Sandwich, blessed will it be./ Foreigners (will be) set out in exile/ one after another, back to their other(s)/ Saxons

Although Saint David was by all known accounts a peaceful and productive church leader, the poet prophesizes that he will be resurrected to lead an army of Brythonic peoples allied with Danes and Scots to defeat the Saxons. Like the Dream Poet's *goeng hæleð* and *Lazamon's Arður*, David's mortality is in doubt, and he is explicitly compared to the Christian God, yet he is not the God or Christ of the Bible. His Christological aspects are seamlessly merged with his warrior- and secular-leader aspects, creating a very distinct concept of leadership that would appeal to a staunchly bellicose and devoutly religious culture.

Though it cannot be said for certain, the strong connections between *Lazamon's* depiction of Arthur, the Dream poet's depiction of Christ and the *Armes* poet's depiction of St. David might indicate a (more or less) direct influence. The Vercelli Manuscript had, likely, yet to leave England and the Ruthwell Cross (upon which is inscribed a

at anchor in the sea daily/ The devout Welsh will conquer unto the judgment.../We implore the king [who] created heaven and earth/ Let Saint David be leader of the warriors, / in the straits he is about (around?) God [and] the Heavenly Fortress./ **they will not die, they will not escape or retreat/ they will not diminish nor fail nor waver nor wither away**] This translation, especially the last three lines, warrants some comment. I follow Rachel Bromwich's emendation of *Gelli Kaer* (a fortress outside Glamorgan) to *Celi Caer* (heavenly fortress) per A.O.H. Jarman's comments in *Llên Cymru* (iv.55-58 qtd in Bromwich n.197). The subject of the 3rd sg., present tense form of *bot* in line 197, *yssyd*, is ambiguous (intentionally so?); I have adopted *Dewi* as the subject from the previous line for the sake of clarity. The traditional reading of lines 198-199 is to adopt *Duw* as the unstated subject of the all the verbs conjugated in the 3rd sg., present tense ("threinc", "dieinc", etc.), assumedly because the negative forms of these verbs would be quite applicable to the Christian deity and *Duw* is the nearest potential subject (see Bromwich's translation 15). However, the subject is again ambiguous. I adopt a 3rd plural subject, encompassing both *Dewi* and *Duw*, as the two are thematically linked in the passage. The utilization of a 3rd sg., present tense verb to represent a 3rd plural subject is, admittedly, not as typical as when the numbers of the subject and verb match. However, as lines 178-182 in *Branwen Uerch Lyr* and lines 29-30 in *Ymddiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin* demonstrate, it is neither aberrant nor grammatically improbable. Furthermore, the poet needs to use a 3rd sg., present tense conjugation to fit the rhyme scheme, since any 3rd plural conjugation would end in *-nt*.

section of *The Dream of the Rood*) was still standing in the churchyard whose name it bears.⁷⁶ Additionally, given Lazamon's interest in prophecy, Welsh culture, and Myrddin, who is mentioned by name in the poem (17), an oral rendition or summary of *Armes Prydein Vawr* by a bilingual March inhabitant is not out of the question.

Yet, Lazamon need not have read these works to have recognized that the motifs he was introducing to Merlin's prophecies and Arthur's character were reminiscent of warrior/Christ salvific figures in Welsh and English—though not Norman—culture. They are intrinsic elements of a long established cultural motif and these texts, the *Dream of the Rood* and *Armes Prydein Vawr*, represent but two manifestations of that motif represented elsewhere—most of which we have unfortunately lost. His presentation of Arthur as Messianic warrior with iconic cultural signifiers from both traditional English and Welsh culture *through* prophecy, yet another cultural signifier, is indicative of his social and political goals.

That Lazamon reveals significant social, political, and artistic motives in this appropriation of Geoffrey's *aper commercii* is far from a recent suggestion. The passage has been much commented on in Lazamon studies and the potential significations of this passage are wide ranging, indeed.⁷⁷ However, in our search for a grandiose ideology or a nugget of humanistic achievement in the passage, we risk losing sight of its basic narrative function in the text.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ See George Phillip Krapp's *The Vercelli Book* xvi-xvii and Albert Cook's dated but still interesting "Cardinal Guala and the Vercelli Book."

⁷⁷ See especially Bryan, "Truth and the Round Table"; Tiller, "The truth *bi Arður þan kinge*", *Vision*, 185-198; and Wickham-Crowley *Future* 117-18.

⁷⁸ The previous analysis of the passage, I admit, is similarly guilty of this.

In its utmost essence, the prophecy is a character development for King Arthur and casts him as a source of inspiration and hope for both *gleomen* and his *folc*, both during and after his time. His power, his ability to control his court and further the national interests of the Britons, are remarkable, wonderful, and inspirational; and, as we see in the story, they are inspirational in a very specific way.

A few lines later, immediately after Laȝamon describes Arthur's potential for return and his impressive ability to maintain order ("*god mon and griðful*" [11519]), his subjects are inspired to engage in a bloody and devastating conquest of none other than the French:

*Cnihtes [Arður] hafede prute and græte on heore mode,
And speken to þan kinge of seollichen þinge:
“Lauerd Arður, faren we to Francene riche
and iwinnen al þat lond to þire azere hond,
flemen alle þa Freinscen, gore king feollen,
alle þa castles bonien and setten heom to mid Brutten,
and rixlien a þere riche mid rehære strengðe.”*⁷⁹ (11518-11527)

It is telling that this seemingly random inspiration to conquer the French, whom Laȝamon, unlike Wace, does not distinguish from the Normans,⁸⁰ comes after Merlin's prophecy that Arthur would be an eternal nationalistic inspiration for his people. I see this passage as analogous to the political inspiration that Laȝamon wishes to inspire in the

⁷⁹ [Knights Arthur had, proud and great in spirit, and they spoke to the king of a wonderful thing; his royal household addressed the high king thus: “Lord Arthur, let us go to the French land and conquer all that land to be under your hand, we'll put the French to flight, kill their king, assemble their castles and set British in them and rule in the kingdom with strong forces.”]

⁸⁰ See below in Chapter 3.

Anglo-Welsh people of the March: that Arthur, who will come again, will inspire his followers to “throw off the rule of the French.”⁸¹

Such a reading is supported by the fact that Lazamon revises Wace to emphasize the effects of this inspiration. Though in terms of plot development the works are similar—after a description of the Round Table, Arthur decides to go to Norway to make Lot king and then he goes to conquer France—the motivations to do so are different:

*Par la bunté de sun curage
E par le los de sun barnage
E par la grant chevalerie
Qu'il out afaitee e nurrie,
Dist Artur que mer passereit
Et tute France conquerreit.*⁸² (Wace 9799-9804)

Lazamon has totally dispensed with *Artur's* Continental *curage* and his rather flippant motivation to conquer France simply because he has a *grant chevalerie* sitting around to do so. Instead Lazamon formulates the motivation as a product of the pleas of his *cnihtes*, who were so intensely inspired by their lord's greatness. Again, similar to the Winchester prophecy discussed previously, prophecy and history are cast in terms of complementary validation: Merlin prophesies that Arthur will be inspiration or sustenance for his followers, and the history immediately verifies this inspiration, simultaneously validating the prophet, the prophecy, and the subject of the prophecy.

This complementary validation becomes exceptionally important when we look to a prophecy which looks not to the narrative future (that which will occur within the history) or the historical future (that which will occur unto Lazamon's writing) but to the

⁸¹ This quote is from Ralph de Diceto in *Opera Historica* concerning the reaction of the Welsh Princes' forced homage to Henry I in 1163 (qtd in Davies, *Domination* 76).

⁸² [because of greatness of his noble disposition, and for the praise of his barons and because of the great retinue of knights he had fitted and nourished, Arthur said he would pass over the sea and conquer all of France]

future of *Lazamon's* audience. This Merlin prophecy, which has no precedent in *Lazamon's* attested or potential sources, occurs at the end of the Arthurian section, after Arthur has been born away to Avalon to have his wounds healed:

*Pa wes hit iwurðen þat Merlin seide whilen:
Þat weore unimete care of Arðures forðfare.
Bruttas ileueð zete þat he bon on liue,
And wunnien in Aualun mid fairest alre aluen
And lokieð euere Bruttas zete whan Arður comen liðe.
Nis nauer þe mon iboren of nauer nane burde icoren
Þe cunne of þan soðe of Arðure sugen mare.
Bute while wes an witeze Mærlin ihate;
He bodede mid worde —his quideðs weoren soðe—
Þat an Arður sculde zete cum Anglen to fulste.⁸³ (*Brut* 14288-14297)*

It may, and should, seem odd that *Lazamon* presents a British king returning to aid his Germanic conquerors. What will he be aiding them with? The subjugation of his own people? I doubt it. For the answer to that question we must look beyond the Saxon conquest, beyond the Danish conquest and beyond the Norman conquest of Britain. The full political potency of this prophecy is made manifest when we take into consideration *Lazamon's* regional and socio-historical context as well as his political goals of anti-Norman Anglo-Welsh cultural unification.

Other critics have done an exceptional job elucidating the potential political interpretations of this prophecy in relation to the other prophecies of the poem and connecting it with the future of *Lazamon's* audience. Faletra, for instance, also sees this prophecy as having great political import and relative to his goals of “anti-Norman...

⁸³ [Then it came to pass what Merlin once said: That there would be unfathomable grief at Arthur's departure. The British yet believe that he is living well and lives in Avalon with the fairest of the elves; and the British ever look forward to when Arthur should come again. There was never any man born of any gentle lady that can say more of the truth of Arthur. But once there was a prophet called Merlin, he prophesied with words—his words were true—that an Arthur should yet come to aid the English.]

nascent Welsh national consciousness” (3). Indeed, Faletra is one of the few to connect Lazamon’s resistance to the Providential model of history with his Merlin prophecies and his anti-colonial philosophy. Though I am certainly in accord with Faletra in his recognition of anti-Norman sentiments and his resistance to Providential history (aspects of the *Brut* that wider critical opinion would do well to recognize) I must take issue with Faletra’s characterization of these aspects and their broader implications outside the text.

Of particular issue is Faletra’s portrayal of Lazamon’s *style* of anti-colonialism. Under Faletra’s otherwise adept critical lens, Lazamon’s politics seem more appropriate for a modern-day Neville Chamberlain than a medieval historian who knows and appreciates the value of retribution and violent conquest: “[Lazamon] strives to write a history that allows for a future that is less fraught with violence and conquest than the past, a goal that in the end leads him to regard peaceful coexistence as the only solution for the colonial struggles facing the island in the early thirteenth century” (5). To Faletra, Lazamon’s anti-colonialism is specifically “ecumenical” and envisions “ethnic plurality” rather than a re-conquest of the island (18).

This portrayal of Lazamon contrasts with Faletra’s own recognition of Lazamon’s emphasis on military atrocities, personal retribution of wrongs, and “Arthur as a righteous avenging spirit” (14). Yet, it contrasts even further within the context of the other Merlin prophecies and Merlin himself: *not a single prophecy* by Merlin in the text, from his introduction to well after his departure, connotes a peaceful or proselytizing event. From his prophecy that Vortigern will be burned alive in his precious tower to his prediction of Arthur’s immense military might and global subjugation, to the massacre of Winchester and the quaking of Roman walls—*violent retribution*, not peaceful tolerance or

ecumenism, are the tone and message of Merlin's prophecies. Why, then, should we assume this one, "*Pat an Arður sculde zete cum Anglen to fulste,*" to be any different?

No, the Arthur whom Lazamon envisions coming to aid the English is a direct product of Merlin's prophecies. He is a messianic warrior who wears armor fashioned by the Germanic smith Weland while toting his British weapons.⁸⁴ He, like his prophet, is simultaneously shrouded in Anglo-Saxon and Welsh cultural signifiers and Merlin paints him as a Christlike warrior/demi-god, like St. David or the Dream poet's *hlaford*, who will retake the island by force. Merlin's message, as his character, engulfs the boundaries of Anglo-Welsh cultural tradition and calls for revolution, not peace.

⁸⁴ See *Brut* lines 10542-10562. Arthur's armor is made "*of stele þe makede on aluisc smið mid aðelen his crafte; he wes ihaten Wygar, þe witeze wurhte.... Calibeorne his sweord he sweinde bi his side; hit wes iworht in Aualun mid wizelefulle craften.*" ['of steel, made by an elvish smith with his splendid craft; he was called Wygar, the powerful wright... Caliburn his sword hung by his side. It was wrought in Avalon with powerful craft.']

Chapter 3) Lazamon and the Law of the March

“et si contencio super hoc orta fuerit, tunc inde fiat in Marchia per iudicium parium suorum de tenementis Anglie secundum legem Anglie; de tenementis Wallie secundum legem Wallie; de tenementis Marchie secundum legem Marchie.

-Magna Carta, 1215 (qtd in Holt 466-468)⁸⁵

The primary focus of this project thus far has been the literary and historical precedents and the literary manifestations of Lazamon’s socio-political goals. Concentrating on the figure and prophecies of Merlin in Lazamon’s text, I have attempted to elucidate the presence of an anti-Norman political sentiment driven by and through the integration of English and Welsh cultural signifiers. I have attempted to dispel the assumption that such anti-colonialism would not have been applicable to an Englishman at the turn of the 13th century, that there was real historical precedent for an Anglo-Welsh military alliance in the borderlands, and that Lazamon reinvents his text to engender such an alliance.

I would now like to turn to some aspects of the immediate historical context for this political sentiment. I say “aspects” of the historical context because I have not the desire nor means to provide a comprehensive historical overview of the March of Wales in the late 12th and early 13th centuries.⁸⁶ The Norman invasion, settlement, and the

⁸⁵ [And if a dispute arises over this, then let it be decided in the Marches by the judgement of their peers, for the tenements of England according to the law of England; for tenements in Wales according to the law of Wales; for tenements in the March according to the Law of the March]

⁸⁶ For such extensive historical contexts, I suggest R.R. Davies’ various works, especially *The Age of Conquest* and *Domination & Conquest*. Also, more recently, Max Liebermann has published some very interesting works on the development of the March of Wales:

Marcher Lords' aristocratic philosophies and military movements are not of primary concern here; they have already been much discussed in the historical realm and there have been some connections of the Norman aristocracy to *Lazamon's* subject.⁸⁷

Instead, I will examine the practice and conduct of legal affairs in the March of Wales and its philosophical influence upon *Lazamon* and the region. I feel that this is a more appropriate historical topic in *Lazamon* studies in part because high-political history is inevitably written by the winners and, in the national political realm at least, *Lazamon* was ultimately unsuccessful in his political goals. By instead studying legal practice in the March of Wales, we find brief glimpses into the affairs of the conquered populaces of the March, the English and Welsh peoples whose ancestors had coexisted since well before the Norman conquest, or *Lazamon's* audience.

That is not to say that national and international affairs and concerns should not be considered in our understanding of the *Brut*. Certainly, being a member of a race which has been both conqueror and conquered furnishes *Lazamon* with a unique perspective on a history intimately concerned with the conquest of nations both on the island and continent. Scholars are, in short, correct to see *Lazamon's* poem as a work attentive to broader issues. Yet, the broader issues which our poet is so intimately concerned with would have been recounted and shaped by his interaction with local issues, events and people. Therefore, *Lazamon's* regional perspective on national history should play a more dominant role in our reading of his work.

The Medieval March of Wales, The March of Wales 1067-1300: A Borderland of Medieval Britain, and "The Medieval 'Marches' of Normandy and Wales."

⁸⁷ I am referring primarily to Rosamund Allen's discussion of some of the connections of the Marcher lord William Marshall to *Lazamon's Brut* in "'Where are you, my brave knights!' Authority and Allegiance in *Lazamon's Brut*."

Lazamon's legal persuasion has, indeed, been one of the foremost topics to be discussed primarily on the national and international scale. Christopher Cannon's article in *ELH*, "Lazamon and the Laws of Men," has for more than a decade now been the seminal reading of Lazamon's jurisprudence—and justifiably so. Cannon, after suggesting that Lazamon's name is more likely an appellation than an autograph, explains how 'constitutionalism,' the idea that English law survives monarch to monarch and through foreign conquests without sustaining "appreciable" alterations, is valued by Lazamon throughout the work. Lazamon's kings, especially the good ones, are valued for their lawfulness, but also, more importantly, for their sustaining the laws of their predecessor, indicating, as does the Magna Carta, the priority of the law over the king (339-344). In essence, the law is intimately connected to the *leode*—the land/people/nation, rather than the king or the *folc*—population.

Though I generally agree with Cannon's assessment, I believe it needs to be qualified to some degree: Lazamon's jurisprudence, though certainly possessing national implications, is essentially regional and ethnic in outlook and political in motivation.

Ernleze, or its modern cognate Areley, lies today as it did in Lazamon's day, "vppen Seuarne stape" (*Brut* 3-4).⁸⁸ This village is a mere three miles from Shropshire and less than 10 miles from the border with Herefordshire. This puts Lazamon at the furthest border of the 'borderlands' proper, the infamous Marches of Wales.⁸⁹ As I have previously discussed, this area was widely recognized for the immense amount of Anglo-

⁸⁸ [upon the banks of the Severn]

⁸⁹ Figures reckoned from various maps in David Lloyd's *A History of Worcestershire* (see especially John Speed's 1610 map p. ii) and from descriptions in William Page's *A History of the County of Worcester* (see especially pages 218-219 and 227-230)

Welsh cultural integration; part of the reason for this cultural integration, I argue, is due to the unique nature of the practices of law in this region.

In his ‘liminal’ locale, being just within England and just outside of the Marches, it is presumable that Lazamon would have had at least a passing familiarity with the distinct jurisprudences of the Marches and those of England. If Lazamon’s name is representative of his profession or his interest, as Cannon, among others, suggests,⁹⁰ an interest that corresponds well to the writing of history, then we can deduce that he had more than a passing familiarity and was potentially well versed in the legal proceedings of both areas. In light of this, I propose that the Marcher lords’ establishment of a relatively stable legal system which invited cultural unification amongst the English and the Welsh and resistance to external influence and authority provided Lazamon with an adept conceptual model for his regional and national political goals of English/Welsh cultural unification for anti-colonial purposes.

Though from our present day retrospective position we certainly, in a sense, know more about the unique jurisprudence of the March of Wales than we could expect of Lazamon, the ‘Law of the March’ is not an arbitrary application of contemporary terminology to a vague historical trend, as is the case with ‘dark ages’ or ‘feudalism.’ As we can tell from the epigraph, quoted from the Magna Carta, the distinctive development of a peculiar legal system—or systems, to be more accurate—within the borderlands of England and Wales was widely recognized during Lazamon’s era. At the risk of being reductive with an immensely complex system, I would like to propose four elements of

⁹⁰ See especially Cannon 337-363, also page 3, Rosemund Allen “‘Where Are You My Brave Knights!’ Authority and Allegiance in Layamon’s Brut” in *Lexis and Texts in Early English: Studies presented to Jane Roberts*.

this distinctive development of Marcher Law which both engendered the stability and success of the systems and, also, made the system particularly attractive to Lazamon: 1) the severance and independence from royal authority and continental legal influence; 2) the localization of the legal systems and their consequent emphasis on the specific and distinct cultural context needed for stable law; 3) the near absolute authoritarian power wielded by the Marcher lords in judicial, legislative, and military matters; 4) cultural unification between the English and Welsh populations engendered by the flexible, cohesive perception of the law codes.

As Davies notes, however, the Magna Carta was simply the recognition of a distinction already in place for some time. Marcher Lords had been customizing their frontier jurisprudence since the early 12th century and, because of that early entrenchment, their customization would survive and intensify over the next three centuries (“Law of the March” 27-29). Part of the attractiveness of the *Lex Marchia* in all its various formations to the population of the March and, I argue, to Lazamon is the astounding degree of stability and cohesiveness present in judiciary systems compared to the Anglo-Norman system formulating in England at the time:

The existence of the law of the march was formally recognized in [the Magna Carta edict of] 1215, and behind it there was already a long history. Marcher lords from Clun to Pembroke had already during the twelfth century been... experimenting in the field of law and jurisdiction while the law of England itself was as yet an inchoate amalgam of local customs and while the power of royal justice was as yet undeveloped. (“Law of the March” 27)

Whereas the judicial system in England was highly unstable at the end of the 12th century, the judicial systems established by the Marcher lords were already firmly in place, centralized around each district’s ruler, who claimed to inherit the rights of judicial and legislative independence from the previous Welsh *arglwyddi*.

The perceived stability of the March is, by definition, a comparative stability—specifically comparative to the “inchoate amalgam” of the Norman kings, to use Davies’ phrase. An intrinsic cause of this lack of coherence and persistent struggle for centralization in the Anglo-Norman judiciary system, a cause that I believe Lazamon both recognizes and reacts to, may be attributed in part to the conflicts that would arise between the Anglo-Norman civil legal system and the Continental legal systems based, largely, on Roman Law and Canon Law in the 12th century. These age-old systems were already well established on the continent by the time of the Norman Conquest yet are only vaguely present in Anglo-Saxon England; their introduction would understandably kindle some conflict, to say the least. Though their influence would eventually help shape England’s judiciary system into the formidable system it would become in the Early Modern period, in Lazamon’s time they were more a source of instability for the burgeoning civil system than anything else.

This conflict and instability is most recognizable in the notorious conflict between Henry II and Archbishop Thomas Beckett. As Pollock notes, though Henry ultimately ‘won’ that dispute, he was unsuccessful on two particular fronts: clergy and their associates could not be prosecuted by civil courts and the Church could still appeal any decision not made in its favor to the court in Rome (125). Furthermore, Henry’s penance for his role in the murder of Beckett, whatever it might have been, helped to weaken the perception of a centralized royal judicial authority. The strong encroachment of Canon law, therefore, was instrumental in hindering the judicial independence of the English system, an independence desperately needed for the stability and legal longevity that Lazamon praises in his good kings.

Similarly, and somewhat ironically, the introduction of Roman law into the burgeoning legal state caused somewhat less famous rifts and incidents of instability. Though the historical circumstances are murky, it seems that an Italian by the name of Vacarius was brought into England, probably by Archbishop Theobald, to help with administrative affairs at Canterbury around 1143 (Borkowski 385). While there, Vacarius produced a book of selections from Justinian's law codes entitled *Liber Pauperum*, which, according to Andrew Borkowski in his textbook on Roman Law, was intended for dissemination to poorer law students who could not afford the full text of the codes (385). It is likely that Vacarius himself taught Roman law at Canterbury (Holdsworth 148), but probably did not teach at Oxford. Regardless, "by 1200 Roman law teaching was flourishing at Oxford" (Borkowski 385), due largely one must assume, to the access to Justinian's codes that Vacarius provides.

Undoubtedly, the instruction of an authoritative section of law codes, many of which would conflict with the current Norman customs, would be less than popular among the Norman kings. Indeed, one of the few sources that we have on Vacarius, John of Salisbury, notes that it was Vacarius's introduction of Roman law which caused King Stephen to attempt to silence him: *Tempore regis Stephani a regno jussæ sunt leges Romance, quas in Britanniam domus venerabilis patris Theobaldi, Britanniarum primatis, asciverat. Ne quis enim libros retineret edicto regio prohibitum est, et Vacario nostro interdictum silentium*" (Policraticus VIII.22 qtd in Holdsworth 148).⁹¹ Though Stephen's ineffectual reign endured infinitely worse problems than the introduction of Roman law,

⁹¹ [During the time of King Stephen the Roman law was commanded from the kingdom, though they were adopted through the house of the venerable father Theobaldi, primate of the Britains. A royal edict prevented the retaining of books and our Vacarius had silence imposed upon him]

he apparently found the conflicts that the codes engendered with his own jurisprudence significant enough to address, even during the height of the Anarchy.

It should be noted that Lazamon gives no direct implication that he was aware of any of these conflicts between Anglo-Norman and continental legal authorities. It is improbable, however, that an educated man so apparently interested in political and legal affairs would *not* have sought out information about even the most obscure of such events. Of the more famous events, such as the conflict between Henry and Beckett, it would be nearly impossible for Lazamon to remain ignorant.

The negative intrusion of continental and royal influence on the stability of the judicial system is not, however, an issue in the March. Admittedly, because there are multiple divisions of lordships and jurisdictions in the March and no unifying legal code, there are, to some degree, difficulties in drawing general concepts on legal practice during Lazamon's time. However, there is one notion that governs the post-Conquest March from its conception: "the king's writ did not run in the marches and his judges did not sit there... all the lordships of the march... were outside the scope of the ordinary royal justice of the realm of England" (Davies "The Law of the March" 12). The Marcher lords need not to have worried about conflict with either Canon or Roman law or Royal edict in their governance of judicial civil or criminal issues.

By emphasizing and dramatizing the imperial power struggle between the continent and Britain throughout his entire history, Lazamon presents a general theme of anti-Roman and anti-Norman influence. However, that influence is especially manifested in two particular sections: the aftermath of Arthur's battle with King Frolle and

Lazamon's comments on the encroachment of Norman 'laws' on London. My analysis will be limited to these sections.

Arthur's speech after he has defeated the French king, Frolle, in a trial by single combat and sacked the city of Paris without the loss of a single Briton is especially indicative of Lazamon's anti-Roman sentiments. After the battle, Wace notes that the citizens "*pur Frolle plurent / E nequedent as portes curent; / Artur unt receü dedenz*" [wept for Frolle/ but then streamed for the gates; Arthur was received] (*Roman* 10094-97). The reaction of the populace is rather straightforward here, Frolle dies and the citizens welcome Arthur because he "*pais ordena*";⁹² and, assumedly, the laws.

Lazamon's portrayal of the event is notably different. Immediately after Frolle is defeated, Arthur dismisses the French army and citizens, ordering them to go home and be back in seven nights. He then tells them that:

*Heo scullen me mon-radene mid monscipe fremmen
and ich heom wulle holden a mine onwolden
and settin i leode lazan swiðe gode.
For nu scullen Romanisce lazan to than grunde reosen,
þa iuurn here stoden mid Frolle
þe lið on æite ofslazen and idon of lif-dazen* (11981-11986 emphasis mine).⁹³

Arthur will bring down the Roman law and establish "very good laws" in their place. The poetic—and legal—justice of a figure steeped in both Anglo-Saxon and Celtic cultural manifestations destroying a French king and throwing off the Continental Roman law is unlikely to have been lost on Lazamon or his audience. Lazamon drastically alters the speech to imply significantly different political sentiments: political domination by a

⁹² [keeps the peace]

⁹³ [They will pledge their fealty to me with due honor and I will hold them under my power and **set very good laws. For now shall the Roman Laws be brought to the ground**—those which stood with Frolle who lays slain on the island, all finished with his life days]

figure engrossed in both English and Welsh cultural signifiers and the expulsion of Continental influence on law.

Though *Lazamon*, as most good poets of revolt, most consistently veils his anti-colonial sentiment in metaphorical and symbolic terms, as in the previous example, he is not shy about voicing his sentiments openly on occasion. In the twice-told tale of the origin and evolution of the name for the city of London, *Lazamon* presents perhaps the most caustic and vicious diatribes about the intrusion of Norman and Continental customs and law to Britain:

*He leide adun þere burhþe nome and nemnede hire æfter himseoluen
And hehten heo Kaer Lud, and oueral hit let cuðen.
Þat he duden al for þon þat seoððen sculden moni mon
Þennen þe king weoren dæd demen of his weorken.
Seoððen her com vncuð folc, faren in þessere þeode
And nemneden þa burh Lundin an heore leode-wisan.
Seoððen comen Sæxisce men and Lundene heo cleopeden;
Þe nome ileste longe inne þisse londe.
Seoððen comen **Normans mid hoere nið-craften**
And nemneden heo Lundres –þeos leodes heo amærden!
Swa is al þis lond iuaren for uncuðe leoden (3539-3549 my emphasis).⁹⁴*

The Normans are not detested and castigated by *Lazamon* because they won the Battle of Hastings; that is just part of a historical cycle which may be reversed. Their ‘vile action’ is specifically the suppression of British culture and history contained in the place-name as transcendental signifier. The structure of the passage is a repetition of a previous tangent on the London name, with two very telling alterations; in the passage where the

⁹⁴ [He set aside the town’s name and named it after himself, and called it Kaer Lud, and let it be known over all. That he did all so that many men should admire his works when he was dead. Then there came here unknown peoples, faring in this country, proceeded with their own customs and named the town Lundin. Then there came Saxon men and Lundene they called it; the name lasted a long while in this land. Then there came the Normans with their vile ways and named it Lundres – they ruined this nation! So this land has fared because of unknown peoples.]

above lines 3447-48 occur we find this statement: *Seððen comen þa Frensca þa mid fehte heo biwonnen,/ mid heora leod-ðeawe and Lundres heo hehten* (1030-1031 my emphasis).⁹⁵ First, “Normans” is exchanged for “Frensca”, which implies that *Lazamon* does not distinguish between the two cultures, as does *Wace* (3769). Second, their *leod-ðeawe* [‘customs of the nation’] is directly correlated with their *nið-craeften* [‘vile practices’].⁹⁶ It is not just the actions of the Normans which are being critiqued here, but their entire culture.

It is very telling that *Lazamon* singles the Normans out as having vile customs rather than any of the other conquering cultures; it is certainly the most acerbic characterization of a Christian culture in the history. This criticism is especially emphatic because, in terms of the regional practice of cultural customs and laws, *Lazamon* and his kings typically assume a tolerant if not advocative approach. As a historian and student of law, *Lazamon* would have recognized the benefits of a culturally- and regionally-customized jurisprudence—as was the case in the March of Wales according to *Davies*:

The records, it is true, speak on occasion of ‘the law of the march’ as if it were a monolithic body of custom; but they are much more likely to refer to... ‘the laws of the land of Maelienydd’, the law and custom of the land of Brecon’... And this is what we would have expected: each marcher lord, after all, claimed and exercised exclusive judicial power within his lands and in terms of geography, history, and social development the lordships of the march were much too variegated to be strait-jacketed into the confines of a single code of law. (“The Law of the March” 11)

In many ways, 12th century Britain was a significantly more culturally diverse island than it is today, and it was culturally diverse in ways that the Continent, frankly, was not.

⁹⁵ [Then came the French, who won it in war, **with their customs** and called it London].

⁹⁶ As *Tiller* points out, *nið-craeften* may have an even more specific and derogatory meaning, specifically “a psychosexual insult directed at an enemy with intent of reducing his manhood” deriving from the Icelandic *nið-visu* poems (*Vision* 146-47).

Welsh peoples merged with Anglo-Saxons merged with Scots merged with French merged with Frisians merged with Bretons, etc. The customs pertinent to the governance of Rome and France would not be pertinent, without much revision, to the governance of Britain. Nowhere is this more readily apparent than in Lazamon's region, and the rhetoric of his text reflects as much.

Consider, for example Lazamon's version of the settlement of Ireland. When king Gurguint is returning to Britain from Denmark, he happens upon a set of ships faring from Spain. Pantolaus, their leader, professes them to be exiles from their native land who wish to live under Gurguint's lordship; as if anticipating the reason for his refusal, they plead to him that they would readily accept his law code (3095). Though their submissiveness seems humble enough, Gurguint accepts their homage but is not willing to integrate them under his law code:

*Nulle ic na so don; a eower monradene ic wulle fon
And ich eow wulle senden into ane londe,
For ich nat whet ze beoð ne whannen ze icome beoð...
Heo sculleð eow þat lond bitaken þer ze sculleð libban
And eower lazen setten to rihten eore leoden. (3110-3117)⁹⁷*

Pantolaus takes his people and settles and prospers in Ireland according to Lazamon, who tells us "*he sette stronge lawen to steowien his folke... and þus heo ladden heore lazen and longe heo ilæsten.*" Whether or not the Marcher lords understood the necessity for a customized set of laws for culturally different groups or whether they simply enjoyed the autonomy of rule is a query equally applicable to Gurguint and Pantalaus. Ultimately the

⁹⁷ [I will not do so; but your homage I will take and I will send you to an island. For I do not know what you are or where you come from... they shall take you to that land where you shall live and set your own laws to govern your people]. For comparison see Wace 3268-3326. The general structure remains the same, but Lazamon introduces the aspect of law whereas Wace's Gurguint refuses the exiles because he does not wish to give up arable land: "*Gurguint ne lur volt pas laisser/ Terre en sun regne a guaanier*" (3301-2).

answer does not matter, it is the final product, the ends met, which is more important of the factors; and in both of these cases, there is a degree of stability and legal longevity as a result of the segregation.

Though legal and cultural segregation and independent autonomy imply wholesale disarray, rather than unity, the third aspect of the Law of the March which would have been attractive to Lazamon, single authoritarian rulership, helps to mitigate the inherent disarray of a segregated legal system to some degree. This “interplay of lordly will and local consent” which operated “within the confines of local custom” were all made possible by a single authoritative ruler who had both legislative and “judicial omniscience.” Firm, decisive rule, which is intrinsically tied to the varying customs of the people under that rule, engendered the stability of the March law (Davies “Law of the March” 10-11).

Lazamon’s reflection of this aspect of Marcher jurisprudence can be seen from the first king of Britain who “*heom onleide þat woren lawen gode. / He hehte þat luue scolde liðen heom bitweonen, / ælc halden oðren riht ba bi daie and bi nith; / and weaswa nolde he sculde beon iwite / and swa vfele he mihte don þat he sculde beon ihon*” (1040-1044).⁹⁸ Though such a starkly cruel and dictatorial edict might, to modern minds, seem oppressive, to Lazamon’s Britons it is effective and considerably admirable: “*For swulchen eize gode heo hefden muchele drede, / and bicomæn rihtwise men, and rædes*

⁹⁸ [he laid down laws which were good. He commanded that love should lie between them and each hold the other in justice both by day and by night. And whosoever would not he should be punished, and if evil he should do, then he should be hanged.]

heo luueden” (1045-1046).⁹⁹ Lazamon thus establishes a dictatorial but popular judicial rule for his kings which is followed by many ‘good’ kings throughout his narrative.

Though all of the previously-mentioned aspects of the *Lex Marchia* were important to the success of the system—staunchly authoritarian and firm judicial authorities who are legally independent from external (Continental, Royal) legal authorities governing culturally customized jurisdictions—by far the most important aspect for stability and success was the legal and cultural flexibility and integration engendered by March law. Their independence, judicial authority, and flexibility to customize the law to the cultures gave the Marcher lords necessary ability to properly integrate the English and Welsh systems of law in a way that would be tolerable and ultimately attractive to both the conquering Norman lords and the conquered Welsh and Anglo-Saxon populace (Davies “Twilight of Welsh Law” 151-153). A plaintiff in a suit before a Marcher’s court could and often did argue their case through both Welsh and Anglo-Saxon legal terminology (Davies “Law of the March” 25). Davies notes that March law “was a law of amalgamation, not a law of separate development,” which “encouraged a policy of co-existence” and cultural unification rather than separate, antagonistic and slow development as in the then-current Anglo-Norman system (Davies “Law of the March” 25-26).

Though hard evidence of this legal integration is most often found in the court rolls and specific cases, as those cited by Davies above, the legal integration occasionally found its way into the addendums to extant law codes in the 13th Century. Peniarth MS

⁹⁹ [They had much amazement for such strong rule and became upright men and loved good counsel]

259B contains such addendums and they have recently been edited and translated by Sara Elin Roberts in her book, *Llawysgrif Pomffred*.

The core of this text is very traditional Welsh law, according to Roberts, focusing on the law of Hywel and dating to an early, but undetermined date. Roberts suggests that the integrated material, contained in the ‘tail’, where additions and retractions from the core text are made in some legal texts, was probably compiled close to the border of Wales if not actually within a Marcher lordship (23). The English influence on this text is especially evident in the added punishment for rape (“*Oni ayll y gwr dalv dycker i geillie*”)¹⁰⁰ and for thievery (“*am hyn y dyleo golli aylawd nev enaid amdanaw*”).¹⁰¹ As Roberts points out, these are distinctly English features and their presence beside traditional Welsh legal matter indicate a strong degree of cultural integration along the border under the Norman Marcher lords (26).

Though Roberts gives sparing dates for the text (it is obvious they were composed over a long time frame), she strongly suggests that this particular material, that which contains obvious English influence, post-dates the 1282 conquest of Wales. Certainly, it is reasonable to assume that more integration would have occurred after 1282 than before, however, so Roberts’ date is as feasible as possible for a text that was obviously compiled over a great extent of time. Though it would be impossible to pin an exact date on any of this material, I feel that the degree of cultural integration that occurred during and before the 12th-century suggests that English and Welsh laws were being integrated well before the 1282 conquest.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ [“If the man is unable to pay let his testicles be removed”] Roberts’ translation (161).

¹⁰¹ [“for this he should lose a limb or his life for it”] Roberts’ translation (225)

¹⁰² Davies, in fact, argues exactly that (“Law of the March” 25).

In fact, the English and Welsh populace of the March had been integrating their law systems well before even the Norman Conquest, though Davies and Roberts do not elaborate on this issue. I argue that the stability and cultural integration that developed in the March during Norman rule was due largely to the legal and customary precedents of border rule established by the Anglo-Welsh populace centuries before 1066. This is particularly evident in what is generally referred to as “The Dunsæte Ordinance,” reproduced in Felix Liebermann’s *Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (374-379). Though the text is unspecific as to the place (there are hills all along the border), Mary Bateson and Whitehead have determined that it likely concerned the area around Hereford along the river Wye and was written down around 935 (Whitehead 13; Bateson xviii-xvii). It is obvious, however, that the policies were in place well before being written down (Whitehead suggests the “the time of Offa” [13]), and there were just as likely to be similar ordinances throughout the borderlands.

In this ordinance, we find strong evidence of harmonious co-existence, cultural integration, and mutual rule by the Anglo-Welsh populace on the border. The prologue to the ordinance indicates that a multi-ethnic committee produced the document for a politically unified, integrated population: “*Dis is seo gerædnes, ðe Angelcynnes witan 7 Wealhðeode rædboran beweax Dunsetan gesetton*” (374).¹⁰³ This is not, that is to say, a set of regulations imposed upon Welsh peoples living in English territory or vice-versa.

Besides being inclusive of both English and Welsh peoples, the contents of the ordinance are largely typical of most medieval local law codes, outlining wergilds, what-

¹⁰³ [This is the ordinance the English counselors and the Welsh advisors established between the ‘hill-settlers’]

ifs, and procedural matters. Particularly interesting is the description of the pledge process of the committee who will “*tæcean*” the verdict:

3) *Gif bad genumen sy on mannes orfe for oðres mannes ðingum, ðonne begyte ða bade ham se, ðe heo fore genumen sy, oððe of his agenum ðone gehalde, ðe þæt orf age:*

3.1) *Sceal syððan nede riht wyrcean se ðe ær nolde.*

3.2) *XII lahmen scylon riht tæcean Wealan 7 Ænglan: VI Englisce 7 VI Wylisce.*

3.3) *Ðolien ealles ðæs hy agon, gif hi woh tæcen; oððe geladian hi, þæt hi bet ne cuðon.* (Liebermann 376)¹⁰⁴

Though the pledging party may be of Welsh or English blood, they will be judged by an equally weighted committee of both English and Welsh lawmen. The Marcher lords of the 12th century, then, were not the first to recognize the need for cultural integration in the practice of border law; they had a long history of customs, practices and established law codes to draw on to govern their populations in relative peace and stability.

Cultural integration is a necessary byproduct of border regions as is, but the integration of British and Welsh laws—highly cherished cultural mores—made the border amalgamation in the March particularly effective, as we have seen. *Lazamon* seems to self-consciously recognize the connection of “legal integration” and “cultural integration” in his presentation of “border law” after the settlement of the Anglo-Saxons

¹⁰⁴ [3.) If pledge is taken on the man’s cattle for other man’s sake, then he shall take the pledge home, or satisfy [the one] who owns the cattle from his own possessions: / 3.1) It shall then need to be made right [by] he who would not before. / 3.2) 12 Welsh and English ‘lawmen’ shall determine the right [judgment]: 6 English and 6 Welsh./ 3.3) Let suffer loss of all that they own, if they judge wrongly; or exculpate themselves if they know no better.]

under Cadwallen. Lazamon subtly re-authors and re-presents this “border law,” Mercian Law, through a regionalist lens with very national implications.

Towards the end of the history, after Arthur has fared to Avalon to prepare for his messianic return to aid the English and while the British King Cadwallen is trying to root out the treacherous Edwin, we are introduced to King Penda. When introducing Penda, Lazamon emphasizes the connection of his people, *folc*, to the law of the particular area: “*Pa wes in Æstlonde a king þe hehte Penda;/ he biwuste a þan dazen þat folc of Merchene lazen*” [There was in Eastland (East Midlands?) a king called Penda; / he ruled in those days the people of the Mercian Law] (15440-41). It is interesting that Lazamon uses *folc* rather than *leode*, here, even though *leode* would fit better with the alliterative meter. In this particular case, the *people*, rather than the nation, are intimately associated with the law.

It is not just any people who are connected with this law, however. A few lines later Lazamon mentions, quite unexpectedly, that “*he wes Mærwales fader, Mildburge alde-uader*—[Penda] was Maerwal’s father, the grandfather of Mildburga” (15478). Lazamon does not explain this aside because the local audience he was writing for would not need an explanation: Mildburga is a very local saint who founded a convent and died not more than twenty miles from Lazamon’s hometown, Areley Kings, in Shropshire.¹⁰⁵ Penda and Mercian Law are thus presented as an important aspect of *regional* history. It is apparent that Lazamon, correctly nonetheless, sees a historical continuity between the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia, especially its people and laws, and his contemporary surroundings.

¹⁰⁵ Barron and Weinberg (“Commentary” n.795 p.893-895); Le Saux (*Poem* 164-165); Tatlock (*Legendary* 495).

This continuity is encouraged, and complicated, when we look back in the text to Lazamon's history of the founding of the *Merchene lazen* by a British queen Marcian:

*Marcie men heo clupede –þat is 3et widene cuð;
Nu and aueremare is **taken of here heare**.
Peo quene leornede anne craft: heo wes a boken wel itaht;
Heo leornede hire lære leofliche on heorten.
Of hire wisdom sprong þat word wide,
Tat heo we swiðe wis of wordliche dome.
Pa makede heo ane læ3e and læide 3eon þat leode.
Pa þeos læ3e wes al iworhte,
Bruttis nemneden þa læ3en æfter þare lafuedi;
To soðen, wihuten wene, þe læ3en æfter þare lafuedi;
Seoððen þeræfter monie hundred wintre
Com Alfred þe king, Englelondes deorling,
And wrat þa læ3en on Englis ase heo wes ær on Bruttisc,
And whærfdde hire nome on his dæ3e and cleopede heo Mærcene læ3e.
Ah þet I þe sugge þurh alle þing, ne makede heo noht ærst Ælured king;
Ah heo makede þa quene þe me Mærcie cleopede
And Ælured heo seide on Englisc –þis is seoð fuliwis. (3136-3154 my
emphasis)¹⁰⁶*

Even this early in the text, well before we see the arrival of the Saxons and the development of the English nations, Lazamon connects the namesake of the Mercian Law code with his region. The local remnants of the Mercian nation (of which Areley and the eastern Marcher counties would have been in the western part) are the 'tokens' of the British queen Marcie. Furthermore, the law code has a specifically and emphatically

¹⁰⁶ [men called her Marcie –she who is widely known; now and evermore **there are tokens of her here**. The queen learned a skill; she was well read and she learned her lore lovingly by heart. Word sprang widely of her wisdom, that she was very wise in worldly dooms. She made a law and laid it upon the nation; when this law was fully wrought, the Britons named the laws after the lady; truthfully, without doubt, the law was called Marciane. Then thereafter many hundred winters came Alfred the King, England's Darling, and he wrote the laws in English as they were in Brittish and changed its name and in his day it was called Mærcene law. But I tell you above all things, Alfred the King did not make this law first but the queen who was called Mærcie made them and Alfred put them into English—that is the full truth] (3136-3154 my emphasis)

British origin.¹⁰⁷ Whereas, as we have seen, Lazamon will later specifically and intimately connect Mercian Law to the *folc* of Mercia, his audience's *English* ancestors, Lazamon certainly does not want us to confuse its origins with the English.¹⁰⁸

Though now there is little doubt as to the egregious historical inaccuracy of Lazamon's statement, local history was more malleable and ephemeral in the Middle Ages and thus subject to discussion. The multiple protestations of accuracy and *seoð* in the passage betray an air of defensiveness indicative of having taken part in such a discussion or, even, argument within the not too distant past. Though there are, indeed, very important nationalistic implications for Lazamon's seemingly minor changes to the narrative, it is telling that the implications are framed within a regionalist perspective: in a complex and metaphysical manner, Lazamon is speaking through local history to his local audience with both regional and international ramifications here. Mercian Law, their local historical English *border* law (OE *mierciens* [borderers]) and March law (AN '*marche*' [border]) are connected through historical continuity and linguistic evidence,¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Though both Wace (3335-3348) and Geoffrey (III.47) mention the British origins of the English Law code and King Alfred's translation, the emphatic nature of the origins and the increased separation, both philosophical and temporal, from King Alfred is Lazamon's.

¹⁰⁸ Indeed, Tiller emphasizes the double meaning of *whærfde* ('turning' and 'destroying') in the passage (3151) to demonstrate how "the work of the conqueror with the work of the translator" are intrinsically linked; Alfred conquers Marcia's laws but her name remains attached as a transcendental signifier (*Vision* 117-12). Though Tiller uses this as a metaphor for the limitations "conqueror-translator," it is also an indication of how British culture is ultimately enveloped in the English 'border' laws, merging the two.

¹⁰⁹ Whatever his attestations of the origins of the code, Lazamon would have undoubtedly realized that all of the cognates of 'Mercian' he uses: *Marciane* (3146), *Mærcan* (3150), *Merchene* (15441), *Marcchisce* (15472) are related to AN '*marche*,' as in the "Marche of Wales" or the *Lex Marchia*, though he might not have known it is specifically through OE *mærc*- border (Oxford English Dictionary "march" n.3). As Barron and Weinberg point out, he uses another cognate from the same (OE *mære* [boundary]), *-mere* to rename another border county, Westmoreland, as *Westmering* ("Commentary n. 257

and have their ultimate origin in British/Welsh History. They are intrinsically tied to the Britons *through* the legal code that has been adapted by Laȝamon in much the same way that the tenements of the March are integrated by the ‘customized’ legal code developed by the Marcher lords.

This unification is reinforced by the presentation of Penda after Laȝamon mentions him as the king of the *folc of Merchene laȝen*. Among the notable comments Laȝamon adds about Penda in his description is his relief that “*Swa sellic hit ferde in alle þan uahte/ þat nas Pendan þe king amarred nanes kunnes þing*” [“such wonder it fared in all the fighting Penda the King was not a bit harmed”] (15481-2). And the comments from the “*swiðe wis mon*” (whom Laȝamon invents) to Cadwallan indicate that he is not just another liegeman to but “*he wule beon þi mon icoren aȝein ælcne mon iboron*” [he will be the most worthy man to you of any man born] (15503).

Similarly, though Wace mentions that Cadwallan marries Penda’s sister and subsequently frees Penda, the tone and details are altered in Laȝamon’s version. Instead of the terse exchange of an unnamed sister for freedom and questionable allegiance, as is the case in Wace (14384-90), we get a long description of Cadwallan and Helen’s wedding and Cadwallan and Penda’s alliance ceremony, wholly new to Laȝamon:

*Þa hit wes dæi amarȝen and duȝeðe gunnen sturien,
And the king iuæstned hafde alle his forwarde,
Þa nom he muchele genge and after Penda sende,
Þer he wes ful faste in þan castle of Æxchæster,
And mid much lufe hine hehte cumen to Lundenne.
Penda to Lundene com; he wes ahtliche underuon
And Candwalan þe kene mid lufe hine custe;*

p857), indicating, as I see it, that he had a sharp understanding of the origins and use of this stem and concept.

*And Penda bicom his mon þer –his monscipe wes þe mare.*¹¹⁰ (15539-15546)

Obviously, part of the motivation behind Lazamon’s reinvention of Penda here is to mitigate the problematic history of a local historical figure who, though very powerful and famous, also will forever be known as the killer of St. Oswald (Barron and Weinberg “Commentary” pp. 893-894n., 795). Yet, Lazamon’s descriptions and revisions of Penda are also important because they emphasize his personal and cultural connections to the heroic British king, Cadwallan.

Lazamon emphasizes the Welsh connection and debt to the English as well; Cadwallan is not only personally connected to Penda, the English King, but his British heirs will evermore trace their line to a Mercian king, a detail not denied, but certainly not emphasized by Wace (Wace 14657-14660). Lazamon is very clear about the familial ties of the alliance: “*Enne sune hafde Cadwaðlan, Cadwaladar ihaten; he wes Penda suster sune, al of kingen icume; þeos feng to his riche after his fader daiȝe*” (Brut 15865-15867).¹¹¹ Penda is the fulcrum of English/Welsh legal cultural unification—he governs English people with a British Law and is the sire of the matriarchal line of the Welsh kings unto Lazamon’s own time and beyond.

It should be noted, however, that Lazamon found this cultural integration an attractive consequence of the *border* law for significantly different reasons than did the Marcher lords. Whereas the Norman Marcher lords encouraged cultural integration as a

¹¹⁰ [Then it was the morning of the next day, and the household began to stir and the king vested all his promises, he named a large gang to go after Penda, where he lay still in the castle of Exeter, and with much love called him to come to London. Penda came to London; he was well taken in and Cadwallan his kin embraced him with love; and Penda became his vassal there –his honor was the more for it.]

¹¹¹ [One son had Cadwallan called Cadwaladar; he was Penda’s sister’s son, coming all from kings; the kingdom he took after his father’s day]

means of colonization and suppression of anti-Norman activities, Lazamon sees cultural integration as a means of anti-colonial usurpation. As Davies tells us, at the time Lazamon was composing his poem the March districts just upstream on the Severn from Lazamon, Maelienydd and Elfael, were the sites of intense tension, mistrust, and numerous rebellion attempts against the Normans (*Age* 101).¹¹² The Welsh are rebelling on a consistent and often successful, if limited, basis during this time and for some time afterwards. Yet, for colonial rule to be completely cast aside, both conquered peoples of Britain would need to assist in the efforts.

I believe that Lazamon foreshadows the potential of such a unification after the dual marriage and liegeman celebration scenes cited above. In a scene greatly dramatized and expanded from Wace (14391-14424), they turn to their now mutual enemy, Edwine, who has called together a massive army from both the insular and continental nations—Saxony, Denmark, Norway, Wales, Scotland, Orkney, Galloway, Iceland, Friesland and Jutland—to defeat the new alliance between Mercia and Britain:

*Næs he boren nauere in nauer nare burhze
 Þe mihte in æi spelle þat oðer uolc telle.
 Nas hit nauere isæd, no on bocken irad,
 Þat æuer ær weore æi swa muchel ferde
 Æuere in Ængelonde þurh ænie king togadere.*¹¹³ (*Brut* 15574-15578)

Historically speaking, the most powerful of foreign armies ever seen in the British Isles, even to this day, would be the Normans. Though Lazamon is in the general habit of exaggerating, expanding, and dramatizing Wace, given the previous anti-colonial and

¹¹² Davies does not mention Lazamon, of course, but is generally concerned in this section of *The Age of Conquest* with the latter half of the 12th century.

¹¹³ [there was never one born in any town that might any tale of the rest of this army tell. It was never said, nor in any book read that ever before so enormous an army was brought together in England by any king.]

nationalistic concerns, I believe that Lazamon draws us to connect this generally with a very large, both insular and foreign force,¹¹⁴ and specifically with the Normans, who are a very large insular and foreign force during his own time period.

The Mercia/British alliance is, indeed, successful and our poet celebrates the success, as usual, with a pithy summary: *nu wes þe king Cadwalan bliðest alre kempen. Nu wes icleoped Cadwalan, king ouer Anglen. Penda wes king under him and ma þa iqueme weoren him*” (15613-15615).¹¹⁵ This is the first time that such a title has been given to Cadwallan and the first time Penda is so intrinsically associated with him. Lazamon has intimately connected the British king with a local historical figure who is intimately connected with ‘border law’ and the *folc* of that law, both historically and in Lazamon’s time.

Cannon’s suggestion that Lazamon values the continuity of national law is certainly seen in the rhetoric surrounding the transmission of rule and the law from one ruling generation to the next. However, Lazamon’s perceptions and ramifications for that continuity are significantly more regionalist in nature and anti-colonial in purpose than Cannon leads us to think in his article. His resistance to Continental customs and law, his reverence for regionally- and culturally-oriented laws, his emphasis of autonomous and authoritarian judicial rule, and perception of the integrated nature of English and Welsh ‘border’ law educes strong connections with the legal practices of the Norman Marcher lords and the practice of ‘border law’ before the Norman Conquest. His emulation of the

¹¹⁴ In Wace’s account, Edwine only gathers kings “*ki Seidnes furent e Engleis/ plusurs ke reis clamé esteient/ pur realtez cuntez teneient*” [who were Saxons and English/ (many who claimed to be kings in reality held counties)]”

¹¹⁵ [Now was Cadwallan the king blithest of fighters, now was Cadwallan called King of England. Penda was king under him and more who were approved by him]

legal practices of the Marcher lords, however, is akin to the Welsh military's emulation of the Norman armies—respectful admiration of an effective system of rule which can and should be utilized against Norman colonization.

Conclusion

“I have put the *Longaevi* or longlivers into a separate chapter because their place of residence is ambiguous between air and Earth. Whether they are important enough to justify this arrangement is another question. In a sense, if I may risk the oxymoron, their unimportance is their importance. They are marginal, fugitive creatures. They are perhaps the only creatures to whom the Model does not assign, as it were, an official status. Herein lies their imaginative value. **They soften the classic severity of the huge design.** They intrude a welcome hint of wildness and uncertainty into a universe that is in danger of being a little too self-explanatory, too luminous.” (C.S. Lewis *The Discarded Image* 122, my emphasis)

In one of the first intensive studies of *Lazamon's* Merlin, Jeff Rider analyzes the section of the *Brut* concerning Merlin's conception directly in relation to these comments by C.S. Lewis. Rider identifies the “*incubii demones*,” who tricked Merlin's mother into bed (*Brut* 7831-7882), as being a strong example of Lewis's *longaevi*. His major focus in the analysis is that “Merlin is the linchpin of history” and that *Lazamon's* recreation of Merlin emphasizes the poet's “distinct preference for fictional discourse over historical discourse” (2). Though it is not precisely clear why Rider sees *Lazamon's* revisions to Merlin as more ‘fictional’ than Merlin as he is represented in *Wace*, his connection of these incubi and Merlin himself to Lewis's *longaevi* is an astute observation which has not, as yet, been fully considered.

The first two chapters of this project have been, in a way, an attempt to expand that identification of Merlin as an intrinsically important yet liminal figure. He is a character who calls ‘from the wilderness,’ from the ephemeral past, present, and future, for revolution and change. *Lazamon's* recreation of his character from *Wace* educes intrinsic connections with other liminal figures—prophets, heroes, ‘wild men’—of the English and Welsh cultures, coalesced and merged seamlessly into a single powerful

demi-god. His message, like that of his character, is reminiscent of both traditional English and Welsh cultures. Merlin prophesizes an overthrow of the Norman peoples by violent retribution, lead by a warrior-messiah who, like himself, is enveloped in English and Welsh cultural mores. The “wildness and uncertainty” that Merlin imparts upon the history makes him just as much a “marginal, fugitive creature” as that of his spiritous sire.

Furthermore, Merlin’s marginal position within the narrative is analogous to Lazamon’s position outside the narrative. Lazamon is an English poet recreating a history of Welsh kings from largely Norman sources; as such, he bestrides the boundaries of the social, political, and cultural arenas of the 12th-century British Isles while literally bestriding the borders of England and Wales. And, just as Merlin crosses the borders of the natural world to bring a ‘hint of uncertainty’ into Lazamon’s narrative, Lazamon destabilizes the colonial Norman hegemony in the March.

Perhaps this is why Rider’s comment on the connection between Merlin and the *longaevi* seems more a curious aside than demonstrative point: “it is surprising, paradoxical almost, to find the offspring of an incubus demon at the center of history.” To Rider, as to many critics of the *Brut*, Lazamon’s *raison d’être* in composing history is to justify the loss of the English as a product of Providence and “to see the Norman conquest as a divine punishment of the English for their past misdeeds” (12). Yet, as this project demonstrates, Lazamon depicts the rule of Britain as being in a largely transitory state. In a world where historiography was primarily utilized to reinforce the existent hegemony and justify oppression and colonization through Providential History, Lazamon uses history, prophecy, and law to detract from this model/Model.

Lazamon seeks to unify the peoples of the March of Wales through educating these intrinsic cultural mores and inciting violent retribution against the Norman overlords. Yet, paradoxically, his admiration for the system of rule by the Norman lords leads him to emulate the *Lex Marchia* in his presentation of law in the *Brut*. Their stable and inclusive system of law which integrated and controlled the populace of the March was, indeed, worthy of admiration. Yet, it is a system of law that Lazamon sees as having a long *regional* history, and does not materialize with the Normans. As demonstrated by his presentation of Mercian law and (to some degree) validated by the *Dunsæte* Ordinance, Marcher/border law finds its origins in the law practices of Lazamon's audiences' ancestors.

I have tried to show that the cultural unification and unified rebellion against Norman forces that Lazamon sought to incite was, indeed, a real possibility. If, as Sir Frank Merry Stenton says in his *First Century of English Feudalism*, "after the Battle of Hastings the chances were against the survival of the Anglo-Norman monarchy" (qtd in Rex 199), their survival, especially in the west, was far from assured more than 130 years after the Conquest. If Lazamon was as effective at revolution as he was at poetry, or if his sentiments are but a taste of a much larger political movement around the turn of the 13th century, it is a wonder they survived at all.

Appendix:

A Note on the Translations

As I hope is made apparent throughout the course of this project, England's border with Wales was an extremely culturally diverse area during the Middle Ages. Though we will never know precisely how diverse, we can get some sort of indication by considering the diversity of languages utilized in some form over the course of a couple hundred years. My interaction with these languages has been one of the most significant informants to my conceptualization of the complexity and diversity of the March and the environment Lazamon was writing in, therefore, the most apparent aspect of this interaction, the translations of primary sources in my project, warrants some comment.

With only a few exceptions, all translations in the project are my own. These translations, when possible, were checked against other, published translations, and I am very indebted to the work of these professionals. All errors within my translations, of which I am sure there are more than a few, are emphatically my own.

For Lazamon's archaic Middle English, I consulted Barron and Weinberg's respected facing page translation and edition of British Library MS, Cotton Caligula A.ix.

For the Anglo-Norman, Judith Weiss's translation of Wace was very helpful.

For the Latin, the translations I consulted were many in number. All translations of Geoffery of Monmouth, unless otherwise noted, are my own, although Neil Wright's translation (accompanying Reeve's edition) and Lewis Thorpe's translation were consulted. For my selections from *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, my translations were highly informed by Marjorie Chibnall's translation that accompanies her edition. P. McGurk's translation of John of Worcester's chronicle was consulted for my selections thereof. Cary Nederman's translation of John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* was consulted and emended only slightly. J.C. Holt's translation of the Magna Carta accompanying his edition was very helpful in my translation of the portion on the Law of the march. For all other Latin texts I either used the translation completely, as was the case for my few selections from Gerald of Wales, or I did not have a translation to consult, as was the case with the *Dialogus de Scaccario* (though Hughes et al.'s introduction to this was quite helpful).

For the Anglo-Saxon, Miller's facing page translation of *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* was consulted. Elaine Treharne's translation of *The Dream of the Rood* was consulted. Though I did not consult a proper translation of *Beowulf*, the immaculate glossary in Fulk et al.'s edition of *Klaeber's Beowulf* was more helpful than any translation could have been. For the "Ordinance Concerning the Dunsæte" as well as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 'D' text, I did not have a modern English translation.

For the Welsh, I used Sarah Elin Roberts' translations of *LLawysgrif Pomffred* without emendation for the brief sections I used from her very recent edition of MS Peniarth 259b (Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales). Gwyn and Thomas Jones' translation of *Historia Peredur vab Efrafc* was consulted for all selections of that text. For my translation and analysis of *Armes Prydein*, Rachel Bromwich's translation of Sir Ifor Williams' edition and glossary was highly informative, and my departures from her professional and scholarly translation are done at my own risk.

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