

**Exile and Return:
The Development of Political Prophecy on
the Borders of England, c.1136-1450s**

by Victoria E. Flood, BA (Cantab) MPhil (Cantab)

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Abstract

This thesis traces the development of political prophecy in England from the publication of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetiae Merlini* (c.1136-40), to political prophecies in circulation on the eve of the Wars of the Roses. A genre endorsing and naturalising territorial claims, political prophecy was a powerful mode of communal and national address. In the construction of these rights, the authors of English political prophecy leant heavily on contemporary Welsh and Scottish counterclaims, material which was re-inscribed and employed as an endorsement of English hegemony.

An assessment of cross-border influences is fundamental for a balanced study of the genre. From Geoffrey of Monmouth's re-inscription of Welsh prophetic material, to the northern English prophecies ascribed to Thomas of Erceldoune and antecedent texts on the Anglo-Scottish border drawing on Scottish materials, and the later circulation of Erceldoune prophecies on the Anglo-Welsh border, the movement of prophetic material across national lines proved formative. In the study of these sites of re-inscription in this thesis, each text is orientated in its broader geo-political and historical context. This is a scholarly practice which presents a radical departure from a critical framework which in recent years has understood these very different works, composed and circulating in relation to different geo-political and historical factors, as monolithically 'Celtic'.

In the historical development of these prophetic traditions, as they were reapplied by consecutive groups and factions within England and on its borders, the affinities of the border aristocracy played an important role. Political prophecy functioned as a powerful hegemonic strategy, staking political-territorial claims, both regional and more recognisably national. On occasion political prophecy was drawn on directly by members of the aristocracy themselves: most prolifically, the Percy earls of Northumberland; and the Mortimer earls of March, and later Yorkist claimants to the throne.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis, and the research upon which it is based, is my own work. Where reference is made to the works of others, the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and duly acknowledged in the text and bibliography.

This work has not been already accepted in substance for any degree, nor is it being concurrently submitted in candidature at any other university, or for any other degree.

- signed:
- dated: 11 March 2013

Introduction

English Political Prophecy and the Idea of the Celtic Fringe

Sometime he angers me
 With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant,
 Of the dreamer Merlin and his prophecies,
 And of a dragon and a finless fish,
 A clip-wing'd griffin and a moulted raven,
 A couching lion and a ramping cat,
 And such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff
 As puts me from my faith.

(William Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 3.1, 146-53)

By the sixteenth century, the association of the Welsh with prophetic incredulity was commonplace. Nowhere is this marginalising perception more clearly asserted than in William Shakespeare's portrait of the prophetically enthused Welshman Owen Glendower, whose prophetic interests are denounced by his pragmatic Northumbrian ally, Henry 'Hotspur' Percy, in the lines quoted above.¹ In this case, historical fiction stands a far cry from history, and unlike his Shakespearean counterpart, the historical Hotspur – like many Englishmen of the Middle Ages – was certainly as much, if not more, of a prophecy enthusiast than the historical Owain Glyn Dŵr. What is more, the prophecy Shakespeare drew on here was an English production, known as the *Last Six Kings of the English*, a text with a long and enduring influence in the north of England. It was more feasibly known to Hotspur than to Owain.

The association of political prophecy with Welshness has exerted a long influence on understandings of political prophecy beyond the realm of Shakespeare's histories and into that of historical scholarship. Even modern critics have been quick to root English prophecies, wherever they appear in any sense obscure, in Celtic source material common to the literary-

¹ This pervasive perception is discussed by Helen Fulton, 'Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Uses of Prophecy', *Studia Celtica*, 39 (2005), 105-21. For consideration of Shakespeare's Owen see Rees Davies, 'Shakespeare's Glendower and Owain Glyn Dwr', *The Historian*, 66 (2000), 22-25; David J. Baker, 'Glyn Dwr, Glendouer, Glendourdy and Glendower', in *Shakespeare and Wales: From the Marches to the Assembly*, ed. by Willy Maley and Philip Schwyzer (2010), pp.43-58.

political culture of both Wales and Scotland.² This line of reasoning is for the most part unsustainable. However, this is not to say that English prophetic traditions were untouched by Welsh or Scottish influences. By the close of the Middle Ages, English political prophecy stood as the end product of a series of negotiations between Welsh, Scottish, and English influences reworked in line with English political agendas. This was a long historical development far more complex in its relationship to insular borders than the assessment of particular prophetic themes as endemically and uniformly Celtic, allows.

As a survey of English prophetic texts commonly assigned Celtic roots, this thesis is intended to challenge a number of pervasive preconceptions surrounding the history of prophecy in the British Isles, offering a radical revision of the role of Welsh and Scottish models in the history of English political prophecy, and an exploration of the historical and political conditions governing the cross-border transmissions and reception histories of prophetic texts. It charts a process of cross-border literary borrowings, offering a new analysis of Welsh and Scottish influences on the development of English political prophecy from the twelfth-century *Prophetiae Merlini* of Geoffrey of Monmouth (which I understand as a reworking of Welsh prophetic materials) to political prophecies circulating on the eve of the Wars of the Roses.

Literary Scholarship and Medieval Prophecy

The importance of prophecy in English political culture through the late Middle Ages and into the early modern period is now broadly recognised. Scholars of political prophecy no longer malign their material as ‘doggerel’, as did even the most diligent of investigators until comparatively recently.³ Through the works of literary historians like Sharon Jansen, Tim Thornton, and Lesley A. Coote, and their discussions of the role of political prophecy in the structuring of both highly conservative and oppositional political discourses during the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, the fundamentally political function of English prophetic texts has gained broad recognition.⁴ However, a reassessment of the relationship between English

² This is discussed in detail below, pp.3-4.

³ Rossell Hope Robbins, ‘Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions’, in *Manual of Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500*, general ed. Albert E. Hartung, 10 vols, V (1975), pp. 1516-36, 1714-25 (p.1516).

⁴ Sharon Jansen, *Political Prophecy and Protest Under Henry VIII* (1991); Sharon Jansen, ‘Prophecy, Propaganda, and Henry VIII: Arthurian Tradition in the Sixteenth Century’, in *King Arthur through the Ages*, ed. by Valerie M. Lagorio and Mildred Leake Day (1990), pp. 275-91; Tim Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People in Early Modern England* (2006); L. A. Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (2000).

texts and the uses of prophecy in Wales and Scotland has remained largely beyond the scope of scholarly enquiry. There are two important exceptions in this respect: M. E. Griffiths's assessment of points of interaction between English and Welsh prophetic traditions in her 1937 study, *Early Vaticination in Welsh with English Parallels*; and Helen Fulton's recent discussion of the translation and re-working of English prophecy texts in late medieval Welsh literary political culture.⁵ Comparative work concerning Anglo-Scottish lines of prophetic influence remains a still lesser explored field, with the exception of conjecture regarding the reputedly Scottish sources of the prophecies ascribed to Thomas of Erceldoune.⁶

Scholars of the medieval English tradition on its own have by and large failed to recognise the full implications of the cultural connections evidenced by Griffiths's and Fulton's studies, although Anglo-centric scholarship remains seduced by the notion of an ill-defined Celtic influence acting upon English political prophecy. The only two full-length scholarly contributions to the study of medieval English political prophecy, Rupert Taylor's early twentieth-century *Political Prophecy in England*, now largely superseded by Coote's *Prophecy and Public Affairs* (2000), provide essential overviews of the field, but are both highly problematic in their approach to the cross-border influences at work on English political prophecy.⁷ Taylor's primary engagement in this respect is with the question of Welsh influence on English prophecy. Where he perceived a connection between Welsh and English prophecies, Taylor posited complete translations of single Welsh sources, and the existence of now-lost texts, rather than the more subtle re-working of Welsh themes and motifs in line with English agendas which, my own research suggests, were more commonly the case.⁸ The major problem with Taylor's discussion is largely that of his critical vocabulary, which does not lend itself to considerations of cultural functionality and political re-inscription. His study is in this sense very much a product of its time.

In this particular respect, Coote's conclusions evidence a more pervasive assumption concerning the relationship between English prophetic writings and those of Wales and also Scotland. Coote's fullest engagement with the question of Celtic influence is found in her definition of a new genre of 'popular prophecy' detailed in an article co-written with Tim Thornton. Here a division, implied in *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, is drawn between 'mainstream'

⁵ M. E. Griffiths, *Early Vaticination in Welsh With English Parallels* (1937); Helen Fulton, *Welsh Prophecy and English Politics in the Later Middle Ages* (2009).

⁶ The contentions of previous scholarship in regard to this are discussed in Chapter 3.

⁷ Rupert Taylor, *Political Prophecy in England* (1911); see above, n.4.

⁸ Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp.44-47.

Latin prophecies, concerned with the imperial image of the kings of England, and vernacular materials assumed to have been in oral circulation, and as such more broadly speaking ‘popular’.⁹ This division is ill-founded. In Coote and Thornton’s schema, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Prophetiae Merlini*, the fundamental source text for the vast majority of Latin and vernacular political prophecies circulating in England from the twelfth to seventeenth centuries, is attributed an essentially ‘popular’ source, in that it is held to have been derived from Welsh vernacular material, understood by the authors as in oral circulation.¹⁰ Although there was almost certainly an oral aspect to the circulation of early Welsh literary material, this does not preclude manuscript circulation, and more importantly, does not suggest, as Coote and Thornton understand it, that Geoffrey’s Welsh sources ‘originated in a lower social stratum’.¹¹ Welsh prophecies survive as elements of a *literary* tradition, and what is more, a culturally and politically central one. In medieval Wales, political prophecy was addressed not to a credulous peasantry, but was composed about, and on occasion for, the Welsh princes, often drawing on historical and mythic king lists.¹²

Nearly all of the prophecies surveyed in this thesis are classified by Coote as ‘popular’, regarded as culturally and socially marginal, and associated unquestioningly with an assumed Celticity and orality.¹³ Of the northern English Erceldoune tradition, for example, one of the central strands of prophecy discussed in the following chapters, Coote notes its representative value as derivative of ‘an earlier Celtic, originally oral tradition’, of a similar type to the ‘Celtic’ influences at work on the *Prophetiae Merlini*.¹⁴ Celticity here appears to be functioning as a catch-all term for prophetic materials that show signs of cross-border influence, and aligns both Welsh and Scottish traditions with a common, but apparently obscure, body of source traditions. The assumption of a now-lost but nonetheless shared Scottish and Welsh prophetic tradition as the ultimate source of both the *Prophetiae Merlini*, composed by a Cambro-Norman cleric writing in Oxford during the 1130s; and the extant Erceldoune tradition, conceived on the Anglo-Scottish border during the early years of the Scottish Wars of Independence, is unsustainable. Such a model collapses the differences between the very different cultural contexts of these

⁹ Lesley A. Coote and Tim Thornton, ‘Merlin, Erceldoune, Nixon: A Tradition of Popular Political Prophecy’, in *New Medieval Literatures IV*, ed. by Wendy Scase *et al* (2001), pp.117-37 (pp.118-23).

¹⁰ Coote and Thornton, pp.118-19. See also Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.54.

¹¹ Coote and Thornton, p.118, n.4.

¹² Cf. Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, pp.90-94, 98, 100, 106,118, 130. For a discussion of late fourteenth and fifteenth-century prophetic panegyrics see R. Wallis Evans, ‘Prophetic Poetry’, in *A Guide to Welsh Literature, 1282-c.1550*, ed. by A. O. H. Jarman and Gwilym Rees Hughes (1997), pp.256-74 (pp.268, 269-70).

¹³ Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.100; Coote and Thornton, p.126.

¹⁴ Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.100.

productions, and precludes any investigation of the genuine influence of Welsh material on Geoffrey's *Historia*, or Scottish on the Erceldoune prophecies. This perception of a monolithic Celticity inscribes Welsh and Scottish prophecy material with an indelible otherness, placing possible analogues and source texts far beyond the reach, and intellectual responsibility, of English scholarship. (Such a methodology would be unimaginable in discussions of, for example, French influences on medieval English literature). This renders impossible any meaningful analysis of the crucial role of border transmission in the historical development of the English genre.

Apprehension of the shadowy forces of Celticity and orality is related to one further commonly-perceived obstacle to the study of political prophecy: the question of lines of transmission. The notion that prophecies are in some sense more open to oral circulation than other forms of political literature, denies the formative role of clerical manuscript culture in both the circulation and the construction of political prophecies. The presence of vernacular witnesses or analogues is not evidence of orality. This argument is unimaginable in the study of non-prophetic texts. For example, few critics would now claim exclusively oral sources for a work of medieval romance on the basis of its vernacular status alone. Although the association of prophecy with orality is born from the very understandable idea that as political documents people were talking about these works, we cannot automatically, on the basis of political topicality, deny that these were in the first instance literary texts. As Sharon Jansen's investigations have shown, even in the early Tudor period, from which we possess some of the most clearly documented evidence of the oral circulation of political prophecies, prophetic rumours remained associated with the transmission of prophetic manuscripts.¹⁵ The study of political prophecy remains first and foremost an engagement with textual history.

A fundamental principle of my own enquiry is that vernacular prophecies are in no way less aligned with continuous literary traditions than Latin ones. An easy division between Latin and vernacular prophetic culture in medieval Wales has recently been challenged by Patrick Sims-Williams, who argues for 'basic assumptions' common to both Latin and vernacular prophecies.¹⁶ A similar awareness of the permeability of Latin and vernacular writings is necessary in medieval English scholarship if we are to reach a fuller understanding of genres like political prophecy, the

¹⁵ Cf. Jansen, *Prophecy and Protest*, pp.27, 39.

¹⁶ Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, ed. A. O. H. Jarman, Rachel Bromwich, and Brynley F. Roberts (1993 rpt;1991), pp.33-72 (p.35). The material Sims-Williams has in mind here is discussed further below, Chapter 1, p.22.

discursive conventions of which extend across languages. In the terms of my analysis, political prophecy, both Latin and vernacular, is understood first and foremost as a (highly political) literary genre, defined by the use of a specific discourse. Unlike Coote, I hold this discourse to be consistent across Latin and vernacular productions for the greater part of the Middle Ages.¹⁷ I do not regard extant manuscript witnesses of allegedly ‘popular’ vernacular prophecies as the fleeting and transitory movement of these materials into a primarily latinate manuscript culture, but rather evidence of their literary origins and status, as derivatives from a latinate model: the *Prophetiae Merlini*. My aim is to orientate manuscript texts of works long considered ‘popular’, in relation to their textual circulation, constructing lines of transmission (including transmission across national lines) by reconstructing the geographical circulation and salience of particular types of prophecy in particular regions, during particular periods, considering how they functioned in relation to long-lived political literary traditions which were recurrently invested with new meanings. From here we can begin to understand precisely where and when major points of innovation occurred in English prophetic traditions.

The English prophecies surveyed in this study are indebted to the transmission of political prophetic materials in border milieux on the Anglo-Welsh and Anglo-Scottish borders. I do not seek to assign an innate ‘border’ character to these texts, and I do not here regard border writing as a separate genre in itself.¹⁸ Such a process is as fundamentally detrimental to scholarship as monolithic claims of Celticity. The evidence for each point of Anglo-Welsh or Anglo-Scottish intersection is analysed on its own merits, and a strategy of particularism is here pursued as the surest course.¹⁹ However, prophetic texts of the Anglo-Welsh and the Anglo-Scottish border invite comparative study in one important respect: as the domains of the once-called ‘over-mighty subjects’ of the kings of England. In political prophecies circulating in both regions, from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, we see a localised application of national territorial rights as constructed by Geoffrey of Monmouth. In many respects, the regional histories of political prophecy encapsulate what Janet Meisel, in her study of the barons of the Welsh border, has observed as a profound tension between ‘regicentric’ England and the Marcher barons, who, as R. R. Davies notes, must be understood as ‘petty kings of petty

¹⁷ For Coote’s assessment of political prophecy as a discourse see *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.1-12.

¹⁸ For this method see Michelle Warren, *History of the Edge: Excalibur and the Borders of Britain, 1100-1300* (2000).

¹⁹ This method has been espoused in recent critical literature concerning the overenthusiastic presentation of Irish and Welsh literary commonality. Patrick Sims-Williams, ‘Celtomania and Celto-scepticism’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 36 (1998), 1-35; Patrick Sims-Williams, *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* (2010), esp. Introduction; Mark Williams, *Fiery Shapes: Celestial Portents in Ireland and Wales, 700-1700* (2010); David N. Dumville, ‘“Celtic” Visions of England’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Culture*, ed. by Andrew Galloway (2011), pp.107-28.

kingdoms'.²⁰ In their adoption of prophetic strategies, non-royal dynasties assumed a mode of self-identification very close to that of the kings of England, to whom Galfridian prophecy was also enthusiastically applied.

As Helen Cooper has observed, prophetic material came to function during the later Middle Ages as a form of origin myth comparable to the dynastic uses of romance, providing a re-writing, or at least a sanitising, of history.²¹ Political prophecy functioned as potent propaganda during periods of regnal change or instability, but it also rested on (and, I shall argue, provides important evidence of) the building of affinities by border magnates, and the cementation of regional power bases. The animal symbols of Galfridian prophecy came to figure heraldic emblems as part of an aristocratic political discourse active well into the early modern period.²² From a very early stage in its history, political prophecy emerged as a fundamentally factionalist genre. The ciphers of the vast majority of the political prophecies surveyed in the course of this thesis are not (as prophecy has long been considered) obscure and ultimately beyond the reconstructive activities of the literary historian. Rather, in the vast majority of cases, the meaning of arrangements of symbolic and heraldic materials can be reconstructed through an assessment of specific regional and factional prophecy conventions, and the sway of local and national political figures during, and in, a given time and place.

Theoretical Framework

This thesis charts the origins and development of Galfridian prophecy in England as a fundamentally inter-textual process. Over the course of the three centuries surveyed, old prophecies were drawn into new contexts, and combined with additional materials, English, Scottish, and Welsh. Each act of re-combination entailed a concurrent re-inscription, a reflexive process operating in relation to periods of social and political crisis. Yet political prophecy was not a simply reactive genre, it also must be understood in relation to a very particular *longue durée*: the prophetic strategies of dynastic and royal presentation and self-representation that took root

²⁰ Janet Meisel, *Barons of the Welsh Frontier* (1980), p.xviii; R. R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (2000), p.391.

²¹ Helen Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune: Romance as Prophecy', in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (2005), pp. 171-87; Helen Cooper, 'Romance After Bosworth', in *The Court and Cultural Diversity*, ed. by Evelyn Mullally and John Thompson (1977), pp.149-57 (p.150); Helen Cooper, 'Literary Reformations of the Middle Ages', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Culture*, pp.259-78 (pp.263-64).

²² Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971), p.462.

in particular regions of the British Isles, evolving over a three-hundred-year period through the addition of new texts and new meanings to what we can most intelligibly term, the prophetic canon.

At the root of the composition, dissemination, and re-inscription of political prophecy in the British Isles between c.1136 and the 1450s lies a number of competing conceptions of the nation: its people and its borders. Much attention has been paid to the meaning of the nation and national sentiment in the British Isles during the Middle Ages and the early modern period, and political prophecy has naturally been aligned with this scholarly trend.²³ The question of what in historical terms constitutes the medieval nation (indeed, if we can even speak of a medieval nation) is not one the evidence gathered in this thesis can resolve, other than to observe that the concerns which run through the prophetic material surveyed here on occasion come very close to modern notions of the nation: the rights of particular peoples to particular territories and self-rule. The appeals to a tripartite Britain, and an independent Scotland and Wales, which recur across the medieval material surveyed here, anticipate questions which have set the pace of debate on what precisely 'Britain' means (its territorial extent, its rulers, and its laws) into the twenty-first century. In medieval political prophecy, we can observe what Saskia Sassen has identified as the constituent pre-occupations of the incipient nation: territory, authority, and rights;²⁴ and, most importantly for my study, the strategic cultural identifications which endorsed these claims.

The vast majority of extant English, Scottish, and Welsh political prophecies, including all of the examples discussed in this thesis, rest on a fundamentally similar model of the British past and future, a Welsh prophecy-type reworked for English, and later Scottish, consumption by Geoffrey of Monmouth: the paradigm of exile and return, by which a land is understood as the birthright of a particular people. Across England, Scotland, and Wales throughout the Middle Ages, political prophecies (both Latin and vernacular) functioned as statements of the time-honoured rights of the 'Britons' to rule over a divinely sanctioned insular territory, whilst whoever in contemporary terms this people might be, and whatever in practice that territory

²³ Cf. G.C. Coulton, 'Nationalism in the Middle Ages', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 1 (1935), 15-40; Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (1997, 2nd edn; 1984); David Matthews, *Writing to the King: Nation, Kingship, and Literature in England, 1250-1350* (2010); Hirokazu Tsurushima, ed., *Nations in Medieval Britain* (2010); Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation* (1996); Kathy Lavezzo, *Imagining a Medieval English Nation* (2003); Philip Schwyzer and Simon Meador, *Archipelagic Identities: Literature and Identity in the Atlantic Archipelago, 1500-1800* (2004). For the application of this to political prophecy see Coote and Thornton, pp.126-31, although the conclusions drawn here are problematic in their assessment of Celtic influence.

²⁴ Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights* (2006).

might constitute, remained open to re-definition.²⁵ The vast and rapid dissemination of Geoffrey's *Prophetiae* saw English, and from the early fourteenth century, Scottish, interest groups assume a mantle of entitled Britishness, appropriating an identification which was at one time exclusively Welsh.²⁶ The uses of political prophecy inevitably involve a certain re-writing of history in the framing of strategic identities articulating territorial claims: in order to say that *we* were always meant to be *here*.

In understanding the selective nature of British identities amongst border communities in medieval Britain, the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha's framework is conceptually very useful. Although the phenomena Bhabha identified were understood in his terms as modern and postmodern, subsequent scholarly activity in Medieval Studies suggests these are processes at work in medieval texts also. Bhabha is concerned (as am I) with the formation of strategies of national address in situations marked by an essential power imbalance, where of two peoples, both of whom identify themselves as a distinct ethnicity, one dominates the other. Although the application of the term 'colonial' or 'postcolonial' to the insular Middle Ages, and Anglo-Welsh relations in particular, has proven controversial for some, I follow a number of scholars in this usage.²⁷ Where a number of literary-historians have fruitfully looked to Bhabha's works on subaltern mimicry, particularly as regards Anglo-Welsh relations,²⁸ I am concerned with the same process in reverse: how English, and later Scottish, writers came to claim essentially Welsh political-literary structures and modes of identification as their own.

Like Bhabha, I am not concerned with the nation itself, but the terms of national address through which peoples come to be constituted, a phenomenon that is:

²⁵ Changing understandings of Britain and Britishness have attracted considerable critical comment in recent years: Cf. R. R. Davies, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles 1093-1343* (2000); Roger A. Mason, 'Elizabethan England and the Idea of Britain', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), 279-93; Ralph Griffiths, 'The Island of England in the Fifteenth Century: Perceptions of the Peoples of the British Isles', *Journal of Medieval History*, 29 (2003), 177-200; Huw Pryce, 'British or Welsh: National Identity in Twelfth-century Wales', *English Historical Review*, 16 (2001), 775-801.

²⁶ For the dissemination of the *Historia* see below, n.32.

²⁷ Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, (1993), pp.185, 221. R. R. Davies, 'Colonial Wales', *Past and Present*, 65 (1974), 3-23 (p.3). This question is discussed in some detail in relation to the twelfth century by Michael Richter, *Giraldus Cambrensis: The Growth of the Welsh Nation* (1972), pp.61-65.

²⁸ Stephen Knight, 'Resemblance of Menace: A Post-colonial Reading of *Peredur*', in *Canbwyll Marchogyon: Cyd-Destunoli Peredur*, ed. by Sioned Davies and Peter Wynn Thomas (2000), pp.128-47; Helen Fulton, 'Class and Nation: Defining the English in Late-Medieval Welsh Poetry', in *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales*, ed. by R. Kennedy and S. Meecham-Jones (2008), pp.191-212. For other relevant considerations of medieval postcolonialism see Simon Gaunt, 'Can the Middle Ages be Postcolonial?' *Comparative Literature*, 61 (2009), 160-76; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (2001), and *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain* (2006); Warren, *History on the Edge*, pp.25-59.

... more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structure of social antagonism.... the complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of ‘the people’ or ‘the nation’ and make them the immanent subjects of a range of social and literary narratives’.²⁹

The political prophecies discussed in this thesis constitute a ‘discursive address’ which identifies the users of prophecy as British. Across the milieux surveyed in this thesis, to invoke Britishness is to draw on an exceptionally strong, and highly specific, cultural identity, addressing one community to the exclusion of others. However, these social and literary narratives remained open to multiple re-inscriptions, and vestiges of prior political and regional uses remain as markers in the historical tradition itself. It is from the identification of these markers that my project takes its impetus.

Chapter Overview

Each prophetic text surveyed in this thesis does not exist in isolation, but in relation to the prophetic tradition, or traditions, rooted in the long-lived reader reception history of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Prophetiae Merlini*, and the wealth of subsequent texts known, from Geoffrey’s name, as Galfridian.

Chapter One offers an overview of the re-inscription of the meta-narrative of Welsh political prophecy in prophecies produced in England and on the Welsh border during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It begins with a foundational moment in the history of English political prophecy: Geoffrey of Monmouth’s reworking of Welsh political prophetic themes in his *Prophetiae Merlini*, extant as Book VII of his history of the mythic British past, the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (produced c.1136-40). The influence of Geoffrey’s writing on subsequent English, Welsh, and Scottish literary, historical, and prophetic traditions must not be underestimated. The *Historia*, including the *Prophetiae*, survives in over 200 extant manuscripts, a

²⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (2004, rpt; 1994), pp.200-01.

number of which treat the *Prophetiae* as an independent text in its own right.³⁰ Given its widespread and long-lived influence, an understanding of the nature of Geoffrey's prophetic activity must form the basis of any study in the field. Geoffrey reworked for an Anglo-Norman audience a Welsh historical and prophetic model staging the loss of British (that is Welsh) mythic insular unity associated with the Saxon invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries, and its future restoration.

The *Prophetiae* forms the basis for the paradigm of exile and return which governs almost every major work of English, and a great deal of Scottish, political prophecy from the twelfth century onwards. It is from this essential structure that this thesis takes its title. The purpose of Geoffrey's application of a Welsh historical-prophetic model to contemporary Anglo-Norman affairs was two-fold. He employed it both as an account of the Saxon 'exile' following the Norman Conquest of 1066, an authorisation of the Norman colonisation of England and Wales as a British return to the island from exile overseas (a complex identificatory mechanism); and a warning to an ecclesiastical and aristocratic audience of the threats waiting on the Welsh border as the Anglo-Norman kingdom descended into civil war. This latter application was somewhat more faithful to the original function of Welsh political prophecy, and proved to be instrumental in the structuring of English anxieties about the stability of borders throughout the Middle Ages.

The second and third parts of the chapter consider the influence of Geoffrey's uses of Welsh prophecy models on the Cambro-Norman aristocracy of the Welsh March in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, through the prophecies of Merlin Silvester composed by Gerald of Wales in his framing of the rights of his broader familial milieu, the Cambro and Hiberno-Norman dynasty known as the Geraldines, to the newly conquered Irish territories.³¹ Alongside elements of the *Prophetiae*, Gerald's prophecies were reworked in the thirteenth-century prophecy collection known as the *Prophecy of the Eagle*, an articulation of opposition to King John. This text has very strong claims to a Welsh-border provenance. Both are important documents of the reception history of the *Prophetiae* on the Welsh March, but also are demonstrative of a continued (albeit highly selective dialogue) between Welsh and English

³⁰ Julia Crick, *Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth IV: Dissemination and Reception in the Later Middle Ages* (1991), esp. pp.64-65.

³¹ I understand the Welsh March here as a term encompassing both the northern and the southern Anglo-Welsh borders, and the conquest states of the south-west. For discussions of the term see: R. R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales* (1978), pp.1-33; Kevin Mann, 'The March of Wales: A Question of Terminology', *Welsh History Review*, 18 (1996), 1-13; Max Lieberman, *The Medieval March of Wales* (2010), pp.1-22.

prophecy models. This material consolidated the process of transference we find in the *Prophetiae*: the means by which English interest groups came to draw on Welsh strategies of address.

By the early fourteenth century this movement had a broad utility far beyond the Welsh March. The relationship between strategic British identifications and regional politics is explored in Chapter Two in regard to the Anglo-Scottish border. During the early decades of the fourteenth century, a period of extreme northern English antipathy towards Scotland, the malleable concept of British rights came to inform the localised application of political prophecy. In their uses of Galfridian prophecy, the northern English borderers became the displaced peoples of British mythic history, awaiting the arrival of a long-prophesied British hero to restore lost territorial rights, a hero understood as the king of England. It is with such mentalities that we must align one of the most famous examples of the late medieval English Galfridian tradition (we have seen, in circulation until Shakespeare's day), the early fourteenth-century *Last Six Kings of the English*. This text represents a considerable engagement with material drawn from the Anglo-Scottish border: both prevalent English Galfridian strategies claiming English rights in Scotland, and a concurrent Scottish mode of Galfridian prophecy which came to frame antipathy towards the English pretenders. The long life of the *Six Kings* in the northernmost counties of England, alongside Scottish elements in English circulation, is clearly evidenced by the second text with which Chapter Two is concerned: a reworking of the *Six Kings* in a political prophetic ballad from the Northumberland-Cumberland border, *Als Y Yod*.

War is a condition germane for the production of oppositional materials, in that it makes strategies of factional address visible, and opens them out to contestation and radical re-inscriptions by and for new groups. Thus it is from the years of the Scottish Wars of Independence that we find the richest, and most enduring, English uses of Scottish prophecy-themes. This direction of influence is apparent not only in the *Six Kings* but in the English Erceldoune tradition, the fourteenth-century witnesses of which, spanning the period c.1335-88, are the subject of Chapter Three. The Erceldoune tradition represents a significant northern English reworking of Scottish historical and prophetic traditions concerning the wars, re-inscribed with highly jingoistic English meanings.³² The upper limit of this period saw the earliest uses of political prophecy in the north of England by an interest group exhibiting political loyalties extraneous to, but ultimately compatible with, the kings of England: the Percy earls of

³² This marks an important departure from Coote's analysis that as pessimistic prophecies, the Erceldoune tradition must be understood as an element of 'popular' counter culture, rather than 'mainstream' jingoism. *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, cf. p.109.

Northumberland. Although the evidence surveyed here suggests that in the late 1380s regional allegiance to the Percies could co-exist alongside allegiance to the king, the growing association towards the end of the fourteenth century of Percy prowess with the territorial rights, and regional autonomy, of the northern English borderers, set the scene for the direct contestation of royal government in the early fifteenth century.

Following the break with the Lancastrian monarchy, there is evidence for the development of a distinctive tradition of Percy-ite political prophecy in the north of England, a tradition which was transplanted to the Anglo-Welsh border during the family's involvements there in the early fifteenth century. This forms the subject of Chapter Four. Here, for the first time in the history of political prophecy, we see an assertion not simply of regional rights, but of aristocratic pretensions to the crown expressed through political prophecy. The most important Percy-ite prophecy of this period is *Cock in the North*, a text aligned with the northern English Erceldoune tradition, and profoundly influenced by the jingoistic uses of the *Six Kings* in northern England. However, its major interest lies in its role as a prophetic articulation of the Tripartite Indenture between English and Welsh rebels against Henry IV, and its presentiment of a dramatic shift in the balance of insular power. Early fifteenth-century Percy-ite prophecy provides striking evidence of an English endorsement of Welsh demands for independence, prompted by the perception of an English regional kingship in the northern English counties associated with the Percies held to be analogous to Wales in its right to self-government.

Chapter Five explores the afterlife of this tradition on the Anglo-Welsh border in the mid-fifteenth century, returning to the theme of political prophecy as a form of dynastic strategy in this region considered in Chapter One. During the 1450s, *Cock in the North* came to function as a staple of proto-Yorkist political prophecy throughout England. What is most interesting for my purposes is the specifically Anglo-Welsh political expectations that *Cock in the North*, and a number of mid-fifteenth-century derivatives, came to encode as they were re-imagined in the Welsh March. This is a movement grounded in the long-lived memory of the Tripartite Indenture in this region, and the role the Mortimer ancestors of Richard duke of York played in the original alliance. It was almost certainly on the Welsh March that the Erceldoune tradition saw its earliest proto-Yorkist re-inscriptions: the beginning of a network of prophetic meanings that proved influential for the rebels of Jack Cade's Revolt, in London in 1450. The use of Erceldoune prophecies in the 1450 revolt provides the earliest fully documented evidence of the

use of this material on a genuinely popular level. However, this must be understood in relation to a long-lived aristocratic discourse, which began in the Mortimer heartlands, the Welsh March.

The proto-Yorkist uses of British territorial claims represent the final stages in a process which began with the *Prophetiae Merlini*, by which Welsh strategies of collective address came to be employed in line with English political agendas. By the mid-fifteenth century, we find a common prophecy tradition, drawing on the British territorial rights of the earls of March, in circulation from the Welsh March to London and the northern English border, emblematic of an awareness on the eve of the Wars of the Roses in England and Wales of the cohesive power of political factionalism, and its power to engender new modes of political affiliation spanning borders, but constructed in decidedly nationalist terms.

Chapter 1

Exile and Return:

The Applications of Welsh Political Prophecy in the *Prophetiae Merlini*, the Giraldian Collection, and the *Prophecy of the Eagle*

The first chapter of this thesis presents an overview of the re-use of Welsh material in political prophecies produced in England and on the Anglo-Welsh border during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.¹ The re-inscription, and effective Normanisation (later Anglicisation), of Welsh prophetic material during this period had far-reaching effects on the development of political prophecy not simply in England, but throughout the British Isles. It is here that a British honour group, at the centre of Welsh political prophecy, was first opened up for Norman, English (and later Scottish) consumption, and came to interpellate new forms of national identity. This chapter considers the use of Welsh tropes and models in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetiae Merlini*, the writings of Gerald of Wales, and the early thirteenth-century composite prophecy known as the *Prophecy of the Eagle*, as statements pertaining to a perception of a Welsh or a broader pan-Celtic threat; and as an appropriated term of national address. The permeable boundary I observe here between the prophetic terms through which threats were perceived, and through which identities were articulated, is apparent in the cross-border re-use of prophetic material surveyed throughout this thesis.

The application of cross-border material is always in some sense double. As Homi Bhabha observes, composite in its origins, the time of the nation is always 'double and split', built upon elements with competing and overlapping meanings, both anterior and dominant.² Bhabha's ideas have been drawn on in recent years in the analysis of the writings of Marcher clerics, providing a framework through which we can understand the national identities

¹ For a discussion of group identity during this period and questions of appropriate scholarly terminology see Hugh M. Thomas, *The English and the Normans* (2003); John Gillingham, 'The English Invasion of Ireland', in *The English in the Twelfth Century* (2000), pp.145-60. In this chapter I regard the early audience of Geoffrey as essentially Anglo-Norman; later readers of Geoffrey, including Gerald of Wales, Anglo and Cambro-Norman; and the author-compiler of the *Eagle* and his early audience, Anglo-Welsh and English in a sense more generally recognisable to us.

² Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, p.206.

expressed by such authors as irreducibly hybrid.³ We might view Geoffrey, Gerald, and the author-compiler of the *Eagle* in such a reading as at once Norman (or Anglo-Norman) and Welsh. Yet cultural affinity or interest, and political orientation are not one and the same thing. In the uses of Welsh prophecy in these works we do not see an expression of a hybrid cultural identity so much as the co-option of cultural strategy. In this particular respect, Bhabian critique proves useful to the study of political prophecy, allowing analysis of the means by which signifiers both retained and accrued culturally disparate meanings. The three texts considered in this chapter evidence a process of re-inscription which functions not as a full displacement of a text's anterior meaning within pre-colonial (i.e. Welsh) society, but a postcolonial (Anglo-Norman or Cambro-Norman) supplement, 'intervening not in the stead of, but alongside'.⁴ The new text remains dependent on the source text as the fundamental condition of its meaning: Welsh political mythology was reworked for Anglo-Norman consumption within a new political-cultural framework, the meaning of which, however, remained dependent on the prior meaning of its Welsh sources.

1. 1 The *Prophetiae Merlini*

It is now commonly accepted that Geoffrey of Monmouth possessed some level of acquaintance with elements of Welsh political prophecy.⁵ His engagement with this material is nowhere more clearly in evidence than in the appearance of the principal heroes of the earliest extant Welsh prophecies, Cynan and Cadwaladr (latinised as Conanus and Cadualadrus), in his *Prophetiae*

³ Cohen, 'In the Borderlands: The Identities of Gerald of Wales', in *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain*, pp.77-109; see also Warren, *History on the Edge*, pp.25-26.

⁴ Bhabha, p.277.

⁵ A. O. H. Jarman, 'The Merlin Legend and the Welsh Tradition of Prophecy', in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, pp.117-45; A. O. H. Jarman, *Legend of Merlin* (1970), pp.10-12, 23-25; Brynley F. Roberts, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh Historical Tradition', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 20 (1976), 29-40; Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, pp.57-83; Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* (1960), p.xcvii, n.2; Fulton, *Welsh Prophecy and English Politics in the Late Middle Ages*, pp.5-6; D. Edel, 'Geoffrey's So-called Animal Symbolism and Insular Celtic Tradition', *Studia Celtica*, 18-19 (1983-1984), 96-109; Karen Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (2010), pp.78-93; Stephen Knight, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power through the Ages* (2009), pp.5-6, 21.

Geoffrey's knowledge of Welsh is discussed by T. D. Crawford, 'On the Linguistic Competence of Geoffrey of Monmouth', *Medium Aevum*, 51 (1982), 152-58.

Merlini, preserved as Book VII of the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (composed c.1136-40),⁶ and the prophecies of his final work, the *Vita Merlini* (c.1155), a life of the prophet Merlin.⁷ In his use of Cynan-Cadwaladr material, Geoffrey did far more than utilise the names of the Welsh mythic heroes alone, he worked with a deeply entrenched model of Welsh prophecy which informed the very structural principles behind the *Prophetiae*. What interests me here is how in the *Prophetiae*, Geoffrey came to use this structure as a mode of Norman historical commentary, and a corresponding vision of the Norman future.

The names of the heroes codify expectations for the re-assertion of British rule: the restoration of a mythic insular wholeness fractured by the coming of the Saxons, and later the Normans.⁸ At the centre of Welsh prophecy we find reconfigured memories of the Saxon invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries, now regarded by scholars as something of a Welsh origin legend.⁹ In Welsh political prophecy the Saxon arrival signifies the beginning of a new historical period of exile and loss, understood in relation to a threefold historical progression: from the mythic unity of the British past, to a period of oppression during the time of Saxon domination, followed by Saxon overthrow and the restoration of British supremacy by the genre's customary heroes, a form of secularised Last Judgement, instigating an insular golden age. By the twelfth century, the age of foreign oppression was extended to Norman occupation, and the Normans (customarily identified as the French) entered Welsh prophecy as a new national enemy. Alongside memories of Roman occupation and the Saxon, the Norman invasion was understood as an insular *gormes* (plural: *gormesoedd*), a term encompassing hostile occupation or plague, both human and supernatural (a framework preserved in the Welsh triads).¹⁰ In post-1066 Welsh prophecy, the Norman presence in the British Isles was no more than a continuation of the Saxon, integrated into a long-lived mythic-heroic framework. In Geoffrey's re-use of

⁶ *Prophetiae Merlini*, 110-14, printed as Book VII in Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. by Michael D. Reeve, transl. by Neil Wright (2007), pp.142-59.

⁷ *The Vita Merlini*, ed. by John Jay Parry (1925), 967-73. For discussions of the date and provenance of the text see *ibid.*, pp.9-15; H. L. D. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 2 vols (1883-1910), I, pp. 278-88; John J. Parry, 'The Date of the *Vita Merlini*', *Modern Philology*, 22 (1925), 413-15; Basil Clarke, *The Life of Merlin* (1973), pp.40-42.

⁸ Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Some Functions of Origin Stories in Medieval Wales', in *History and Heroic Tale*, ed. by T. Nyberg, P. M. Sorensen, and A. Trommer (1989), pp.91-131; Brynley F. Roberts, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* and *Brut Y Brenhinedd*', in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, pp.97-116 (pp.102-03).

⁹ Sims-Williams, 'Some Functions of Origin Stories in Medieval Wales', pp.105-06.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.105,114; Bromwich, *Trioedd*, pp.84-87; Roberts, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh Historical Tradition', p.33.

Welsh political prophecy then, we are looking at the deployment of material fundamentally antipathetic to Norman hegemony, re-made in a Norman image.

Geoffrey's Programme

Although (as the second and third parts of this chapter will detail) Geoffrey's work was formative in the articulation of distinctively Cambro-Norman identities in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries, his original project must not (as it has been categorised in recent scholarship) be understood as an example of 'border writing', in the sense of work undertaken on the periphery, at a remove from Anglo-centric interests and power structures.¹¹ Although Geoffrey's Welsh-border origin (Monmouth) was presumably his prime credential for his stated task in the prologue to the *Prophetiae* as a translator, 'de Britannico in Latinum' (9) (which I understand as an allusion to Welsh prophetic material), by no means was the *Prophetiae* written from a marginal cultural position.

The circumstances of the text's composition place it within the Anglo-Norman cultural mainstream. In its separate prologue, the *Prophetiae* is dedicated to Alexander, archbishop of Lincoln. It was almost certainly composed at Oxford, a site of ecclesiastical learning, and just the environment in which, as Julia Crick notes, we would expect to find the production and dissemination of works of twelfth-century apocalypticism (which in many respects the *Prophetiae* is).¹² There appears to have been an enthusiasm for British literary culture in Oxford during the 1130s. Although previously understood exclusively in relation to Breton material, we might conjecture Welsh political prophecy as one facet of the interests of the so-called Lincoln circle.¹³ Geoffrey's acknowledgement of Walter, archdeacon of Oxford, in the prologue to the *Historia* as the provider of the spurious British book, more likely a man acquainted with fragments of Welsh and Breton materials amongst other 'exoticis hystoriis', suggests the existence of something of a

¹¹ Warren, *History on the Edge*, pp.25-59; Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, *King Arthur and the Myth of History* (2004), p.45.

¹² Lewis Thorpe, ed. and transl., *History of the Kings of Britain* (1966), pp.13-14; Crick, *Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth IV*, pp.221-22.

¹³ Roberts, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh Historical Tradition', p.38; in discussion of Dominica Legge, 'L'influence littéraire de la cour d'Henri Beauclerc', in *Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune* (1969), pp.679-87.

community of interest in British materials at Oxford.¹⁴ I posit that when Geoffrey began work on the *Prophetiae*, Welsh political prophecy was a subject of clerical discussion beyond the March.

In the prologue to the text, Geoffrey presents the *Prophetiae* as the answer to a specific request from Alexander, which was one amongst many. Geoffrey writes that such was the extent of the demands for publication of the prophecies which arose during the composition of the *Historia*, that he broke off his task and turned his attention to the prophecies.¹⁵ This is more than an authorising fiction: it directly pertains to the conditions through which Welsh prophecy came to Anglo-Norman attention. This rests on a clear contemporary understanding of the close relationship between central and border politics. Henry's naming of his daughter, the Empress Matilda, as his heir in 1128, was the subject of some anxiety in England. Matilda's second marriage to Geoffrey of Anjou was a source of particular discomfort for some of Henry's barons, and a smooth succession was by no means guaranteed.¹⁶ Concerns about the breakdown of royal power manifested also as a heightened perception of threats looming on the Anglo-Welsh border. From its earliest circulation (independent of the *Historia*), the *Prophetiae* was understood as pertaining to Anglo-Welsh relations. Writing on the basis of a copy in circulation in Normandy prior to the death of Henry I (a truncated version of the text up to line 110), Orderic of Vitalis glossed the text as a historical vision extending from the arrival of the Saxons in Britain under Hengist to the time of 'Henrici et Gritfridi', that is, Henry I and Gruffydd, king of Gwynedd and Powys, a recollection of Welsh challenges to Henry.¹⁷

Certainly, the contestation of the crown between Matilda and Stephen of Blois which followed, the period commonly referred to as the English Anarchy, was a time of Welsh opportunity.¹⁸ Following the murder of Richard FitzGilbert de Clare in April 1136 (understood

¹⁴ *Historia*, Prologue, 9. For a good summary of the Breton and Welsh material possibly at Geoffrey's disposal see Roberts, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* and *Brut y Brenhinedd*', p.101; Helen Fulton, 'History and Myth: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Helen Fulton (2009), pp.44-57 (pp.50-51).

¹⁵ *Prophetiae*, 1-4.

¹⁶ Chibnall, *Empress Matilda*, pp.50-54; Crouch, *Reign of King Stephen*, p.25.

¹⁷ Orderic Vitalis: *The Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by M. Chibnall, 6 vols (1978), VI, pp.386-87. There is also possible evidence of a draft in circulation in a northern English monastic milieu as early as the 1120s. Bernard Meehan, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Prophecies of Merlin*: New Manuscript Evidence', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 28 (1980), 37-46. However, Meehan does not comment on the text's relationship to later extant copies.

¹⁸ For a discussion of this period, and applicability of the term 'Anarchy', see Edmund King, ed., *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign* (1994); Keith Stringer, *Reign of Stephen* (1993); J. G. White, 'The Myth of the Anarchy', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 22 (2000), 323-27; David Crouch, *The Reign of King Stephen, 1135-1154* (2000), esp. pp. 1-8; Hugh M. Thomas, 'Violent Disorder in King Stephen's England', in *King Stephen's Reign*, ed. by Paul Dalton and Graeme J. White

as a direct attack on the Anglo-Norman establishment in Wales), Morgan ap Owain seized much of lowland Gwent;¹⁹ and to the north, the territorial gains of Owain ap Gruffydd and the kingdom of Gwynedd extended almost to the gates of Chester.²⁰ Political prophecy articulated this same contestation. To Geoffrey and his Oxford contemporaries, Welsh prophecies did not represent culturally or politically neutral material: they were a Welsh call to arms.²¹ In such a historical context, the *Prophetiae*, understood as a translation project, was not simply an intellectual exercise, but in many respects also a political one. It is evidence of a profound English desire to anticipate and ventriloquise the terms of Welsh, and later Scottish, prophetic opposition during periods of heightened border threats. This is an ambition which, we shall see, is echoed in Gerald of Wales's later engagements with Welsh political prophecy, and throughout English adaptations of Welsh and Scottish literary-political material throughout the later Middle Ages.²²

However, the period of Geoffrey's work was not simply one of border antipathies but, simultaneously, co-existence. During the early decades of the twelfth century, Welsh political and ecclesiastical claims came to be integrated into the Norman power structure, and Norman landholders in Wales and the March were insinuated into Welsh patterns of lordship (conditions which, R. R. Davies observes, also fostered the cross-border movement of literary materials).²³ This process accelerated following Henry's death. The period 1136-40 saw not simply Welsh rebellion on the border but a significant growth in the power of certain Marcher lords – such as Robert of Gloucester, bastard son of Henry I and lord of Glamorgan – and their independent interactions with the Welsh kingdoms and church.²⁴ Following his alliance with Morgan ap Owain, significant Welsh-held territorial gains of 1137 were still held in fee from Robert at the end of the decade and into the 1140s.²⁵ This is important historical context for our understanding of Geoffrey's incorporation of the *Prophetiae* in the *Historia*, dedicated to Robert (who appears as a dedicatee in all extant named dedications), alongside in some copies, Waleran

(2008), pp.139-70. For an overview of Anglo-Welsh relations during this period see Crouch, *Reign of King Stephen*, pp.54-59

¹⁹ Ibid, pp.54, 56.

²⁰ *Brut y tymysogyon*, ed. and transl. by Thomas Jones (1985), pp.51-52; Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp.45-46, 48-51; John Davies, *A History of Wales* (1993), p.121.

²¹ Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp.79-80.

²² See below, p.50.

²³ Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp.105-07.

²⁴ Crouch, *Reign of King Stephen*, p.235; David Crouch, 'Robert, first earl of Gloucester (*b.* before 1100, *d.* 1147)', ODNB <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23716>> [accessed 8 Jan 2013].

²⁵ J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 2 vols (1939, 3rd edn), II, pp.439-40.

of Meulan, a member of the inner circle of King Stephen, and in one extant copy, Stephen himself.²⁶ These were powerful political players with a vested interest in the politics of the western British Isles. Waleran was named earl of Worcester by Stephen in 1138, one of a number of redistributions of earldoms in the west Midlands to counterbalance the growing western powerbase of Robert.²⁷ Welsh material was not only in Geoffrey's ken, but was relevant to the interests of his patrons, particularly Robert, who almost certainly had at least a passing acquaintance with Welsh literary-political traditions.²⁸ As he inserted the *Prophetiae* into the *Historia*, Geoffrey was not writing from the margins to the centre, but from the centre to the borders, during a period when the borders were a locus of considerable aristocratic power.

Geoffrey's Welsh Sources

We cannot, as did Rupert Taylor, regard the many repetitions found in the *Prophetiae* as evidence of the work's status as a translation of a complete, but now lost, Welsh prophecy collection.²⁹ This is an idea which scholars have long abandoned in favour of a more complex and selective relationship between the *Prophetiae* and Welsh material.³⁰ The analysis I pursue in this chapter is in this spirit. In the absence of pre-Galfridian Welsh manuscript material, and uncertainty as to the role of oral composition and transmission, we must rely on orthographic evidence (which is often problematic) and historical allusions within the text (often given in highly mythological terms) in dating the composition of specific prophecies. Yet it is clear that a considerable number of Welsh prophetic strands pre-date Geoffrey, and he was acquainted with elements of them.

²⁶ *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Prologue, 17-33. For discussion of the dedications see Crick, *Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth IV*, pp.113-20; Tatlock, *Legendary History*, pp.436-37.

²⁷ David Crouch, 'Waleran, count of Meulan and earl of Worcester (1104–1166)', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1887>> [accessed 8 Jan 2013]; Robert B. Patterson, 'William of Malmesbury's Robert of Gloucester: A Re-evaluation of the *Historia Novella*', *American Historical Review*, 70 (1965), 983-97 (p.991).

²⁸ For transmission of Welsh material amongst the border aristocracy, and the royal courts, see Constance Bullock-Davies, *Professional Interpreters and the Matter of Britain* (1966). Robert also had involvements with the Cistercian monastery at Margam, at which we know prophecy circulated by the end of the century. Reeves, *The Marcher Lords*, p.140; see below, pp.50, 64.

²⁹ Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, p.47.

³⁰ Cf. Bromwich, *Trioedd*, p.xcvii, n.2. See also above n.5.

Chief among Geoffrey's Welsh sources is the *Omen of the Dragons*, a prophetic episode staging British exile and restoration, in the collection of historical materials compiled in BL, Harley MS 3859, formerly ascribed to the Welsh monk Nennius and known as the *Historia Brittonum*, dated to c.828-29.³¹ Challenging the long-accepted division between a latinate learned culture and Welsh vernacular works, Patrick Sims-Williams has regarded the *Omen* as evidence of an active Welsh culture of political prophecy contemporary to the production of the *Historia Brittonum*.³² Certainly, Geoffrey aligns it with Welsh language material which he similarly draws on in the *Prophetiae*. This includes a number of allusions from *Armes Prydein Vawr* ('Great Prophecy of Britain'), a Cynan-Cadwaladr prophecy extant in the fourteenth-century Book of Taliesin (NLW, Peniarth MS 2), but almost certainly a product of the period following the death of Hywel Dda (c.950), a king of Deheubarth whose domain came to encompass much of Wales. Helen Fulton has argued persuasively that *Armes Prydein* offers a retrospective view of past English atrocities and Welsh defence cast in the mode of a long-lived anti-Saxon heroic tradition.³³ The prophecy preserves the earliest extant reference to the Welsh prophet Myrddin (of which Geoffrey's Merlin is the latinate form), presenting a great and violent act of British restoration as 'dysgogan Myrddin' ('Myrddin foretells') (17). Although we cannot rule out the possibility that the reference is a late interpolation, there is no more reason to assign it such a status than any other line in the poem. The *Omen* does not mention Myrddin, but tells of the prophecy of the marvellous child, and later war-leader, Ambrosius, on a similar theme. Between them, these references hold the seeds of Geoffrey's prophet, Merlin Ambrosius.³⁴

Alongside these better noted analogues, I posit Geoffrey's familiarity with Myrddin prophecies extant in the Black Book of Carmarthen (NLW, Peniarth MS 1), a mid-thirteenth-century manuscript containing material with claims to a twelfth-century core and other elements

³¹ Nennius: *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. and transl. by John Morris (1980); David Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend', *History*, 62 (1977), 173-92 (pp.176-77).

³² Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', p.35; see also Brynley F. Roberts, 'Gerald of Wales and Welsh Tradition', in *The Formation of Culture in Medieval Britain*, ed. by Françoise H. M. Le Saux (1995), pp.129-47 (p.131).

³³ Helen Fulton, 'Tenth-Century Wales and *Armes Prydein*', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, NS 7 (2001), 5-18. *Armes Prydein* was previously dated by Ifor Williams in relation to its most likely political context, opposition to Hywel Dda's policy of appeasement towards the English and the expectation of an alliance between the Irish and the Welsh against Athelstan, to c.930, before the failed alliance of 937. *Armes Prydein*, ed. and transl. by Rachel Bromwich (1972), pp. xx-xxiv.

³⁴ Jarman, 'Merlin Legend and the Welsh Tradition of Prophecy', p.136; A. O. H. Jarman, 'The Arthurian Allusions in the Black Book of Carmarthen', in *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Patricia B. Grout (1983), pp. 99-112 (p.103).

earlier still, similarly engaged with the matter of British restoration.³⁵ He also appears to have been acquainted with material of an early Cynan-Cadwaladr type found in the Book of Taliesin alongside *Armes Prydein*, and with a similar claim to antiquity. Additionally, Geoffrey almost certainly drew on prophetic and legendary material from *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*, by the British monk Gildas (c.500-70), a text which enjoyed a long-lived primacy in monastic libraries across Europe during the Middle Ages.³⁶

Geoffrey's major prophetic borrowings from Welsh, and identification of his Welsh source traditions, as set out in the first part of this chapter are the results of only a cursory study, and are surely the tip of the iceberg. All examples have been selected for their function as sites of Normanised re-inscription.

The Omen of the Dragons

The *Omen* is representative of a long prophetic tradition placing the Saxon invasions within the loose framework of the *gormesoedd* of Welsh historical traditions, and reads as an important piece of historical mythology associated with the *adventus Saxonum*.³⁷ It centres on the building project in Snowdonia of the fifth-century British king Vortigern, a figure vilified in Welsh history as the king whose foolhardy invitation to Saxon mercenaries resulted in the earliest wave of Saxon invasion.³⁸ In the original *Omen*, on the eve of the Saxon invasion, Vortigern finds the foundations of his fortress (doubtless a metaphor for the foundations of his kingdom), troubled by an unseen presence beneath the earth, revealed in the course of the episode as two 'vermes' (worms or snakes) representative of 'dracones' (dragons), most probably intended as national standards.³⁹ The dragons are interpreted by the child-prophet Ambrosius as a portent of the

³⁵ A. O. H. Jarman, 'Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin: The Black Book of Carmarthen', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 71 (1985), 333-56 (for discussion of the dating of the Myrddin poems see pp.345-49).

³⁶ Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain*, ed. by Michael Winterbottom (1978). Robert W. Hanning, *The Vision of History in Early Britain* (1966), pp.44-62; N. J. Higham, *The English Conquest: Gildas and Britain in the Fifth Century* (1994), pp.7-34; Jankulak, pp.54-66; Antonia Gransden, *English Historical Writing* (1974), pp.1-5.

³⁷ *Historia Brittonum*, 40-42. Sims-Williams, 'Some Functions of Origin Stories', pp.105,114; Bromwich, *Trioedd*, pp.84-87.

³⁸ Bromwich, *Trioedd*, pp.392-96; *Armes Prydein*, 137; discussed by Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain', pp.183-86. Geoffrey reworks this material in *Historia*, VI, 284-479.

³⁹ J. S. P. Tatlock, 'The Dragons of Wessex and Wales', *Speculum*, 8 (1933), 223-35. Tatlock suggests the precedent for such use was not Welsh, but English.

warring Saxons (the white dragon) and Britons (the red), hostilities which will endure for centuries, concluding finally in the exile of the white from the island and the victory of the red:

At ille albus draco illius gentis, quae occupavit gentes et regiones
plurimas in Brittannia, et paene a mari usque ad mare tenebunt, et
postea gens nostra surget, et gentem Anglorum trans mare viriliter
deiciet.

(But the white one is the dragon of the people who have seized many
peoples and countries in Britain, and will reach almost from sea to sea;
but later our people will arise and valiantly throw the English across the
sea.)

(42)

The episode concludes with Vortigern's relinquishing of his fortress to Ambrosius, the son of a Roman consul, from whose might (military rather than prophetic) Vortigern flees.

Geoffrey's treatment of the *Omen* provides the initial conceit of the *Prophetiae*, spanning the period from the arrival of the Saxons in Britain in the fifth century, to the Normans in 1066. His account is essentially faithful to, and was certainly assimilated into, Welsh prophetic-historical culture within this broader framework of meaning. *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys* ('The Adventure of Lludd and Llefelys'), inserted into the Welsh translations of Geoffrey's *Historia*, the *Brut y Brenhinedd* ('Chronicle of the Kings') (c.1250), glosses the warring of the white and red dragons as representative of the Saxon *gormes*, in a reconstructed origin tale for the burial of the dragons in Snowdonia and Merlin Ambrosius's prophecy.⁴⁰ Geoffrey introduced only a few minor alterations and additions to his source narrative. Unlike Ambrosius, *Merlin* Ambrosius is not a war-leader;⁴¹ neither is he the son of a Roman general, but (a hypothesis suggested by Vortigern's magus Maignantius) incubus-sired.⁴² Geoffrey also (perhaps for the sake of clarity, or dramatic purposes) collapses the standard allusion, and gives us simply dragons. Although

⁴⁰ Sioned Davies, ed. and transl., *The Mabinogion* (2007), pp.111-15; *Brut y Brenhinedd*, ed. and transl. by J. J. Parry (1937), pp.65-70.

⁴¹ Ambrosius of the *Historia Brittonum* almost certainly provided the model for Geoffrey's Aurelius Ambrosius of *Historia*, VI and VIII, the brother and predecessor of Uther Pendragon, and contemporary of Vortigern.

⁴² *Historia*, VI, 544-50.

these additions and re-writings proved important in their influence on later political prophecies,⁴³ the most important difference which need concern us here is Geoffrey's re-writing of the conclusion to the *Omen*. The Saxon threat is contained not by the British dragon, but the arrival of the Normans: a people of wood and iron who chase the Saxons from the island, and restore its original inhabitants:

Vix obtinebit cauernas suas Germanicus draco, quia ultio prodicionis
eius superueniet. Vigebit tandem paulisper, sed decimatio Neustriac
nocebit. Populus namque in ligno et ferreis tunicis superueniet, qui
uindictam de nequitia ipsius sumet. Restaurabit pristinis incolis
mansiones, et ruina alienigenarum patebit.

(The German dragon will be hard put to keep possession of its caves,
since retribution will be visited on its treason. Then it will prosper for a
short time, but Normandy's tithe will injure it. A people will come clad
in wood and tunics of iron to take vengeance on its wickedness. They
will restore the former inhabitants to their dwellings, and the ruin of the
foreigners will be plain to see.)

(69-74)

Geoffrey's pro-Norman conclusion of the *Omen* is in many respects in keeping with a decidedly Norman historical mythology. The account of the white dragon's treachery and downfall in *Prophetiae*, 69-71, must be regarded (as it was certainly seen by later medieval commentators on the *Prophetiae*) as incorporating a component of post-Conquest Norman propaganda: the broken oath of Harold Godwinson.⁴⁴ This rests on the notion of a prior agreement between Harold and William of Normandy concerning William's rightful claim to the English throne. This association was much used in Norman accounts of the Conquest: for example, Harold's oath to William is depicted in plate eleven of the Bayeux Tapestry, which

⁴³ For the influence of the incubus narrative on later insular political prophecies see below, Chapter 3, p.137.

⁴⁴ We find this reading in a late twelfth-century commentary printed by Jacob Hammer, and a number of later productions, including a commentary by Matthew Paris. Jacob Hammer, 'Another Commentary on the *Prophetiae Merlini*?', *Bulletin of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America*, 1 (1942-43), 589-601 (p.598) [mid-twelfth century]; Jacob Hammer, 'A Commentary on the *Prophetiae Merlini*?', *Speculum*, 10 (1935), 3-30 (p.14) [fourteenth century]; *Mattaesi Parisiensis, Monarchi Sancti Albani Chronica maiora*, ed. by H. R. Luard, 7 vols (1872-82), I, p.201.

shows the homage of Harold to William, who appears enthroned and every inch a king.⁴⁵ However, in Geoffrey's allusion to Harold's treachery there is also a very specific, and structuring, use of a Welsh prophetic paradigm: the last English king is representative of the usurping Saxons of the Welsh historical and prophetic meta-narrative, and the Norman invaders the instruments of his pre-ordained downfall: it is a scene of the end of British, and the beginning of Saxon, exile. It is through this association that Geoffrey's portrayal of the moment of Norman vengeance finds an overt association in the text with British territorial restoration as we find it in Welsh political prophecy.

In historiographical terms, these perspectives were compatible. As Francis Ingledew has observed, following the tenth-century Dudo of St Quentin, a number of eleventh and twelfth-century historians cast the Normans as members of the 'Trojan diaspora'.⁴⁶ Working on the basis of the *Historia Brittonum*, and its Trojan British foundation narrative which Geoffrey reworks in *Historia*, I, the British diaspora can be understood as an extension of the Trojan, a mythic origin which Norman historians had similarly claimed as their own.⁴⁷ There was also a more recent historical dimension to this association: the restoration of the Britons can here be understood not as an allusion to the insular Britons (the Welsh) but to the Bretons of Brittany who accompanied the Norman forces in 1066 as the largest group of auxiliaries in the conqueror's army, and received substantial grants of land, many of them on the Welsh border.⁴⁸ It is from amongst such a cohort that Tatlock has suggested Geoffrey's racial origin.⁴⁹ However, there is nothing in this prophecy particularly suggestive of a Breton self-identification, rather it rests on an acquaintance with the function of the Breton diaspora in Welsh political prophecy.

The Breton diaspora is a mythic-historical tradition we can date back to Gildas's *De Excidio*, and its vision of the island's depopulation in the fourth century, under the usurper Maximus;⁵⁰ and later, more positive myths of the continental campaigns of 'Macsen Wledig' (the

⁴⁵ *The Bayeux Tapestry*, ed. by Eric Robert Dalrymple Maclagan (1943). Discussed by Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society*, p.47.

⁴⁶ Francis Ingledew, 'The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History: The Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*', *Speculum*, 69 (1994), 665-704 (pp.683-86).

⁴⁷ *Historia Brittonum*, 10, 11; *Historia*, I, 48-452.

⁴⁸ F. M. Stenton, *The First Century of English Feudalism, 1066-1166* (1961), pp.25-28; Knight, *Arthurian Literature*, pp.40-41.

⁴⁹ Talock, *Legendary History*, pp.399-402. See also E. K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain* (1927), p.24

⁵⁰ *De Excidio*, 13-14. This was later reworked in *Historia Brittonum*, 27. For discussion of Maximus see Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain', p.179-80; Hanning, pp.51-52; P. J. Casey, 'Magnus Maximus in Britain', in *The End of Roman Britain*,

same) and narrative of the foundation of Brittany as a British colony under Maccsen's Welsh ally Cynan Meriadoc (a legend reworked by Geoffrey in *Historia*, V).⁵¹ This Cynan Meriadoc is understood to be one and the same as the hero of Welsh political prophecy, Cynan, who functions as a cipher for the return of a Breton army.⁵² A theme continually associated with the overthrow of Saxon oppression in Welsh history and prophecy, the Breton diaspora was at once indicative of a lost insular wholeness associated with the *adventus Saxonum*, and an off-shore reserve of power to be wielded against the Saxon *gormes*. This idea certainly had currency in the twelfth century independently of Geoffrey. A revision of the *Prophetiae* from c.1154 ascribed to John of Cornwall, with multiple additions and a commentary seemingly drawn from contemporary Welsh prophecies, identifies Conanus as a prophesied hero returning from overseas ('Conanus nauigat undas').⁵³

The position of the Norman conquerors in *Prophetiae*, 69-74 must be understood as a direct substitution for Cynan, and a returning Breton force. Tellingly, one fourteenth-century commentator (very feasibly writing on the basis of an earlier Latin Welsh commentary), glosses the returning heroes of as 'duce Conano', who went to Brittany with 'Maximi imperator', and 'duce Cadualladro' with him.⁵⁴ Indeed, there is evidence that on occasion both heroes were used interchangeably to figure a return from beyond the island: the name Cadwaladr was invoked by one Welsh writer in anticipation of Rhys ap Tewdr's return from exile in Brittany during the 1080s.⁵⁵ Indeed, that Cynan and Cadwaladr were in mind in Geoffrey's construction of the Norman conquerors, is suggested by an allusion in *Prophetiae*, 74-76 to the enslavement of the Saxons under the Normans, bound to till the earth whilst their own progeny are destroyed:

ed. by P. J. Casey (1979), pp.66-76; C. E. Stephens, 'Magnus Maximus and British History', *Études Celtiques*, 3 (1938), 86-94; J. F. Matthews, 'Maccsen, Maximus, and Constantine', *Welsh History Review*, 11 (1982-83), 432-38.

⁵¹ Many of the fundamentals of the Welsh myth are preserved in *Breudnytt Maccsen Wledic* ('The Dream of The Emperor Maxen'), *Mabinogion*, pp.103-10, 249. Geoffrey reworks this legend in *Historia*, V, 331-59. For discussion of this positive reworking of Gildas's narrative see Sims-Williams, 'Some Functions of Origin Stories', p.107; Janulak, p.54; Rachel Bromwich, 'The Character of the Early Welsh Tradition', in *Studies in Early British History*, ed. Chadwick et al (1959), pp.107-09; Brynley F. Roberts, 'Breuddwyd Maxen Wledig: Why? When?', in *Heroic Poetics and Poetic Heroes in the Celtic Tradition*, ed. by Joseph Falaky Nagy and Leslie Ellen (2005), pp.303-14.

⁵² Bromwich, *Trioedd*, pp.316-18, 292-93; Bromwich, *Armes Prydein*, p.46; Bromwich, 'Cynon Fab Clydno', in *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd* (1978), pp.151-64. The last article is an argument against M. E. Griffiths's hypothesis that the prophesied Cynan was not originally associated with Brittany, but Cynan son of Clydno Eiddyn, who she regards as the only survivor of the northern British battle of Gododdin, for which see Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, pp.110-18.

⁵³ Michael Curley, 'A New Edition of John of Cornwall's *Prophetia Merlini*', *Speculum*, 57 (1982), 217-49 (pp.236, 246).

⁵⁴ Hammer, 'A Commentary on the *Prophetiae Merlini*', p.14. For the relationship of this commentary to a Welsh commentary on the *Prophetiae* see Jacob Hammer, 'A Commentary on the *Prophetia Merlini*, A Continuation', *Speculum*, 15 (1940), 409-31. Unfortunately Hammer's Welsh control text does not extend to this passage.

⁵⁵ See Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, p.118.

Germen albi draconis ex ortulis nostris abradetur, et reliquiae
 generationis eius decimabuntur. Iugum perpetuae seruitutis ferent
 matremque suam ligonibus et aratris uulnerabunt.

(The seed of the white dragon will disappear from our gardens and the
 remnants of its generation will be decimated. They will bear the yoke of
 unending slavery and wound their mother with hoes and ploughs.)

(74-76)

This is a direct translation from the Welsh restoration fantasy preserved in *Armes Prydein*, which
 envisages the enslavement of the Saxons under Cynan and Cadwaladr:

ny alwawr gynhon yn gynifwyr
 namyn kechmyn Katwaladyr ae gyfnewitwyr

(The foreigners will not be called warriors but the slaves and hucksters
 of Cadwaladr)

(183-84)

There is some evidence that relatively early in its reception history, the *Omen* was
 associated in Welsh language prophecy with the arrival of Cadwaladr. *Glaswawt Taliesin* ('Lament
 of Taliesin'), extant in the Book of Taliesin, contains a Cadwaladr-prophecy dated by M. E.
 Griffiths to the tenth century.⁵⁶ An allusion in the text to Cadwaladr's lamentation for Hywel (25)
 suggests that, like *Armes Prydein*, this prophecy entered circulation following the death of Hywel
 Dda in the mid-tenth century. The prophecy envisages battles against the Saxons (and possibly, if
 we go on the basis of the editor's gloss, the Danes), under Rhodri ap Hywel, prior to the return
 of Cadwaladr and his devastation of the alien settlements. We read in the midst of these great
 events, 'ac Eryri vre varnhawd' ('and Eryri's height decides'), that is, Mount Snowdon:

⁵⁶ Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, pp.120-21; printed in J. G. Evans, ed. and transl., *Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (1915),
 p.98; transl. p.99.

Trin, o bop tu, rhy phorthawd,
 ac Eryri vre varnhawd.
 Ilu o Seis ac Ynt dygn-awd yng Hymry
 yd erhy a wedwawd
 ...
 Cadwaladr ai cwyn;
 briwhawd bron o vrwyn.
 Gwellt llawr anrheithawd;
 a tho tei, tandawd.

([Rhodri] supports the war on every side,
 and Eryri's height decides.
 He afflicts the host of Saxons and [Northmen] in Wales
 their widows only are left.

...
 Cadwaladr weeps for [Hywel]
 and breaks his heart from grief.
 He lays waste to cornfields,
 and fires the thatch of dwellings)

(*Glaswawt Taliesin*, 19-22, 25-28)

This locating of the battle establishes a direct association between the British-Saxon conflict presaged in Snowdonia in the *Omen*, and the return of Cadwaladr. Geoffrey may well have known a variant of this prophecy. Notably, the text begins with an allusion to envoys sent on an expedition across the sea ('mor-hynt') to obtain military aid (3-4). In the *Prophetiae* this supporting host, presumably in the Welsh work the Bretons, is reworked as Norman.

There is another marker in Geoffrey's depiction of the Norman Conquest, which suggests the self-conscious deployment of a British restoration framework. The term set for the duration of Saxon rule in *Prophetiae*, 66-68 – three hundred years (one hundred and fifty of which go unchallenged) – is lifted from Gildas's *De Excidio*.

Terminus illi positus est quem transuolare nequibit; centem namque
 quinquaginta annis in inquietudine et subiectione manebit, ter centum
 uero insidebit.

(A limit has been set for the white dragon beyond which it will not be able to fly; for a hundred and fifty years it will endure harassment and submission, but for three hundred it will be in occupation.)

(66-68)

Gildas refers to a prophecy in circulation on the eve of the earliest wave of Saxon invasion forecasting three hundred years of Saxon occupation in Britain, divided into a century and a half of supremacy, and a century and a half of challenge :

Secundis velis omine auguriisque, quibus vaticinabatur, certo apud eum praesagio, quod ter centum annis patriam, cui proras librabat, insideret, centum vero quinquaginta, hoc est dimidio temporis, saepius vastaret.

(The winds were favourable; favourable too the omens and auguries, which prophesied, according to a sure portent among them [the Saxons] that they would live for three hundred years in the land towards which their prows were directed, and that for half the time, a hundred and fifty years, they would repeatedly lay it waste)

(23)⁵⁷

Geoffrey does not give the historical duration of Saxon occupation prior to the Conquest (historically, closer to five hundred years) but instead draws on one of the oldest extant echoes of British political prophecy. Geoffrey's borrowings from Gildas in the *Historia* itself are well-noted,⁵⁸ but it is also an important source as a vestige of early British prophetic perceptions, and perceptions informing later Welsh prophecy, recognised by Geoffrey as such. Gildas claims a relationship to long-lived oral traditions, and certainly, to Geoffrey this prophecy would have possessed a considerable vestige of British antiquity.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ *De Excidio*, 23.

⁵⁸ Neil Wright, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas', in *Arthurian Literature II*, ed. by Richard Barber (1982), pp.1-40 (pp.13, 16-17).

⁵⁹ R. William Leckie, Jr, *The Passage of Dominion* (1981), p.30; E. A. Thompson, 'Gildas and the History of Britain', *Britannia*, 10 (1979), 203-26.

Geoffrey's account of the Norman Conquest is grounded in a deeply entrenched, and long-lived, Welsh formulation of the temporal limitations of Saxon power, and this is precisely what enables its re-working as a language of Norman power, for the Normans bring the end of Saxon rule. Historical Norman traditions of the Conquest function as a Bhabian supplement to Welsh prophetic discourse, the function of which is explicitly Normanising. Geoffrey's reapplication of a British restoration model to the Norman conquerors is one of the first definitive acts in the history of political prophecy in England. British restoration here became one and the same as Norman *imperium*. This is a precedent which was enthusiastically followed throughout the Middle Ages, staging the conquests and territorial claims of consecutive English kings as acts of British restoration.⁶⁰ Geoffrey's reworked *Omen* presents the first significant bridge between Welsh political literature and English prophecies: Welsh prophecy-themes were here for the first time applied to Anglo-Norman, that is English, imperial history.

Myrddin Prophecies of the Black Book of Carmarthen

However, Geoffrey's borrowings from Welsh prophecy were double-edged. Following his re-inscription of the *Omen*, the employment of Welsh prophetic material is pessimistic rather than eulogistic. There are strong grounds for positing Geoffrey's acquaintance with prophetic material of the type preserved in the Black Book of Carmarthen, which took the kings of Norman England as its antipathetic focus.

It is often argued that Geoffrey only became familiar with prophecies of the type found in the Black Book during the composition of the *Vita Merlini* in the 1150s, where in his reimagining of Merlin Geoffrey drew heavily on the depictions of the prophetic wild man of the Black Book, a character identified at some point in his history as Myrddin (although precisely when remains disputed).⁶¹ However, as Stephen Knight has observed, we have no reason to suppose that Geoffrey felt compelled to use all the Welsh prophetic material at his disposal in

⁶⁰ Numerous instances are discussed in the following chapters of this thesis.

⁶¹ Prevailing opinion, based on the analyses of A. O. H. Jarman, are summarised succinctly, and interrogated, by Oliver Padel, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Development of the Merlin Legend', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 51 (2006), 37-65 (pp.37-38). Padel argues that the identification of the northern wild men of the Black Book as Merlin was a Galfridian innovation. This remains debatable.

one fell swoop, rather he drew on material that was useful for particular purposes.⁶² Indeed, elements of material from the Black Book *were* relevant to Geoffrey's purposes in the 1130s.

In her assessment of Geoffrey's debt to Welsh prophecy, M. E. Griffiths noted the relative proximity between Geoffrey's figure of the Norman Conquest and direct prophecy of the returning heroes, which follows in *Prophetiae*, 110-14, as a feature borrowed from prophecy-types preserved in the Black Book.⁶³ An important detail I note here cements Griffiths's thesis: the Normans appear not only prior to the arrival of Cynan and Cadwaladr, but identified in very similar terms to those found in the Black Book: by their armour.⁶⁴

The reference in the *Prophetiae* to the Normans as 'populus... in ligno et ferreis tunicis' ('a people clad in wood and tunics of iron') (72), echoes the interest in Norman armour of the Black Book prophecy, *Y Bedwenni* ('The Birch Trees'), where we read of the appearance of the Normans in their distinctive chainmail, preceding their overthrow by the royal one of Môn (Cadwaladr):

Gwin y bid hi y vedwen. ym pimlumon
 ... a wil y freigc in lluricogion
 ... Arbenygaul mon ae guledychuy

(Blessed its world, the birch in Pumlumon... which will see the French in
 coats of mail. ...The royal one of Mon will rule them.)

(9, 11, 20)⁶⁵

In another Black Book prophecy, *Yr Oianau* ('O Little Pig'), similarly, the arrival of the Normans across the sea prompts the return of Cynan and Cadwaladr in defence of the island, and the piercing of the mail coats of the Normans:

⁶² Knight, *Merlin*, p.32.

⁶³ Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, pp.85-136.

⁶⁴ John Gillingham argues for the use of armour as a fundamental difference, and inequality, in armed conflict between the Normans and the Welsh. 'Conquering the Barbarians', in *The English in the Twelfth Century*, pp.41-58 (p.49).

⁶⁵ *Llyfr du Caerfyrddin*, ed. by A. O. H. Jarman (1982), pp.29-35; transl. by John K. Bollard, in Peter Goodrich, ed., *The Romance of Merlin* (1990), pp.24-30. Geoffrey drew on this material again in *Vita Merlini*, 654-57.

Briuhaud llurugev rac llim waewur.
 Ban diffon nortmin. y ar lldan llin
 advit imurthrin ina gan vitinaur.
 a gorescin pridein y uiron yswein
 ar vall o lundein a dyattavr.
 A mi disgoganeu e deu priodaur
 a luniont tegnevet o nef. hid laur.
 Kynan kadwaladir.

(Mail-coats will be pierced by sharp spears. When the Normans come on the broad sea, there will be clashing then by armies and Britain will be conquered by the descendents of Yswain [the mythic hero Owain] and the destruction from London would be released. And I will prophesy two rulers who will create peace from heaven to earth: Cynan, Cadwaladr)

(115-22)⁶⁶

In both, the struggles of the Welsh against the armoured Normans are seen as an extension of the age of Saxon occupation, and a feature of the time immediately prior to the age of British restoration.⁶⁷ This is precisely the position the Norman invaders occupy in the *Prophetiae*.

The Pan-Celtic Alliance

Undoubtedly, the most influential of Geoffrey's reworkings of Welsh political prophecy, in terms of its enduring impact on subsequent English and Scottish prophetic traditions, is his reformulation of the pan-Celtic union of *Armes Prydein*.⁶⁸

A chymot Kymry a gwyr Dulyn
 Gwydyl Iwerdon Mon a Phrydyn
 Cornyw a Chuldwys eu kynnwys genhyn.

⁶⁶ *Llyfr du Caerfyrddin*, p.25; transl. Bollard, pp.21-22.

⁶⁷ Jarman, 'Arthurian Allusions in the Black Book of Carmarthen', pp.99-100.

⁶⁸ This influence is well-noted. In addition to n.1, above, see Michael Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (1994), p.73.

Atporyon uyd Brython pan dyorfyn.

Pell dygoganher amser dybyden

(And there will be reconciliation between the Cymry and the men of Dublin, the Irish of Ireland and Angelsey and Scotland, the men of Cornwall and of Strathclyde will be made welcome among us. The Britons will rise again when they prevail for long was prophesied the time when they will come)

(9-13)

This material was reworked by Geoffrey in the *Prophetiae*:

Cadualdrus Conanum uocabit et Albaniam in societatem accipiet. Tunc erit strages alienigenarum, tunc flumina sanguine manabunt, tunc erumpent Amorici montes et diademate Bruti coronabuntur. Replebitur Kambria laetitia, et robora Cornubiae uirescent. Nomine Bruti uocabitur insula, et nuncupatio extraneorum peribit.

(Cadualdrus will summon Conanus and make Scotland his ally. Then the foreigners will be slaughtered, the rivers flow with blood, and the hills of Brittany burst forth and be crowned with Brutus's diadem. Wales will be filled with rejoicing and the Cornish oaks will flourish. The island will be called by Brutus's name and the foreign term will disappear.)

(*Prophetiae*, 110-14)

And later, in the *Vita Merlini*, where Conanus's (Cynan's) association with Brittany, implicit in the *Prophetiae*, was made more overt:

...ab armorico ueniet temone conanus

Et cadualdrus cambrorum dum uenerandus

Qui pariter scotos cambros et cornubienses

Amoricos que uiros sociabunt federe firmo

Amissum que suis reddent diadema colonis

Hostibus expulsis renouato tempore bruti

(Conanus shall come in his chariot from Brittany, and Cadualadrus the venerated leader of the Welsh, who shall join together Scots and Cumbrians, Cornishmen and men of Brittany in a firm league, and shall return to their people their lost crown, expelling the enemy and renewing the times of Brutus)

(967-72)

The pan-Celtic alliance had a long life in Welsh prophecy prior to Geoffrey. David Dumville has argued that even as this material was incorporated in *Armes Prydein* in the tenth century, it was of considerable antiquity.⁶⁹ Certainly, it was a deeply influential formulation in Welsh political prophecy articulating, as Fulton has termed it, the ‘pan-Celtic subjectivity’ of a decidedly Welsh genre.⁷⁰ At its basis is an understanding of Cynan as representative of the returning Breton diaspora, a meaning Geoffrey rests on in his Norman re-inscription of the *Omen*.⁷¹ A mythic-historical prince of the north Welsh kingdom of Gwynedd, Cadwaladr is here representative of a domestic Welsh force.⁷² His heroic status was derived from the victories of his father Cadwallawn against the Saxons.⁷³ He is traditionally understood as the last ruler of Britain prior to the extension of Saxon colonisation across the most part of the formerly British territories.⁷⁴ As is nearly always the case with return prophecies (in evidence in both English and Welsh examples across this thesis), the function of the heroes is not in relation to any particular brand of folk credulity, but must rather be understood as metonymic, representative of peoples and their territorial claims.

In its invocation in the *Prophetiae*, this sequence follows directly upon material identified by scholars as the contemporary Norman time of the text: an account of the reign of Henry I, the dragon of justice; the ascendancy of Matilda, figured as the eagle in relation to her imperial title;⁷⁵ and the eruption of violence in Cornwall and North Wales (identifiable as allusions to

⁶⁹ David Dumville, ‘Brittany and *Armes Prydein Vawr*’, *Études Celtiques*, 20 (1983), 145-59.

⁷⁰ Fulton, ‘Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Uses of Prophecy’, p.115.

⁷¹ See above, n.53.

⁷² This identification is preserved in *Y Bedwenni*, which concludes with Cadwaladr’s return: ‘Arbenygaul mon ae guledychuy’ (‘the royal one of Môn will rule them’) (20). Discussed by Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, pp.85-86.

⁷³ Bromwich, *Trioedd*, p.293. This genealogy was drawn on by Geoffrey in *Historia*, XI, 513-14.

⁷⁴ Also drawn on by Geoffrey in *Historia*, XI, 558-59.

⁷⁵ *Prophetiae*, 78-88. This is certainly how this sequence was understood by late twelfth-century commentator the Pseudo Alanus ab Insulis. See Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, p.88; Julia Crick, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth, Prophecy and History’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 18 (1992), 357-71 (p.369). For analogous later interpretations see Hammer, ‘A

specific murders in these regions during the late 1120s and early '30s).⁷⁶ The movement between these sequences stages the breakdown of Norman authority in the island, followed by a pan-Celtic takeover. This is indicative of a profound anxiety in regard to English borders, coupled with an awareness of the terms of Welsh oppositional prophecy.

Although Paul Dalton has associated *Prophetiae*, 110-14 with the patronymics of contemporary rulers of Brittany and Gwynedd, I am not convinced Geoffrey had any one threat so specifically in mind.⁷⁷ Although Gwynedd was certainly a locus of fearful expectation for Geoffrey, his geographical scope is far broader.⁷⁸ In this borrowing from *Armes Prydein*, at this particular moment in the *Prophetiae*, we find a simple meaning: weakness in the Norman power structure sees the emergence of threats on its margins. A weak centre sees violent contestations on the borders of the Anglo-Norman realm: in Scotland, Cornwall, Brittany, and above all, in Wales. This was a scene of anti-English political challenges for which the pan-Celtic alliance of Welsh political prophecy proved to be convenient shorthand, both for Geoffrey and for later English writers influenced by him.

By the later Middle Ages, *Prophetiae*, 110-14 came to function as a staple figure through which threats to English governments were both perceived and articulated across the British Isles. It is a latinate appraisal of one of the central themes of Welsh political prophecy, and it became a convenient political shorthand with a broad geo-political utility. The historical importance of Geoffrey's use of this Welsh prophetic motif cannot be over-stated. *Prophetiae*, 110-14 became the terms through which political prophetic opposition to consecutive English governments were codified, and understood, not simply in Wales but throughout the British Isles, for centuries. This thesis charts a literary history unimaginable in the absence of this one moment.

Alongside its invocation of the pan-Celtic alliance, *Prophetiae*, 110-14 contains a number of overt markers of its Welsh source: most notably, the river 'Perironis', diverted by an old man on a white horse prior to the return of the heroes:

Commentary on the *Prophetiae Merlini*', p.16; Hammer, 'Another Commentary on the *Prophetiae Merlini*?', p.599. For an understanding of this as the Norman time of the text see Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, pp.63-66.

⁷⁶*Prophetiae*, 86-87. For discussion of this passage see Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p.66; Oliver Padel, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Cornwall', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 8 (1984), 1-27 (pp.20-27).

⁷⁷ Paul Dalton, 'The Topical Concerns of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*: History, Prophecy, Peacemaking, and English Identity in the Twelfth Century', *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2005), 688-712 (pp.699-700).

⁷⁸ See above, n.73.

Deinde reuertentur ciues in insulam; nam discidium alienigenarum
 orietur. Niueus quoque senex in niueo equo fluuium Perironis diuertet et
 cum candida uirga molendinum super ipsum metabitur.

(Then the natives will return to the island for strife will break out among
 the foreigners. An old man in white on a snow-white horse will divert
 the river Periron and with a white rod measure out a mill on its bank.)

(108-10)

Although the precise meaning of the old man remains obscure (analogous figures are observable in a number of Welsh prophecies, but none exactly so),⁷⁹ ‘Perironis’ is a latinisation of Perydon, in *Armes Prydein*, the river at which the Saxons (identified as the Saxon tax collectors) are met by the British hosts, and the survivors driven as far back as ‘Gaer Wynt’ (96) (Winchester, the capital of the English kingdom of Wessex), and from there to the sea and exile. Tellingly, the name of the river stands corrected in one Welsh translation of the *Historia* from Geoffrey’s ‘fluvium Perironis’ to ‘auoun Perydon’.⁸⁰ Although the exact location of this river remains unknown (a number of candidates have been considered on the basis of etymology and their situation on the border, but none conclusively),⁸¹ the river is presented in both *Armes Prydein* and the *Prophetiae* as a locus of Saxon defeat, and a natural border between the Welsh kingdoms and the historical Saxon.

In his use of this material Geoffrey preserves another important marker: both prophecies draw a clear division between the island’s rightful heirs, and their foreign usurpers. The allusion to the Saxon ‘alienigerarum’ (‘aliens’) who are chased to Winchester, is a re-working of the anti-Saxon terminology of *Armes Prydein*, in which the Saxons are identified as ‘allmyn’ (‘foreigners’):

Dysogoan Myrdin kyueruyd hyn.
 yn Aber Perydon meiryon mechteyrn
 A chyny bei vn reith lleith a gwynyn.
 o vn ewyllis bryt yd ymwrthuynnyn

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.93. There have been more recent attempts to identify the old man with figures of Welsh folk traditions, for which see Toby D. Griffen, ‘Aber Perydon: River of Death’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 15 (1995), 32-41 (pp.34-35). None of these are fully convincing.

⁸⁰ Griffen, ‘Aber Perydon’, p.34.

⁸¹ Williams, *Armes Prydein*, p.xl; Tatlock, *Legendary History*, pp.75-76.

... ef gyrhawt allmyn y alltuded.

(Myrddin foretells that they will meet in Aber Perydon, the stewards of the Great King (and though it be not in the same way they will [all] lament death). With a single will they offer battle... The foreigners will be driven into exile.)

(17-20, 28)

Geoffrey's prophecy ventriloquises a Welsh right to Britain, presented as a subject of Anglo-Norman anxiety. Herein lies the historical-political dimension to Geoffrey's use of this material. The location of this prophecy in the Norman time of the text holds the historical Saxon kingdom of Wessex synonymous with the contemporary Anglo-Norman realm. As with his application of material of the Black Book-type, in his historical positioning of this allusion Geoffrey betrays an awareness of an association between Saxon occupation and Norman in Welsh prophetic mentalities.

Yet elsewhere in the *Prophetiae* Geoffrey employs the Pan-Celtic alliance not as a figure of a pan-Celtic threat, but as a ciphered reference to Anglo-Norman territorial interests. There is one particular reworking of *Armes Prydein* and its analogues, which we find in a later portion of the *Prophetiae*, worth commenting on briefly here. Some forty or so lines after the appearance of Conanus and Cadualadrus, *Prophetiae*, 147-69 recounts the division of the British Isles from Winchester through the appearance of three streams in the city, and subsequent British restoration led by a pan-Celtic alliance, in an aggressive movement against Winchester:

Tres fontes in urbe Guintonia erumpent, quorum riuuli insulam in tres
portiones secabunt. Qui bibet de uno diuturniori uita fruetur nec
superuenienti languore grauabitur. Qui bibet de altero indeficienti fame
peribit, et in facie ipsius pallor et horror sedebit. Qui bibet de tercio
subita morte periclitabitur, nec corpus ipsius subire poterit
sepulchrum.... Excitabitur Daneum nemus et in humanam uocam
erumpens clamabit "accede, Kambria, et iunge lateri tuo Cornubiam, et
dic Guintoniae 'absorbebit te tellus; transfer sedem pastoris ubi naues
applicant, et cetera membra caput sequantur; festinat namque dies qua

ciues ob scelera periurii peribunt; candor lanarum nocuit atque tincturae ipsarum diuersitas; uae periurae genti, quia urbs inclita propter eam ruet” (Three springs will appear in the city of Winchester, and their streams will cut the island in three. Whoever drinks from the first will live a longer life, free from disease. Whoever drinks from the second will die of a thirst that cannot be quenched and a ghostly pallor will appear on his face. Whoever drinks from the third will die a sudden death and no one will be able to bury his body. [The puella narrative follows]... The Forest of Dean will awaken and shout in a human voice: “come, Wales, stand with Cornwall at your side, and to say to Winchester, ‘the earth will swallow you up; move the seat of your shepherd to the place where the ships land, and let the remaining limbs follow the head; the day is at hand when your citizens will perish because of their sins of betrayal; the day is at hand where your citizens will perish because of the whiteness of your wool and the many colours it has been dyed has done you harm; woe to the treacherous people on whose account a famous city will fall.’)

(147-69)

There are a good number of obscurities to this portion of the text, not least the figure of a girl sent to the hoary forest to dry up the streams (155-56; omitted for reasons of space from the quotation above), and the animated Forest of Dean which instigates the pan-Celtic alliance. It is by virtue of these seemingly irreducible ciphers that the prophecy has been understood as characteristic of the portion of the text commonly regarded as post-Norman, and beyond the scope of fruitful literary-historical analysis.⁸² The sequence has been most fully commented on for its legendary rather than political resonances: its relationship to *Kat Goden*, a poem from the Book of Taliesin, with a tenth-century provenance, which tells of the enchantment of a forest by the magician Gwydion, rallied to fight against Arawn, king of the Otherworld.⁸³ Similarly, the sequence has seen some comment, both medieval and modern, in regard to its later application

⁸² Both Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, and Curley, *Geoffrey of Monmouth* refrain from historical analysis of this section of the text.

⁸³ Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, p.47. Poem printed with commentary in Marged Haycock, ed., *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (2007), pp.167-239.

to Jeanne d'Arc, and the precise source of Geoffrey's *puella* remains a significant unknown.⁸⁴ Both are tantalising threads, but what interests me here is the precise configuration of the pan-Celtic alliance, which I understand not as futurist at all, but a deeply contemporary reworking of some of the oldest Welsh political prophecies.

The account of the three streams of Winchester, and the division of the island in 147-51, borrows from a Welsh historical-prophetic convention, associating the division of British territories with the Saxon invasions (here figured by an allusion to the kingdom of Wessex, by its capital, Winchester). We find an excellent example of this paradigm in the prophecy *Gmawd Llyudd Mawr* ('The Great Hosting'), another long-lived prophecy found in the Book of Taliesin representative of an older Cynan-Cadwaladr type. It gives an account of the Saxon invasions as a time of British exile, which sees the scattering of the British people, figured in the prophecy by the development of four languages of Cymry:

Dyscogan perffeith
anhedyn diffeith.
Cymry, bedeir iaith,
sy mudant i hareith.

(Most true the prophecy – They will dwell in the wilderness. They will change the speech of Kymry, with its four languages.)

(47-50)⁸⁵

This suggests a division of a British language into Welsh, Cornish, Breton and, I assume, a Strathclyde dialect. These four languages allude to the three remaining British insular territories, held in connection with the British diaspora of Brittany. This formulation corresponds to a later Arthurian triad naming the three regions of a united Britain as the North, Wales, and Cornwall.⁸⁶

Here Geoffrey was working in relation to a clear Welsh tradition. However, it is notable that given its concern with insular splitting, the pan-Celtic alliance which follows does not evoke

⁸⁴ Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by D. E. R. Watt, 9 vols (1987-1998), VIII, pp.130-33, 209; Paul Zumthor, *Merlin le Prophète* (1943), p.69; Jankulak, p.81.

⁸⁵ Evans, *Poetry from the Book of Taliesin*, pp.175-82; discussed by Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, p.125.

⁸⁶ Bromwich, *Trioedd*, pp.1-4.

the full extent of the British historical territories, as found in *Armes Prydein*. Although, in keeping with the model of *Armes Prydein*, in *Prophetiae*, 151-69 a pan-Celtic alliance marches on Winchester, there is no reference to either Brittany or the north as in *Prophetiae*, 110-14, and Ireland, Scotland, and other conventional allies of the Britons are similarly absent. This is because the sequence is not just a rearrangement of Welsh prophetic material, but one aligned with a specific political agenda. Geoffrey drew on allusions from *Armes Prydein*, and the Welsh exile and return structure, in line with a particular sphere of political meaning: he reformulated the pan-Celtic alliance as a map of the powerbase of patron of the *Historia*, Robert of Gloucester.

There are strong grounds for understanding this sequence as a late addition to the *Prophetiae* (as it was read by Orderic Vitalis), inserted into the *Prophetiae* as it was integrated in the *Historia*, and devised not with Alexander of Lincoln in mind, but Robert. Robert's regional influence was cemented by a series of alliances across South Wales, the March, and the West Country through the 1130s, with his foothold in Cornwall secured by a marriage alliance between his brother, Reginald, and a daughter of the Cornish magnate William FitzRichard early in 1140.⁸⁷ Geoffrey's interest in Cornwall and the West Country in the *Historia* is well commented upon.⁸⁸ The political conditions of the late 1130s and 1140, suggest a political dimension to this, as related to the activities of Robert. Certainly, it is in relation to the territorial interests of Robert that we can understand Geoffrey's addition of a new locale to this reformulated scene of the pan-Celtic alliance: the Forest of Dean. Although a location of marvels in Welsh romance,⁸⁹ no reference to it appears in extant Welsh political prophecy. Spanning both sides of the River Severn, a large area of the forest was under royal jurisdiction, its hunting rights enjoyed by the Anglo-Norman kings; whilst it also encompassed territory in which the Welsh diocese of Llandaff had both a church and an estate (*manoris*).⁹⁰ It stood on the very edges of the territorial interests of Robert, whose involvements with Llandaff during the 1130s are well noted.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Crouch, 'Robert, earl of Gloucester'.

⁸⁸ Padel, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Cornwall'.

⁸⁹ Juliette Wood, 'Caerleon Restanarata: The Narrative World of Early Medieval Gwent', in *The Gwent County History*, 3 vols, series ed. by Ralph A. Griffiths, I: *Gwent in Pre-history and Early History*, ed. by Miranda Aldhouse-Green and Ray Howell (2004), pp.317-30 (p.323).

⁹⁰ *Book of Llan Dan*, ed. by J. Gwenogwryn Evans (1893; facsimile edn, 1979), p.333; Tatlock, *Legendary History*, p.74.

⁹¹ John Reuben Davies, *The Book of Llandaf and the Norman Church in Wales* (2003), pp.46-55;

Similarly, Winchester was not invoked in the prophecy simply as a source-marker. During the later 1130s and into the 1140s it was a bastion of support for King Stephen against the Angevin claim: the bishop of Winchester was Henry of Blois, staunch supporter, and brother, of the king. It was also a city where Robert was a major tenement holder.⁹² It became the site of violent contestation in 1141, when the Angevin and English forces converged on the city, in the so-called Rout of Winchester, the subject of an *ex eventu* prophecy in Geoffrey's *Vita Merlini*.⁹³ This was a locale, and political scene, in which Geoffrey exhibited an earlier interest, in the *Prophetiae*. The fracture between Robert and the crown became visible during Easter 1137, as Robert moved decisively towards the Angevin camp, and Stephen seized and razed Robert's castles.⁹⁴ By 1138 Robert's affiliation to the Angevins was common knowledge,⁹⁵ and this year saw a rising of the allies of Robert, as in the prophecy, across the March, Wales, and the south west, and the definitive emergence of Robert as leader of the Angevin opposition to Stephen. It is to this period that we must date the reformulated pan-Celtic alliance of *Prophetiae*, 151-69.

There is a sense in which we might understand Geoffrey's prophetic Cambricising of Robert as a form of endorsement, a flattery analogous to examples better noted by scholars in the roughly contemporary writings of William of Malmesbury, and indeed, the prologue to Geoffrey's *Historia*, and the heroic dukes of Gloucester who appear throughout the text.⁹⁶ Certainly, this reworking of the pan-Celtic alliance as a reference to the territorial interests of a Marcher lord was to become a much-used strategy in the later Middle Ages. We find comparable examples on the Welsh border during the fifteenth century, associated with the earls of March, and their vast powerbase spanning both sides of the Irish Sea.⁹⁷ However, although this prophecy presents Robert as the architect of some form of British restoration, there is an inescapably pessimistic dimension to it, and this was a particularly long-lived facet of *Prophetiae*, 147-69 in its later English reception history. The divided island, seized upon by a pan-Celtic alliance, is a figure found in English pessimistic prophecies from the thirteenth down to the fifteenth centuries (most famously in the *Last Six Kings*, but also in the *Prophecy of the Eagle*,

⁹² Patterson, 'William of Malmesbury's Robert of Gloucester', pp.994-95.

⁹³ *Vita Merlini*, 1485-88. Discussed by Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, p.283-84; Parry, *Vita Merlini*, p.366; Clarke, *Vita Merlini*, p.154.

⁹⁴ Patterson, 'William of Malmesbury's Robert of Gloucester', p.989.

⁹⁵ *Ecclesiastical History*, VI, pp.482-83; William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella*, ed. by Edmund King, transl. by K. R. Potter (1998), pp.40-43; Crouch, 'Robert, first earl of Gloucester'.

⁹⁶ Patterson, 'William of Malmesbury's Robert of Gloucester', p.985; Tatlock, *Legendary History*, pp.69, 90, 121, 170, 398; Padel, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Cornwall', p.10; Chambers, p.43.

⁹⁷ See below, Chapter 5.

discussed below). Nonetheless, on occasion it was employed for more jingoistic purposes – notably, by factions associated with Marcher lords both on the Anglo-Welsh and Anglo-Scottish borders – as an articulation of a threat to English government.⁹⁸ This is because the sequence draws on the threatening military capacity of a network of alliances beyond the direct geographical control of the English king, the very sense in which it was first employed by Geoffrey.

Prophetiae, 151-69 is the earliest example of the application of the Welsh prophetic meta-narrative to the Marcher aristocracy. This began a long tradition, through which political figures, with territorial strongholds in border regions but engaged in the politics of the centre, came to tactically self-identify as British. The next important stage in this evolution is found in the prophetic writings of another Marcher cleric, Gerald of Wales.

1. 2 The Giraldian Prophecies of Merlin Silvester

During the late twelfth century a powerful political prophetic mythology centred around the notion of a British territorial right emerged amongst the Cambro-Norman aristocracy of the Welsh March and Ireland. This movement was rooted in the Marcher utility of Geoffrey of Monmouth's writings, and a limited awareness of the place of prophecy in Welsh political literature, circulating in the mixed milieu of the Anglo-Welsh border. Amongst the aristocracy of the March, political prophecy was used to authorise territorial conquest; build family prestige; and defend territorial rights.

This use of Galfridian prophecy and Welsh strategy is nowhere clearer than in Gerald of Wales's account of the late twelfth-century Cambro-Norman conquest of Ireland, the *Expugnatio Hibernica*. Prophecy was instrumental to Gerald's conceptualisation of the work: he referred to it throughout his life as 'Vaticinalis Historia'.⁹⁹ It is a work concerned with the historical fulfilment of prophecy. There are three groups of prophetic authorities drawn on in the *Expugnatio*:

⁹⁸ This use of the pan-Celtic alliance is discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁹⁹ Giraldus Cambrensis, *Expugnatis Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland*, ed. and transl. by A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin (1978), p.lxii.

prophecies adapted from the *Prophetiae Merlini*, ascribed to Merlin Ambrosius; prophecies ascribed to Merlin Silvester; and, an addition to Gerald's British sources, reputedly Gaelic works of native Irish prophets.¹⁰⁰ The prophecies with which I am here concerned are those of Merlin Silvester, prophecies after a Galfridian model, drawing also on authorising Welsh tropes, functioning as a mode of endorsement for the Irish territorial interests of the Cambro and later Hiberno-Norman dynasty to which Gerald belonged, the Geraldines.¹⁰¹

A perceived lack of Geraldine advancement and recognition in Ireland during the 1170s and '80s colours the *Expugnatio*: it belongs to a period in which governorship was passing to other interested parties, closer to the royal court.¹⁰² The text makes a claim for Geraldine recognition through the prophetic authorisation of territorial acquisition. Gerald's association of prophecies with the Geraldine milieu provides an important example of the circulation of political prophecy in the context of twelfth-century regional lordship. It forms a precedent for the Marcher use of prophetic territorial endorsement, in operation into the later Middle Ages, most prolifically amongst the broader milieu of the Mortimer earls of March during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (discussed in Chapter Five). This is rooted in the long history of the region: from the evolution of the March in the late eleventh century to the Acts of Union under Henry VIII, the territorial authority of the Welsh Marcher lords was rooted in a provenance directly outside the control of the king of England.¹⁰³ One of the fundamental elements to the use of political prophecy in this milieu is a sense of territorial entitlement beyond the power of the English crown, and a proximity to Welsh models associating prophecy with territory. This cultural influence is particularly important for our understanding of the political prophetic mentalities of Geraldines, who are often cited as important representatives of Norman insinuation within native Welsh power structures.¹⁰⁴ Through the progenitress of the broader

¹⁰⁰ For discussion of the latter see Scott and Martin, *Expugnatio*, p.333, n.307.

¹⁰¹ There is a wealth of scholarship on the conquest, most of which draws heavily on Gerald's account. See J. F. O' Doherty, 'The Anglo-Norman Invasion, 1167-71', *Irish Historical Studies*, 1 (1938), 154-57; W. L. Warren, *Henry II* (1973), pp.192-206; Robin Frame, *Colonial Ireland, 1169-1369* (2012), pp.1-21; James Lydon, 'Ireland and the English Crown, 1171-1541', *Irish Historical Studies*, 29 (1995), 281-94; Marie Therese Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship* (1989), pp.79-304; Marie Therese Flanagan, 'Strongbow, Henry II and Anglo-Norman Intervention in Ireland', in *War and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of J. O. Prestwich*, ed. by John Gillingham and J. C. Holt (1984), pp.62-77; Seán Duffy, *Ireland in the Middle Ages* (1997), pp.57-110.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp.24-25.

¹⁰³ A. J. Otway-Ruthven, 'The Constitutional Position of the Great Lordships of South Wales', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, 8 (1958), 1-20; R. R. Davies, 'The Law of the March', *Welsh History Review*, 5 (1970-71), 1-30; R. R. Davies, 'Kings, Lords and Liberties in the March of Wales, 1066-1272', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, 29 (1979), 41-61.

¹⁰⁴ Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p.102.

familial group, the Welsh princess Nest, the daughter of Rhys ap Tewdr, the family existed in a close association to the princes of Deheubarth,¹⁰⁵ with whom they entreated outside the direct sphere of influence of the English crown, and to which milieu they stood indebted in the integration of Welsh elements into a distinctively Cambro-Norman identity.¹⁰⁶

The Book of Merlin Silvester

In the second book of the *Expugnatio*, Gerald claims to have discovered a Welsh book of the prophecies of Merlin Silvester, or Celidonus, at the monastery of Lleyn in Nefyn, in the northern Welsh kingdom of Gwynedd (a discovery which he also recounts in the *Itinerarium*).¹⁰⁷ Gerald writes that through the help of those more skilled in ‘lingue Britannice’, he has interpreted the prophecies, and intends to publish a translation of this book as a supplement to the better known prophecies of Merlin Ambrosius, that is, the *Prophetiae Merlini*. Although this third book was apparently never written, Gerald’s stated intention tells us much about the use of Galfridian precedent. Both the prophet, and Gerald’s reputed discovery of the prophetic book, function as markers in a historical discourse governed by Galfridian conventions. Through the writings of Geoffrey of Monmouth, the notion of the British Book took form as a convention of British prophecy-claims in Cambro-Norman and Anglo-Norman milieux. Gerald gives the kind of narrative one might expect to frame an account of political prophecy in the twelfth century: a reputed Welsh source. Furthermore, following Geoffrey’s royal dedications in the *Historia*, this became the manner in which one writes political prophecy for, and more importantly *to*, a royal patron. As a convention, it creates a space in which political agendas can be articulated, with potentially seditious connotations displaced onto an antiquated prophet and another language.

Gerald’s distinction between the two Merlins is likely to have been based on monastic practices of cataloguing Geoffrey of Monmouth’s works by drawing on the temporally disparate characterisations of the child-prophet of the *Historia* who prophesied in Vortigern’s time, and the northern wild man of the *Vita Merlini* who narrates the final moments of the Arthurian

¹⁰⁵ A Geraldine genealogy is published by Scott and Martin, *Expugnatio*, p.266.

¹⁰⁶ For the importance of this association in Gerald’s writings see Huw Pryce, ‘In Search of a Medieval Society: Deheubarth in the Writings of Gerald of Wales’, *Welsh History Review*, 1987 (13), 265-81.

¹⁰⁷ *Expugnatio*, pp.254-57; *Journey through Wales*, p.183.

kingdom.¹⁰⁸ Cataloguing practices from the monastery of Bec in Brittany provide the earliest allusions to a Merlin Ambrosius and a Merlin Silvester.¹⁰⁹ Although Geoffrey asserted the unity of his character, he was working on two very different models: the first, a composite between the prophet Ambrosius of the *Historia Brittonum* and the Welsh Myrddin; and the second, a figure closer to the northern wild man identified as Myrddin in the prophecies of the Black Book. Following the researches of A. O. H. Jarman it is a piece of generally accepted wisdom that in his invention of a separate biography for Merlin Silvester (given in the *Itinerarium Cambriae*, II.8), Gerald was attempting to reconcile incongruities in Geoffrey's works, an activity based on an acquaintance with Welsh material concerning Myrddin, and non-Welsh Latin material relating to the life of the northern wild man (and it is often hypothesised Myrddin-original) Lailoken.¹¹⁰ This division proved a long lasting influence on the English chronicle tradition, which preserved Gerald's differentiation between the two Merlins.¹¹¹ Yet there is more to Gerald's Merlin Silvester than a clerical act of clarification.

Gerald was interested not simply in Geoffrey's Merlin, but a Merlin who could be employed for a new purpose. Notably, wherever the *Prophetiae* is quoted by Gerald in the *Expugnatio* (glossed as the prophecies of Merlin Ambrosius) it is in relation to Henry II.¹¹² This suggests a strong convention for use of the *Prophetiae* during this period. Merlin Silvester, however, possesses no such prior function. The prophecies of Merlin Silvester allowed Gerald to negotiate the claims of the early conquerors to Ireland through a language of territorial endorsement reserved in contemporary usage for royalty alone. The prophecies of Merlin Silvester pertain to the actions of non-royal actors in Ireland, and although on occasion the Silvester prophecies stage interaction with royal figures, this is located within the broader context of Marcher political interests.¹¹³ The most compelling use of Merlin Silvester for my enquiry here

¹⁰⁸ *Vita Merlini*, 929-38.

¹⁰⁹ David Dumville, 'An Early Text of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and the Circulation of Some Latin Histories in Twelfth-century Normandy', in *Arthurian Literature IV*, ed. by Richard Barber (1985), pp.1-36 (pp.3-4); Sonya Jensen, 'Merlin: Ambrosius and Silvester', in *Words and Wordsmiths, A Volume for H. L. Rogers*, ed. by Geraldine Barnes *et al* (1989), pp.45-48 (p.47).

¹¹⁰ *Journey through Wales*, 192-93; Jarman, 'The Merlin Legend and the Welsh Tradition of Prophecy', pp.124,136; Jarman, *Welsh Legend of Merlin*, pp.17, 25.

¹¹¹ Cf. *Eulogium Historiarum sive temporis*, ed. by Frank Scott Haydon, 3 vols (1858-65), II, pp.137-38; *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis*, ed. by J. R. Lumby, 9 vols (1865-86), I, pp.416-23.

¹¹² *Expugnatio*, pp.96-97, 208-09, 218-19.

¹¹³ For example, a prophecy of Merlin Silvester is invoked by Gerald in relation to former earl of Pembroke, Richard Strongbow's insinuation into native Irish politics as heir to the kingdom of Leinster, and his subsequent cession of this title to the English king in 1171. See *Expugnatio*, pp.64-65. For Strongbow's activities in Ireland see Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship*, pp.79-166; Flanagan, 'Strongbow, Henry II and Anglo-Norman

is found in Gerald's first 'Vatis enigma', in which Merlin Silvester envisages: 'Miles bipartitus armis Hibernie claustra primus irrumpet' ('A knight, sprung of two different races, will be the first to break through the defences of Ireland by force of arms').¹¹⁴ This was applied to Robert FitzStephen, Gerald's kinsmen, to whose genealogy he here alludes: the son of a Norman father and Welsh mother.¹¹⁵ This prophecy belongs to the very dawn of Cambro-Norman activity in Ireland: FitzStephen's response to the request for aid from the exiled king of Leinster, Diarmait Mac Murchada, in 1167. As such it also memorialises the grant of Wexford from Diarmait to FitzStephen, a prophecy constructed around the memorialisation of territorial acquisition, and an implicit endorsement of a territorial right.¹¹⁶

This prophecy stands in an important relation to a speech Gerald ascribes to FitzStephen, delivered to his Cambro-Norman company on the eve of battle against the Irish king, Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair:

Troiano partim ex sanguine linea descendimus originali. Ex Gallis quoque propaginem ex parte trahimus et naturam. Hinc nobis animositas, illinc aromorum usus accedit.

(In part we come of Trojan stock [lit. blood] by direct line of descent. But we are also partly descended from the men of Gaul, and take our character in part from them. From the former we get our courage, from the latter our skill in the use of arms.)¹¹⁷

Although, like a number of the speeches Gerald gives to both the Irish and Norman protagonists of the *Expugnatio*, a variation on a classical theme,¹¹⁸ FitzStephen's speech may not be the author's invention entirely. It suggests a very specific strategy particular to the Cambro-Norman provenance of those involved in the early conquest of Ireland.¹¹⁹ This statement embodies a sense of Cambro-Norman identity, distinct from Welsh, Norman, or English. This construction undoubtedly shows the influence of Geoffrey's *Historia* in terms of its Trojan element (the

Invasion'; Flanagan, 'Clare, Richard Fitz Gilbert de, called Strongbow', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5447?docPos=1>> [accessed 17 September 2012].

¹¹⁴ *Expugnatio*, pp.30-31.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.293, n.29.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.30-35.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

¹¹⁸ F. X. Martin, 'Giraldus as Historian', in *Expugnatio*, pp.267-84 (p.278); Frame, *Colonial Ireland*, p.2.

¹¹⁹ This is accepted by the editors of the *Expugnatio*, p.297, n.52.

conquest of Ireland here becomes the British foundation myth in miniature), but there is also a methodological, or perspectival, debt to Geoffrey. A striking feature of FitzStephen's speech is the association of Norman prowess with Norman armour, set in relation to a zealous Welsh defence of insular territory. These two elements, which appear as antipathies in the Norman Conquest-prophecies of the type preserved in the Black Book of Carmarthen, drawn on by Geoffrey in terms of his own Conquest-prophecy, are here united in the genealogy of the Cambro-Norman campaigners in Ireland. Certainly, it is notable that, as we read in *Y Bedwenni*, FitzStephen does not refer to the armour of the Normans, but the French (in Welsh, *freigc*, in Latin *gallis*), the customary identification of the Norman conquerors in Welsh political prophecy.

FitzStephen's speech constructs a concept of a new race, with Norman armour and a native right to territory. This episode has been much commented upon by historians interested in Gerald and his Marcher provenance.¹²⁰ The use of the euphemism Trojan for Welsh suggests that the mythic Trojan past was in many respects a more appealing mode of British endorsement than the Welsh present. This is presumably because for men such as FitzStephen, the foregrounding of contemporary Welsh blood ties carried a dangerous over-association with rebellious Welsh kinsmen. In many respects, FitzStephen's speech must be understood as a politically necessary act of disavowal. Competing loyalties on the Welsh March led a number of the Geraldines to Ireland in the first place. Gerald writes that FitzStephen turned his attention to Ireland when he found himself torn between competing allegiances to the English crown and his south Wallian kinsman, Rhys ap Gruffydd.¹²¹ Ireland presented an English loyalist alternative. Yet, Gerald writes that it was necessary for FitzStephen, through the negotiations of his brothers, to secure leave from Rhys before his departure.¹²² The Geraldines existed, unavoidably, within Welsh frameworks of meaning. This context influenced political perceptions, behaviours, and identifications. Like Gerald himself, FitzStephen does not claim to be simply Norman: the Welsh connection (however it is encoded) clearly functioned as a mode of territorial authorisation, and cultural pride.¹²³ In FitzStephen's speech, the force of Norman armour alone is not enough.

¹²⁰ Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, p.18; Cohen, 'In the Borderlands', pp.82-83. See *Expugnatio*, p.229.

¹²¹ *Expugnatio*, pp.28-31.

¹²² *Ibid*, pp.30-31.

¹²³ This combination of Welsh pride, and consciousness of Anglo-Norman heritage is commented upon by Glyn Roberts in a slightly later period, 'Antipathy and Sympathy, 1282-1485', *Welsh History Review*, 1 (1960-63), 375-96 (p.378).

Amongst Cambro-Norman communities on the Welsh March, Galfridian discourse shaped the use of Welsh elements, and Welsh claims, inserting them into Anglicised networks of meaning. Geoffrey's writings were instrumental in the construction of an acceptable national-political identity, which was British rather than Welsh; yet which rested overtly and consciously on Welsh elements. Here we see the very clear operation of the Bhabhian supplement: Geraldine rhetoric was both dependent upon, and a substitution of, displaced Welsh meanings. This strategy is in part indebted to the association of Galfridian prophecy with military conquest, but it is also born from an acquaintance with Welsh political prophecy.

Gerald's Welsh Sources

FitzGerald's speech, and the related Merlinian prophecy, is but one marker among a number in the *Expugnatio*, and Gerald's Welsh writings, suggestive of Gerald's or a Geraldine acquaintance with Myrddin prophecies of the type found in the Black Book, which we have strong evidence were circulating as Welsh oppositional material during the reign of Henry II.¹²⁴

Like Geoffrey's British book, the existence of the book drawn on by Gerald remains controversial. It has long been suggested that Gerald was looking at a Welsh language or Cambro-Latin commentary on the *Prophetiae*.¹²⁵ That the Welsh translation of the *Prophecy of the Eagle* presents one such source is a long enduring misconception (as the third part of this chapter sets out, the compiler of the *Eagle* was almost certainly indebted to Gerald rather than vice versa). Like Geoffrey, Gerald did not have a single Welsh source: his prophecies are his invention, but they do rest on a basic acquaintance, and selective use, of Welsh political prophetic elements. Gerald's familiarity with Welsh prophecy appears to have been more limited than Geoffrey's, but nonetheless, he was aware of a basic Welsh model, and a number of fundamental motifs and allusions.

Although a single Welsh source for the prophecies of Merlin Silvester is distinctly unlikely, there is no reason to dispute the existence of *a* book of native Welsh prophecy at

¹²⁴ Jarman, '*Llyfr du Caerfyrddin*', pp.336, 149-50. This historical association is discussed further below, p.43, 59-60.

¹²⁵ Chambers, p.99.

Nefyn.¹²⁶ Gerald's acquaintance with Welsh material concerning a prophetic northern wild man, in a similar vein to wild-man prophecies of the Black Book, has been posited by Welsh scholars.¹²⁷ Deep into Welsh-held Wales, the monastery at Nefyn is a good candidate for a manuscript of Welsh language prophecy. Gerald's anecdote in the *Itinerarium Cambriae* concerning the Welsh soothsayer Meilyr and his prophetic visions, strongly suggests the contemporary circulation of political prophecy through Welsh monasteries. A number of Meilyr's visions (held in association with the revolt of Hywel ap Iorwerth during the early 1170s), occurred at monasteries.¹²⁸ Indeed, Brynley F. Roberts has noted that a document relating to Meilyr survives from the Cistercian house at Margam, in Glamorgan, a site from which there is evidence of political prophecy circulating by the early thirteenth century, and we might safely assume, earlier.¹²⁹

In the *Expugnatio*, Gerald presents the discovery of the prophetic book at Nefyn as the culmination of a long search, a book most desired ('desideratum').¹³⁰ His interest in Welsh prophecy appears to have occurred in the context of broader historical-political conditions very similar to Geoffrey's: a time of Welsh expectation and an increased awareness in English circles of Welsh political prophecy. The final decades of the reign of Henry II saw the circulation of political prophecies directly antipathetic to the king, and Gerald records a number of these in oral circulation. The search for the book appears to be the search for a textual precedent for these. Notably, there is some correspondence between the oral prophecies observed in circulation by Gerald and those preserved (including material from the reign of Henry II) in the Black Book. For example, a number of prophecies of the Black Book include accounts of battles of British restoration on bridges, set during the reign of Henry II (further discussed in their potential cross-border circulation below).¹³¹ Prophecies closely analogous to these are recorded in Gerald's account of the Llechlavar stone, a bridge which if upon his return from Ireland Henry were to cross, he would die; and the prophecy relating to Rhyd Pencarn, a ford identified

¹²⁶ Roberts, 'Gerald of Wales and Welsh Tradition', p.143.

¹²⁷ Padel, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Development of the Merlin Legend', pp.62-63. A similar acquaintance is posited by Jarman, 'The Merlin Legend in Welsh Prophecy', p.136.

¹²⁸ *The Journey Through Wales*, ed. by Lewis Thorpe (1978), pp.114-21. Roberts, 'Gerald of Wales and Welsh Tradition', p.142.

¹²⁹ Roberts, 'Gerald of Wales and Welsh Tradition', p.142. See also below, p.57. For integration of Cistercians into the native milieu, particularly in terms of literary patronage, see Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation* (1976), pp.19-20.

¹³⁰ *Expugnatio*, pp.254-55.

¹³¹ See below, pp.66-67.

as a prophesied locus of Welsh defeat (an inversion of this trope).¹³² The latter is ascribed to Merlin Silvester; the second a singular ‘Merlin’ (a telling slippage in Gerald’s terms), surely the Welsh Myrddin. Both in its textual form (the reputed book of wild-man prophecy at Nefyn) and its reported oral circulation, Gerald’s impressions of Welsh prophecy are remarkably consistent, and indicative of a particular historical climate of Welsh political prophecy, as also in evidence in the Black Book.

Gerald was also certainly aware of the association between Merlin (which is to say, Myrddin) and prophecies of Welsh decline and restoration. In the *Descriptio Cambriae* he writes of the Merlins as prophets of the destruction of Britain, as Cassandra to Troy:

Sicut et olim, extante adhuc Britonum regno, gentis excidium, et tam
Saxonum primo, quam etiam Normannorum post adventum, Merlinus
uterque, tam Celidonius quam Ambrosius, vaticinando declaravit.

(In the same way, at a time when the kingdom of Britain still existed, the
two Merlins, Celidonius and Ambrosius, each foretold its destruction,
and the coming first of the Saxons and then of the Normans.)¹³³

The shape of this alleged prophetic content clearly owes much to Geoffrey’s *Prophetiae*, and its classical gloss to the Trojan origin myth, which FitzStephen’s speech suggests was drawn on by the Geraldines (or at least Gerald) during this period. Certainly however, it also reflects Welsh accounts of a perceived state of exile following the Saxon, and later the Norman, invasions, observed in the non-Galfridian prophecies surveyed in the first part of this chapter. Although Gerald does not extend this paradigm to the customary vision of British national restoration of Welsh political prophecy, he was familiar with this narrative arc. Earlier in the *Descriptio* he records contemporary Welsh hopes enshrined in the restoration prophecies of Merlin:

et juxta Merlini sui vaticinia, exterorum tam natione pereunte quam
nuncupatione, antiquo in insula tam nomine quam omine Britones
exultabunt.

¹³² *Journey through Wales*, pp.121-22, 167-68; *Expugnatio*, pp.106-07, 232-33. Jarman, ‘*Llyfr du Carmarthen*’, p.351; Roberts, ‘Gerald of Wales and Welsh Tradition’, pp.143-44.

¹³³ *Opera*, VI, p.196; *Description of Wales*, p.246.

(According to the prophecies of Merlin, the foreign occupation of the island will come to an end, and the Welsh will be called Britons once more and they will enjoy their ancient privileges.)¹³⁴

It is apparent here just how extensively Gerald drew on Geoffrey's writings in his understanding of Welsh prophecy: this is an almost verbatim quotation from *Prophetiae*, 114. However, this prophecy is found in the unit of the *Prophetiae* with the strongest claim to a direct Welsh source, incorporating the pan-Celtic alliance of *Armes Prydein*. Gerald almost certainly framed his perceptions in relation to Galfridian prophecy, yet these perceptions were grounded in a basic awareness of a long history of Welsh prophecy oppositional to an English presence in Wales. There is again a slippage in Gerald's categorisation of the two Merlins here: he writes of the restoration prophecies of Merlin, presumably Myrddin.

For Gerald, Merlin Silvester had clear associations with Welsh oppositional strategies. He was aware of a northern wild man prophesying national decline and restoration in Welsh prophecy traditions, a status which presupposes a Welsh framework of meaning for Merlin Silvester. Yet for Gerald, this northern Merlin could also be conveniently separated from contemporary Welsh oppositional discourses. Although Gerald's locating of the prophet in the Caledonian Forest likely rested (whether under the influence of Geoffrey's *Vita Merlini* or Welsh witnesses) on the northern biography of the Welsh Myrddin material, it also represents a strategy of disavowal. He writes in the *Itinerarium*: 'Erant enim Merlini duo... alter vero de Albania oriundus, qui et Celidonus dictus est, a Celidonia silva in qua prophetizavit' ('There are two Merlins... the second Merlin came from Scotland. He is called Caledonius because he prophesied in the Calidonian Forest').¹³⁵ This non-Welsh locale allowed Gerald to distance his uses of political prophecy from contemporary Welsh oppositional prophecies. As in Robert FitzStephen's recourse to Trojan history, Merlin Silvester functioned as a bridge between a partially Cambricised Marcher culture, and Anglo-Norman acceptability. Gerald constructed a prophet with authorising associations of Britishness, but at a geographical remove from contemporary Wales.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ *Opera*, VI, p.216; *Description of Wales*, p.265.

¹³⁵ *Opera*, VI, p.133; *Journey through Wales*, p.192.

¹³⁶ This is strong evidence that during the twelfth century there were not yet restoration prophecies in any sense analogous to Welsh constructions active in Scotland. As Chapter 2 will set out, this is a process which began in the late thirteenth century.

In his conception of Merlin Silvester, Gerald manipulated Welsh traditions as supplements to Galfridian conventions, drawing on Welsh political prophecy as a source of power removed from the English king both culturally and historically. This was where he chose to locate his prophecies of Geraldine prowess. In this respect, Gerald's original intention to translate and dedicate these prophecies to Henry II assumes a new dimension: the prophecies themselves are an envoy for Geraldine rights in Ireland. As such, it is no surprise that Gerald came to identify himself with this prophet. In the dedication of his second Irish book, the *Topographia Hibernica* (1187), Gerald addressed himself to Henry II as 'suus silvester' ('your Silvester').¹³⁷ Ad Putter has understood this in terms of its positioning of Gerald as the king's prophet, his Merlin.¹³⁸ This is certainly in operation here, but there is another level of meaning to Gerald's prophetic self-identification here: Merlin Silvester is also the prophetic spokesman for the Geraldines and their rights in Ireland. This is an address which even as it flattered the king, made a very particular political claim.

Gerald's Self-Censorship

The promised third book of the *Expugnatio*, a full translation of the prophecies of Merlin Silvester, never appeared.¹³⁹ The only prophecies of Merlin Silvester Gerald bequeathed to the world were those included in the first two books of the *Expugnatio*. It is generally assumed that a fuller use of political prophecy was not considered by Gerald to be a politic course in 1189: Gerald writes that wiser counsel had prevailed and the publication of the prophetic book would be delayed for a more appropriate time.¹⁴⁰ The dawn of a new reign is conventionally a time when borders are weak, and political prophecy presents a language not of imperial ambitions but threat, specifically, in twelfth-century England (as I have noted in regard to the 1130s), a Welsh threat. Although this did not stop Geoffrey during the 1130s, Gerald's omission is understandable: as a number of critics have noted, by this period the *Prophetiae* itself had come to

¹³⁷ *Opera*, V, p.20; Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, ed. and transl. by John O'Meara (1982), p.29. This is found in Gerald's first edition of the text. For discussion of the manuscripts see *Opera*, V, pp.xi-xxviii.

¹³⁸ Ad Putter, 'Gerald of Wales and the Prophet Merlin', in *Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2008* (2009), pp.90-103 (p.97).

¹³⁹ *Expugnatio*, pp.253-7; *Journey through Wales*, p.183.

¹⁴⁰ *Expugnatio*, pp.256-57; Putter, p.97.

assume seditious resonances in relation to Welsh opposition (doubtless, an effect of its early assimilation into Welsh literary-political culture).¹⁴¹

However, Gerald never picked up the project. Alongside a great deal of the prophetically-minded *incipits* and *explicitis*, nearly all Merlin Silvester prophecies are excised in the second recension of the *Expugnatio*, revised and dedicated to King John in c.1209.¹⁴² The most recent editors of the text have suggested this indicates a change in Gerald's conception of his work; a transition from a 'Vaticinalis Historia' to a more straightforward historical account of the conquest of Ireland.¹⁴³ In 1209 the *Expugnatio* still framed a statement of Marcher claims in Ireland, directed to the attention of the king. It was prefaced with a request to John not to neglect the 'kingdom of Ireland' and its governance, which is as much as to say, those with a deeply rooted right to be its governors, the Geraldines and their milieu.¹⁴⁴ Gerald was still a spokesman for those rights, but by 1209 he had come to eschew the use of Merlin Silvester here.

Importantly, Gerald did not omit prophecy altogether from the second recension. The prophecies of Merlin Ambrosius are not as dramatically curtailed as those of Merlin Silvester. This is suggestive of a clear division emerging in the early thirteenth century governing what prophetic material was acceptable, and what was not: royal prophecy was, whilst Marcher prophecy was not. There are two primary reasons why Cambriised or Marcher prophecy might have been dangerous in c.1209. During this period the king was deeply concerned by the prospect of a baronial conspiracy, particularly amongst the Marcher barons.¹⁴⁵ The second recension stands on the eve of John's 1210 campaign in Ireland to subdue his rebellious barons, which culminated in the king's famously cruel treatment of the de Braose family, border nobility with interests in Wales and Ireland.¹⁴⁶ This period of steadily building dissent, culminating in the Barons' War of 1215, was also perceived by some parties in native Wales as a time of opportunity, and during this period cross-border alliances in opposition to John crystallised.¹⁴⁷ In

¹⁴¹ Jean Blacker, 'Where Wace Feared to Tread: Latin Commentaries on Merlin's Prophecies in the Reign of Henry II', *Arthuriana*, 6 (1996), 36-52. For Geoffrey's early Welsh reception history see Roberts, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh Historical Tradition'; Roberts, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae* and *Brut y Brenbinedd*.'

¹⁴² *Expugnatio*, pp.lxi-lxxii. An association between the two is also conjectured by Putter, pp.97-98.

¹⁴³ *Expugnatio*, p.lxii.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.264. This dedication is discussed briefly in Lydon, 'Ireland and the English Crown', p.281.

¹⁴⁵ W. L. Warren, *King John* (1961), pp.108-10. For the March as an important locus of resistance in thirteenth-century English politics, see Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, p.274.

¹⁴⁶ Warren, *King John*, pp.184-87; Seán Duffy, 'King John's Expedition to Ireland, 1210: The Evidence Reconsidered', *Irish Historical Studies*, 30 (1996), 1-24.

¹⁴⁷ R. R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest* (1990), p.68; Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p.289.

1209 the application of prophecies to Marcher rights in Ireland was not a politic course; and most certainly not prophecies deriving their authority from Welsh-inspired oppositional constructions such as Merlin Silvester.

There is evidence that Galfridian prophecy, incorporating Welsh elements, was employed in statements of Marcher opposition to John during this period. A notable example is preserved in the fourteenth-century *Fouke Fitzwarin*. Although it survives only in this late form, the romance appears to have reworked material in long circulation in and around Shropshire. The prophecy of Merlin which the romance incorporates has strong claims to be a residual trace of a localised oppositional strategy in the early years of the thirteenth century. This prophecy appears twice in the romance, on both occasions in a clearly Galfridian frame of reference: once ascribed to a demonically-possessed giant identified as Geomagus, of Geoffrey's *Historia*, I, and again at the conclusion of the romance, attributed to Merlin:¹⁴⁸

... Merlyn dit que
 En Bretagne la Graunde
 Un lou vendra de la Blaunche Launde...
 Cely avera si fer regard
 Qu'il enchacera le leopard
 Hores de la Blaunche Launde,
 Tant avera force e vertue graunde.

(Merlin says that in Britain the Great a wolf will come from Blanche Land... It will have such a fierce look that it will chase the leopard away from the Blanche Land, such strength and power it will have.)¹⁴⁹

The prophecy is glossed by the author as referring to Fouke (the wolf) and King John (the leopard), in reference to the territorial dispute with which the romance is concerned, Fouke's right to Wittington Castle (*Blaunche Launde*). The wolf allusion may well be lifted from a contemporary Welsh figure, which appears in the *Cyfoesi Myrddin a Gwenddydd* ('The Prophecy of Myrddin and Gwenddydd'), extant in its fullest form only in the fourteenth-century Red Book of

¹⁴⁸ For Geomagus see *Historia*, I, 469-89.

¹⁴⁹ *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, ed. by E. J. Hathaway *et al* (1975), pp.60-61; transl. 'Fouke Fitz Waryn', in *Two Medieval Outlaws*, ed. by Glyn S. Burgess (1997), p.182.

Hergest (Jesus College, Oxford, MS 111). Although the recension is late, orthographical evidence of a fragment of the verse in the early fourteenth-century NLW, Peniarth MS 3 suggests a twelfth-century background text, and the poem's core has been conjecturally dated to c.1100.¹⁵⁰ As it is preserved in the Red Book, the prophecy is an expanded king-list (likely, it underwent a number of expansions) running from the kings of the mythic Welsh past to the period of Owain Gwynedd, incorporating material from the reign of John,¹⁵¹ such as (I suggest) an epithet applied to Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, prince of Gwynedd, in his opposition to John. Llywelyn is said to possess, 'gael bleid' ('the grasp of a wolf') (col. 580, 15-16; stanza 61).¹⁵² This refers to Llywelyn's *de facto* rule of the greater part of Wales during this period, jealously guarded against the English king. It is this same principle of territorial right that the *Fouke*-prophecy draws on in relation to Fouke's possession of Wittington. A direct borrowing from a Welsh epithet of this type is highly plausible. The romance concludes with Llywelyn's marriage to Fouke's daughter, Eve.¹⁵³ The Welsh prince was part of this dynastic Marcher myth.

The *Fouke*-prophecy mobilises Galfridian, and potentially Welsh, elements as strongly oppositional to the English king. This usage exemplifies a Marcher mentality understood by R. R. Davies as the territorial right of 'ancient conquest'.¹⁵⁴ Marcher liberties were understood amongst these communities as stemming from private acts of conquest, with a necessary level of autonomy from the king's laws. The *blanche launde* was never King John's, always Fouke's. The process by which the defensive political grammar, of the type found in the *Expugnatio*, became a directly oppositional political grammar, of the type found in *Fouke*, is the development with which the third part of this chapter is concerned: a study of Marcher opposition to John as it was articulated in the *Prophecy of the Eagle*.

¹⁵⁰ Ifor Williams, 'Y Cyfoesi a'r Afallennau yr Peniarth 3', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 4 (1927-29), 112-29; John T. Koch, *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*, 5 vols (2006), I, p.1323; K. Jackson, 'The Motive of the Threefold Death in the Story of Suibne Geilt', in *Féil-sgríbhinn Éoin Mhic Néill*, ed. by John Ryan (1940), pp.535-50 (pp.544-45, n.30). This dating has recently been contested by Oliver Padel, in 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Development of the Merlin Legend', p.47. Padel attributes the identification of the wild man as Myrddin to the hypothetical influence of the *Vita Merlini* on Welsh traditions, comparable to the *Historia*. However, we have little evidence of Welsh reception of the *Vita*, which unlike the *Historia* was not translated into Welsh during the Middle Ages. The argument for the antiquity of the *Cyfoesi* remains at present a convincing thesis.

¹⁵¹ For additional indications of this, see below, p.68.

¹⁵² *The Poetry in the Red Book of Hergest*, ed. by J. Gwenogvryn Evans (1911), pp.1-4; transl. by Bollard, pp.31-46

¹⁵³ Burgess, p.182.

¹⁵⁴ Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales*, p.255.

1.3 The *Prophecy of the Eagle*

The *Prophecy of the Eagle* is a composite Latin work incorporating a retrospective of English history from the Norman Conquest to the reign of John.¹⁵⁵ Although in extant manuscript witnesses it is generally titled *Prophetia Merlini Silvestris* or similar, in modern scholarship it takes its name from its insertion in the *Brut y Brenhinedd* where it is interpolated in the second book of the *Historia* as the prophecy of the eagle of Shaftsbury.¹⁵⁶ Although described by its most recent translators as ‘an extraordinary text, confused, confusing and obscure’, its popularity and long-lived utility was pronounced. By the reign of Richard III it was ‘part of almost every educated person’s library’, and saw political re-application well into the seventeenth century.¹⁵⁷ It played an important role in imperial constructions, and wider clerical conceptions of the monarchy, during the reign of Henry IV, and later, Edward IV.¹⁵⁸ However, in its origin, this text is rooted in the oppositional strategies of the Welsh March, as a statement of antipathy to John.

In most extant witnesses, the *Eagle* appears as a sequence of three related prophecies: *Arbor Fertilis*, a prophecy of the succession of Henry II ascribed to Edward the Confessor; *Sicut rubeum draconem*, a Galfridian king list reworking material from the *Prophetiae*, spanning the Norman Conquest (a reworking of Geoffrey’s re-inscribed *Omen*),¹⁵⁹ to the reign of John, the loss of Normandy in 1204, and the French threat of the 1210s; and *Mortuo leone*, an overview of the reign of Stephen and the succession of Henry II.

Arguments still linger concerning the prophecy’s Welsh roots, postulated in light of its possible relationship to Gerald’s book of Merlin Silvester at Nefyn and the presence of the *Eagle*

¹⁵⁵ The most in-depth scholarship on the *Eagle* is found in a series of articles by Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs: ‘Richard III’s Books: VIII: Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* with *The Prophecy of the Eagle*: 2. Prophecy and Commentary’, *The Ricardian*, 8 (1989), 290-304; ‘Richard III’s Books: VIII. Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* with *The Prophecy of the Eagle* and Commentary: 2. The Prophecy and Commentary (Continued)’, *The Ricardian*, 8 (1990), 351-62; ‘The Dark Dragon of the Normans’, *Quondam et Futurus*, 2 (1992), 1-18. I do not agree with all of Sutton and Visser-Fuch’s conclusions, for reasons outlined below.

¹⁵⁶ Parry, ‘The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*’, p.425. The Welsh text is printed by Parry in *Brut y Brenhinedd*, pp.30-33; inserted following the reference to the Eagle of Shaftsbury found in *Historia*, II.29.12-23.

¹⁵⁷ Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, ‘The Prophecy and Commentary (Continued)’, p.351; Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, p.103.

¹⁵⁸ See below, Chapter 3, p.150; Chapter 5, p.213.

¹⁵⁹ For the relationship of this re-worked *Omen*, featuring a dark dragon of Normandy, see Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, ‘The Dark Dragon of the Normans’.

in the *Brut y Brenhinedd*.¹⁶⁰ The version included in the Welsh *Brut* is clearly a translation from an Anglo-centric Latin work rather than an original Welsh text, concerned not with historical Welsh rulers but English. Parry has observed its close relationship to English manuscript versions of the *Eagle*, specifically noting the version we find in BL, Cotton Faustina MS A. viii, the text from which I here work.¹⁶¹ However, a number of elements in the text, discussed below, suggest sizeable Welsh influences on the prophecy. Built on a syncretic appropriation of English and Welsh prophecy material, consideration of these various influences places the composition of the *Eagle* most plausibly on the Welsh March, where this material continued to circulate into the reign of Henry IV.¹⁶²

BL, Cotton Faustina MS A. viii

I take the text as found in BL, Cotton Faustina MS A. viii as my witness, for both its clarity and its coherence with other extant witnesses.¹⁶³ The late survival of this material is notable, in comparison to an allusion to the prophecy which appears in a chronicle reference of the 1220s.¹⁶⁴ This is common for prophecies which functioned as components of an oppositional discourse: as their central allusions came to represent historical rather than contemporary complaint, they became more palatable.¹⁶⁵ The Cotton Faustina witness suggests the renewed circulation of the *Eagle* in London amongst the clerical classes by the mid-thirteenth century.

¹⁶⁰ Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, p.293-94; Barbara Lynne McCauley, 'Giraldus "Silvester" of Wales and his *Prophetic History of Ireland: Merlin's role in the Expugnatio Hibernica*', *Quondam et Futurus*, 3 (1993), 41-62 (p.46); Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.61; Julia Crick, 'The British Past and the Welsh Future: Gerald of Wales, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Arthur of Britain', *Celtica*, 23 (1999), 60-75 (p.66); Putter, p.94; Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, 'The Dark Dragon of the Normans', p.5.

¹⁶¹ Parry prints a Latin version of the text, based on Cotton Faustina A. viii, BL, Arundel MS 409, and BL, Cotton Nero, D. viii. *Brut y Brenhinedd*, pp.225-26.

¹⁶² For the circulation of this prophecy in the March well into the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries see below, Chapter 5, p.213.

¹⁶³ Thomas Smith, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library*, 1696 (1982), p.149; Joseph Planta, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library, deposited in the British Museum* (1802), pp. 603-04; Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, pp.293-98; M. R. James, *Catalogue to Additions to Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 1916-20, p.284; M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace* (1932), item 144; M. R. James, *Western Manuscripts of Trinity College, Cambridge*, 4 vols (1900-02), II, p.154; M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts of the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge*, 2 vols (1909, 1912), II, p.117.

¹⁶⁴ An allusion to *Sicut rubeum* is preserved in the *Chronicle of Ralph of Coggeshall*, Radulphi de Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, ed. by J. Stevenson (1875), p.146; cited by Putter, p.99.

¹⁶⁵ This is certainly true in the case of the Erceldoune tradition. See below, Chapter 4, p.168.

The manuscript is a compilation of predominantly historical materials, both ecclesiastical and secular. The latest date given in the manuscript is memoranda from 1318 and 1319, but the main scribal hand, in which the *Eagle* is written, is somewhat earlier. It contains a number of pieces relating to the Priory of St Mary Overy in Southwark, including Annals from 1209 to 1240. The inclusion of the *Eagle* belongs to roughly the mid-thirteenth century, in living memory of the reign of John, and possibly roughly contemporary to the Treaty of Paris, Henry III's 1256 cession of Normandy to France, which made final the losses of the reign of John.¹⁶⁶

The *Prophecy of the Eagle* appears as three separate prophetic units attributed individually to Merlin Silvester, fols 116r-117r: *Arbor Fertilis* (fol. 116r), *Sicut rubeum draconem* (fols 116r-116v); and *Mortuo leone* (fols 116v-117r). As is a common manuscript convention with the *Prophecy of the Eagle*, the sequence follows the *Prophetiae Merlini* (fols 110v-115v).¹⁶⁷ Although this coheres with the compiler's historical interests in Henry II (the prophetic contents of the manuscript are appended to a complex of twelfth-century historical material, including a genealogy of Henry II on fols 109v-110r), the scribe's main point of interest is the prophecy of the loss of Normandy we find in *Sicut rubeum draconem*, marked out by a *note benne* in the left hand margin of column 1 on fol. 116v. This suggests the text was consulted, if not included in the manuscript, close to 1256.

Original Date of the Prophecy

The assumption that Gerald worked on the basis of the *Eagle* rather than vice versa has led to the dating of the composition of the *Eagle* prior to 1200. This is a highly problematic critical stance in relation to the prophecy's internal frame of historical reference. The earliest proponent of this argument was Rupert Taylor, who based his analysis on the assumption that the prophecy contains no genuine allusions later than the reign of Henry II, regarding all references to Henry's sons in the king list as late interpolations.¹⁶⁸ In fact, a wealth of allusions to Henry's sons appear in the longest historical sequence of the text, *Sicut rubeum*, beyond the scope of those identified by Taylor. This historical context is fundamental to the prophecy's essential construction and

¹⁶⁶ For late identifications of Henry III as the lynx of the prophecy, under whom Normandy is lost, see Eckhardt, *English Commentary*, p.28; Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, 'Prophecy and Commentary, Part 2', pp.356-57.

¹⁶⁷ Crick, *Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth IV*, pp.65-66.

¹⁶⁸ Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp.21, 23.

conception, and it reads very much as a product of the reign of John, taking as its central historical events the loss of Normandy in 1204 and the French threat of the 1210s.¹⁶⁹ It is in this respect that we can understand the author-compiler's interest in Henry II: a nostalgia evocative of a historical Angevin *imperium*, prior to the losses of the reign of John.

In his use of prophecy as a mode of commentary on this long period - stretching from the death of Becket in 1170, encompassing the rebellion of Henry II's sons, the reign of John, and the loss of Normandy - the author-compiler drew on material from the prophecies of *Expugnatio* and the *Prophetiae*. This source material, as it came to frame a clear historical progression, is founded on a direct application of *Prophetiae*, 93-108 to the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, drawn on by both Gerald and the author-compiler of the *Eagle*. These correspondences are set out in Appendix 1. The use of the sequence takes its onus from an association of Henry II with *Sextus*, the conqueror of Ireland of *Prophetiae*, 99-100, first fostered by Gerald in the *Expugnatio*, and consequent identification of John as the lynx, the son of *Sextus* in whose reign Normandy is lost.¹⁷⁰ This constructed relationship between contemporary history and the *Prophetiae* is an interesting case study in how prophecy coloured contemporary perceptions of the relationship between, and meanings of, political events. As Crick has observed, the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries saw the emergence of a clerical culture heavily engaged with the terms of Galfridian prophecy in its very comprehension of history.¹⁷¹

This historical structuring was deeply influential, and, as we shall see in Chapter Two, determined the associations of Geoffrey's ciphers with particular kings into the reign of Edward II. Although much could be said about the specifics of this process (and I intend to publish the results of a detailed study on this at a later date), what matters for my purposes here is the integration of material in the *Eagle* which suggests a decidedly Marcher political orientation, drawing on Welsh materials alongside Galfridian. I am interested in the elements that make this text (to borrow a term from Stephen Knight) syncretic, resting on English and Welsh networks of meaning.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ For relevant historical literature on this period see: Warren, *King John*, pp.93-116; J. C. Holt, *Magna Carta* (2nd edn, 1992), pp.188-236; John Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire* (1984); F. M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy (1189-1204)* (1913); J. C. Holt, *The Northerners* (1961), pp.143-74; Nick Barratt, 'Lackland: The Loss of Normandy in 1215', *History Today*, 54 (2004), 32-37; Bernard S. Bachrach, 'The Idea of the Angevin Empire', *Albion*, 10 (1978), 293-99; John Le Patourel, 'The Plantagenet Dominions', *History*, 50 (1965), 289-308.

¹⁷⁰ *Expugnatio*, pp.92-93; Crick, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth, Prophecy and History', p.368.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Knight, 'Resemblance and Menace', p.130.

A Syncretic Text

Like Gerald and Geoffrey, and alongside their works, the author-compiler of the *Eagle* made selective and limited use of Welsh prophecy-tropes. This does not suggest a purely Welsh provenance but a Marcher one, produced in a cultural environment similar to that in which the Geraldines moved.

The *Eagle* incorporates two prophecies in earlier, and relatively broad, English circulation. It is well noted that the first prophecy of the sequence, *Arbor fertilis* is derived from the reputed death-bed prophecy of Edward the Confessor: a vision of a felled tree, representative of England in the first generations following the Norman Conquest. Although it is found in all extant lives of the Confessor, the interpretation given by Ailred of Rievaulx is unique in its vision of the re-grafting of the tree and uniting of English and Norman ‘stock’ in the person of Henry II.¹⁷³ It is from this version that the *Eagle* takes the prophecy. As this has attracted attention from a number of critics, particularly in regards to its construction of a definitively Anglo-Norman identity,¹⁷⁴ there is little to add here, other than to observe that this quintessentially English prophecy is not included in the Welsh translation of the *Eagle* as it stands in the *Brut*. It clearly possessed little value for Welsh readers.

The second discrete English prophecy which appears in the *Eagle* is the late twelfth-century *Here Prophecy*.¹⁷⁵ It is first found in the Latin chronicle *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, attributed to Benedict of Peterborough, but now increasingly thought to be the work of Roger of Hoveden:

Zan þu seches in here, hert yreret
 Zan sullen Hengles in þre be ydeled
 Zat han sale into Hyrlande alto ladewaya
 Zat hoþer into Poile mid pride bileve
 þe thirde in hayre haughen hert alle ydreghe.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, ‘Prophecy and Commentary’, p.295. We find a likely reference to this prophecy in *Expugnatio*, pp.202-03, although here attributed to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, concerning Angevin involvement in a crusade.

¹⁷⁴ David Walker, ‘Cultural Survival in an Age of Conquest’, in *Welsh Society and Nationhood*, ed. by R. R. Davies (1984), pp.35-50 (p.46); Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, pp.56-57; Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066-1220* (2007), pp.31-33.

¹⁷⁵ Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, p.22.

The chronicler remarks on the fulfilment of this prophecy in the raising of the sign of the hare by ‘Ranulfo filio Stephani’ in a house in Here, granted to him by Henry II, in 1190-91.¹⁷⁷ The son of Henry II’s chamberlain, Stephen, Ralph was a courtier in the service of Henry II and later Richard. Through this service he built up a modest territorial base in Gloucestershire, later extended into Derbyshire.¹⁷⁸ A prophecy in a north-east Midlands dialect, this was most likely applied to a contemporary primarily based in the Midlands.¹⁷⁹ Although it has been conjectured the prophecy may have originated further south, this remains difficult to substantiate. Hales notes the inclusion of one word of a southern provenance, ‘y-uret’, and suggests Here as a reference to Harford in Devonshire associated with a FitzStephen family.¹⁸⁰ Yet, as Hales acknowledged, a provenance in the north-west Midlands is more safely assumed. This potentially moves us towards an origin for the *Eagle* on the northern March.

Alongside the grant of Here, the two other allusions in the prophecy function as markers of the age: the Irish campaigns of Henry II; and the crusading of Richard I, referred to in relation to his sojourn in Apulia on his way to the third crusade.¹⁸¹ Notably, this is a prophecy strongly antipathetic towards crusading. The late twelfth and early thirteenth century was a time of threats from Wales, and of French conquest in Normandy. From a domestic point of view, crusading was an uncomfortable prospect during such times, as it meant an effectively absent kingship.¹⁸² It was during one of Richard’s foreign expeditions that John first gave the French king, Philip Augustus, his foothold in Normandy, an act of treachery which was long remembered in England.¹⁸³ The *Here Prophecy* preserves anxiety on the eve of John’s accession. John may even be implicated in the reference to the Irish campaigns: an allusion to his role in the ignoble campaign

¹⁷⁶ *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis: The Chronicle of the Reigns of Henry II and Richard I AD 1169-92*, ed. by W. Stubbs, 2 vols (1867), II, p.139. Editorial yoghs are here corrected as thorns. The prophecy is given in Hoveden as: ‘Whan thu seches in Here hert yreret,/ Than sullen Engles in three be ydeled; / That han sal into Yrland altolate way,/ The other into Puille mid prude bi seve, / The thridde into Airhahen herd alle Wreke y drechegen’.

¹⁷⁷ J. E. Wells, *Manual of the Writings in Middle English* (1926), p.221; W. H. Schofield, *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer* (1906), p.368.

¹⁷⁸ Julia Boorman, ‘Ralph fitz Stephen (d.1202)’, ODNB <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48113>> [last accessed 31 January 2013]

¹⁷⁹ Robbins, ‘Poems on Contemporary Conditions’, p.1529.

¹⁸⁰ John W. Hales, ‘The Here Prophecy’, in *Folia Litteraria* (1893), pp.55-61. Coote assumes that the entire prophecy is in a Devonshire dialect, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.62; Coote and Thornton, ‘Merlin, Erceldoune, Nixon’, p.126.

¹⁸¹ Hales, pp.59-60.

¹⁸² Christopher Tyerman discusses this broader cultural perception in relation to Edward I’s decision not to crusade during his reign. ‘Some English Evidence of Attitudes to Crusading in the Thirteenth Century’, in *Thirteenth Century England I*, ed. by Peter R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (1986), pp.168-72 (p.172).

¹⁸³ Barratt, p.34. This is alluded to *Sicut rubuem*. See Appendix 1 [5].

of 1185.¹⁸⁴ The integration of this material in the *Eagle* may also have been intended to recall John's 1210 Irish campaign against the Marcher rebel William de Braose.¹⁸⁵

In the *Eagle*, the *Here Prophecy* is reworked as a prophecy of the last days of the offspring of the white dragon (the Saxon cipher from the *Omen*), who are scattered to Apulia and Ireland, whilst a third part remains in the island, worthless and empty:

In ultimis diebus albi draconis semen eius triphariam spargetur pars in apuliam tendens orientali gaza locupletabitur . pars in hyberniam descendens occidua temperie delectabitur. Pars ii tercia in patria permanens: uilis & uacua reperietur.

(fol. 116v, col. 1)

(In the last days of the white dragon its seed will be scattered in three parts: part will draw towards Apulia and will be made rich by the treasure from the east, part will go down to Ireland and will take delight in the temperance of the west. The [ii is a slip] third part will remain in the country: it will be worthless and empty.

(my translation).

Coote has understood the final reference of the sequence as an allusion to King John, in line with contemporary denunciations of the king as a *rex inutilis*, regarding this as a prophecy relating to the careers of the three sons of Henry II (Geoffrey, Richard, and John).¹⁸⁶ However, in its invocation of the white dragon this prophetic unit is not concerned with specific individuals, but, much like *Prophetiae*, 147-51, is a prophecy of insular division and the scattering of the population, here the Saxon - that is, the English. This is held in relation to specific historical events related to English foreign policy, and military movements, perceived as causal links in a period of contemporary English crisis. The reduced third part is not John, but rather England under John.

¹⁸⁴ For an account of John's early activities in Ireland, and the failure of the 1185 campaign, see *Expugnatio*, pp.227-45.

¹⁸⁵ See above, n.148.

¹⁸⁶ Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.62-63. Coote understands the phrase to read 'vilis et inanus'. For discussion of the scholastic theme of the *rex inutilis* see Edward Peters, *The Shadow King* (1970).

Despite Coote's hypothesis of a Welsh provenance for the *Here Prophecy* (based on the unsustainable thesis of it as an originally Cornish production),¹⁸⁷ the Cambricising element of the *Here Prophecy* rests on the innovation of the *Eagle*: the introduction of the white dragon, which implies a prophecy of British restoration, in the mode of the *Omen*. It is presumably for this reason that, unlike *Arbor fertilis*, the *Here Prophecy* was retained in the Welsh *Brut* version of the text. Importantly, the prophecy of the eagle of Shaftsbury, as it is alluded to at the end of Geoffrey's *Historia* in relation to the exile and return of Cadualadrus, is a prophecy of British restoration.¹⁸⁸ The reconfigured *Here Prophecy* is representative of precisely this. The position it occupies in the application of *Prophetiae*, 93-110 in the *Eagle* (as Appendix 1 shows) corresponds to the exile of the aliens in 110, which precedes the pan-Celtic alliance under Conanus and Cadualadrus. The sequence takes us to the very edge of British restoration.

Here we can potentially detect an acquaintance with contemporary Welsh glosses on the *Prophetiae*. The application of *Prophetiae*, 93-110 in reference to the events of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries was a fundamental component of recent historical retrospectives, given in the guise of political prophecy, not only in England but in Wales also.¹⁸⁹ A commentary on the *Prophetiae Merlini* in BL, Royal MS 13. D. ii, a thirteenth-century Welsh manuscript from Margam, preserves an important example of the Welsh use of this material, structurally in line with the conclusion of *Sicut rubeum*.¹⁹⁰ Here the lynx is glossed as John (a reference not to the cession of France but John's status as the Pope's vassal, when England was brought under papal overlordship in 1212);¹⁹¹ and the dissension amongst the foreigners and the restoration of the Britons of *Prophetiae Merlini*, 108-10, is glossed as a reference to the fall of the Braose family. William de Braose had close connections to Margam, and this was a prophetic gloss with local pertinence.¹⁹² In the commentary, William de Braose, and his demise, are integrated into a Welsh network of meaning: an event immediately precursory to the return of Conanus and Cadualadrus (that is, Cynan and Cadwaladr) and the exile of the English (110-14). This return may well be causally related to the new Anglo-Welsh alliances fostered by John's treatment of the de Braose

¹⁸⁷ Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.62, n.54.

¹⁸⁸ *Historia*, XI, 575.

¹⁸⁹ This model subsequently proved long lived in Welsh political prophecy. The time of the lynx as preceding Welsh restoration is found in a late medieval Owain-prophecy, detailed by Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, p.146.

¹⁹⁰ Crick, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth, Prophecy and History', p.368.

¹⁹¹ Warren, *King John*, p.209.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p.107.

family. By 1215 the Welsh princes (largely united in this period by their opposition to John),¹⁹³ were allied to a powerful group of English barons, including William's sons, nursing long-standing grievances against John.¹⁹⁴

During this period a shared oppositional cause between English and Welsh factions emerged on the border. This situation fostered the transmission and adaptation of political prophecy materials across the Anglo-Welsh border. This is nowhere more apparent than in the final unit of the *Eagle: Mortuo leone*, a meditation on the deposition of a much-despised king which includes some distinctive borrowings from contemporary Welsh material.

The Author-Compiler's Welsh Sources

Mortuo leone reads as a retrospective of the beginning of the reign of Henry II, from the accession of Stephen, an 'albus rex', to the arrival of Henry from across the sea, the 'pullus aquile'. In principle, *Mortuo leone* is essentially a marker of Galfridian reception history. It identifies Henry II with the eagle cipher associated with his mother, the Empress Matilda, in the *Prophetiae*, and recalls the prowess of the *Sextus*-prophecies associated by Gerald (and in *Sicut rubeum*) with Henry (these parallel allusions are given in Appendix 1, 3). However, *Mortuo leone* also shows an engagement with non-Galfridian Welsh influences. I suggest that this element of the text was composed within a bilingual milieu, either by an English scribe with a direct knowledge of Welsh, or in an environment in which Welsh materials were circulating in Latin re-workings (as extant from Margam).

In his description of the arrival of the 'pullus aquile' the author-compiler hits on a phrase with a particularly Welsh resonance: 'Deinde ab austro ueniet cum sole super ligneos equos & super spumantem inundationem maris pullus aquila nauigans in Britanniam' ('the eagle's chick will come from the south in the fashion of wooden horses and over the foaming flood of the sea sail to Britain') (fol. 116v, col.2-fol.117r, col. 1). Although Geoffrey produced two prophecies of the Norman Conquest (in the *Prophetiae*, and later the *Vita*), neither draw on this precise analogy.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Smith, 'Magna Carta and the Charters of the Welsh Princes', p.345; Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p.241.

¹⁹⁴ Rowlands, pp.285-86. This alliance is recorded in the *Brut y Tynysogyon*, ed. and transl. by Thomas Jones (1985), p.89.

¹⁹⁵ See above, p.25; *Vita Merlini*, 654-57.

This material is not Galfridian. The description of the Angevin ships as 'ligneos equos' is by far one of the clearest post-Galfridian latinate borrowings from Welsh prophecy. It is heavily reminiscent of the description of the Norman ships in *Yr Oianau* as 'kad meirch' ('war horses') (15).

This potential borrowing is suggestive when coupled with another aspect of the sequence which could not have been lifted from either Gerald or Geoffrey. Of King Stephen the prophecy records: 'Post h[a]ec dicitur per Britanniam . Rex est . & rex ne est' ('After that it will be said throughout Britain: he is king and he is not king') (fol. 116v, col.2). In subsequent English traditions the white king became a stock representation of a *rex inutilis*, a concept applied to Stephen in scholastic culture during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁹⁶ This is found in Welsh examples also. *Gwasgargerdd Fyrddin* ('The Separation Song of Myrddin'), from the Red Book of Hergest, refers to Stephen as a white feeble one, who following the reign of Henry I, seizes the crown of London, 'dyuo y gwynn gwann y holi llundein' ('the weak white one comes to challenge London') (col. 584, 22-23; stanza 9).¹⁹⁷ Whether *Gwasgargerdd Fyrddin* preserves an echo of the *Eagle*, or a potential source, is hard to say. Certainly, however, it is suggestive of a Welsh interest in weak English kings, and weakness in the English power structure, and it is in this long tradition that we can detect a potential Welsh source tradition for 'Rex est . & rex ne est', preserved in the Myrddin prophecies of the Black Book.

As 'Rex est . & rex ne est' was translated in the Welsh version of the *Eagle* inserted in the *Brut*, it was rendered in line with a Welsh phrase with a very specific oppositional application: 'brenhin na vrenhin'.¹⁹⁸ This phrase carries a wealth of prior meanings in Welsh political prophecy. Firstly, we find a number of prophecies of a king who is not a king, associated with the unusual status of the eldest son of Henry II, who was crowned in 1170 during his father's lifetime, Henry the Young King.¹⁹⁹ Certainly, this sequence in *Yr Oianau* is generally understood as prophesying the coming of a 'brenhin na vrenhin' identified as 'Henri mab henri'.²⁰⁰ The allusion follows a description of five chieftains (from the Norman Conquest to Henry II), the

¹⁹⁶ We also find this applied to Henry VI in fifteenth-century Percy-manuscript Cotton Vespasian E. vii, see Sutton and Visser-Fuch, '2. Prophecy and Commentary', p.357. For a discussion of the prophecies preserved in this manuscript see below, Chapter 4, p.169.

¹⁹⁷ *Poetry in the Red Book of Hergest*, p.5; transl. by Bollard, pp.47-50.

¹⁹⁸ Parry, *Brut y Brenbinedd*, p.32.

¹⁹⁹ Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, pp.90, 97-98

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.90; Knight, *Merlin*, p.16.

fifth of which crosses the Irish Sea via St David's. The prophecy tells of the building of bridges following 'gvydi henri / breenhin na breenhin':

A mi dysgoganaw e gvydi henri.
 breenhin na breenhin brithwyd dybi.
 ban vo pont. ar. taw. ac arall ar tywi.
 y dav y dyfed ryvel iti.

(And I will prophecy: After Henry, a king who is no king, there will come tribulation. When there is a bridge on the Taf and another on the Tywi, war will come to Dyfed to you.)

(216-19)

Although this material has been understood as articulating an anxiety about an invasion of Wales led by Henry and his son,²⁰¹ it can be better placed within the broader context of the later conflict between Henry and his sons (the Young King was the first of Henry's sons to rebel against him, in 1172), and the possibilities this distraction presented for Welsh re-conquest. Although a relatively stable time in Anglo-Welsh relations, the rebellion of Henry's sons, and the involvement of the French king, took Henry overseas and was perceived as a time of opportunity by some factions in Wales. The *Brut y Tynysogyon* ('Chronicle of the Princes') records Iorwerth ap Owain's seizure of Caerleon from Norman control as an opportunist strike undertaken during the king's absence in France in his wars against his sons.²⁰² Importantly, bridges over the Taf, the Tywi, and similar rivers running through contested territories in south Wales, appear as legendary sites of English defeat in a number of poems of the Black Book.²⁰³ The circulation of bridge prophecies in Wales during the twelfth century is also suggested by the Llechlavar prophecy Gerald records, a forecast of Henry II's death upon his return from Ireland.²⁰⁴ These are prophecies of Welsh restoration which we can place within a particular historical context. 'Breenhin na vrenhin' is here not an allusion to a weak king, such as Stephen, but weakness in the English power structure itself.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² *Brut y Tynysogyon*, p.70 (ca.1173).

²⁰³ *Yr Afallennau* (77-80, 84-86); *Y Bedwenni* (15-18); *Yr Oianau* (216-19). For location of the river see Hywel Wyn Owen and Richard Morgan, eds, *Dictionary of the Place-Names of Wales* (2007), pp. 451, 482-83, 498.

²⁰⁴ See above, n.134.

The vogue for *Henri mab henri* prophecies in Wales may well have influenced the emphasis on the demise of the ‘first son’ recorded in the *Eagle* in association with rebellion against his father (historically, the Young King did not die on campaign against his father, but against his brother Richard): ‘*Patris iniuria prosternet filios quorum primus regni culmen ascendens. subito tum & quasi floris u[er]nus citra fructum emarcescet*’ (‘The injustice of the father will lay low the sons, of whom the first will climb to the summit of the kingdom. Then suddenly he will wither away like a flower before it bears fruit’) [2]. It is possible that the ‘*Rex est & rex ne est*’ represents a translation from, and modification of, Welsh ‘*brenhin na brenhin*’ prophecies, undertaken with this precedent in mind.

However, to the author-compiler of the *Eagle* this was not simply historically anti-Henrician material, but material with a contemporary function oppositional to John. John appears as the defeated subject of a number of Welsh restoration prophecies. *Yr Oianau* contains an allusion to his expedition against Llywelyn ap Iorwerth in 1211, declaring that vengeance will be had upon the ‘frang’ (Norman: an allusion to historical insular usurpation).²⁰⁵ He is also identified as ‘*brenhin na vrenhin*’ in the version of the *Cyfoesi* preserved in the Red Book, where the meaning of the phrase comes very close to the concept as found in the *Eagle*, a *rex inutilis* and a corrupt king: ‘*ami disgogaf wedy mab hennri . brenhin na vrenhin brithuyt au*’ (‘And I will prophesy: after the son of Henry, / a king who is no king there will be tribulation [lit. war]’) (col. 580, 32-33; stanza 69). Like the allusion to the wolf-like grip of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth discussed above, the allusion to the ‘*brenhin na vrenhin*’ almost certainly belongs to the reign of John (and may similarly have been known on the Welsh border). A reworking of oppositional material from the 1170s and ’80s, this is here applied to the succession of Richard I (the ‘*mab hennri*’ of the prophecy) by a ‘*brenhin na vrenhin*’, his brother John. The *Cyfoesi* also refers to a foolish king, ‘*ynuyt vrenhin*’, who is deceived by the men of England, ‘*a gwyr lloegr yn y dwyllaw*’ (col. 580, 36-37; stanza 71). As Griffiths observes, this almost certainly refers to the rebellion of the barons against John, a movement rooted in the March.²⁰⁶ This unit, and its condemnation of John, reflects contemporary *local* activity. Certainly, it is in this broader framework of Anglo-Welsh expectation that we must place the modified *Here Prophecy* which concludes *Sicut rubeum*.

²⁰⁵ *Yr Oianau*, 15-16. The reference is discussed by Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, p.91.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.99.

In the construction/incorporation of *Mortuo leone*, the author-compiler of the *Eagle* drew on Welsh elements directly oppositional to John, as a coded form of opposition cast back into the reign of Stephen, and replete with Galfridian resonances. It is a striking testimony of cross-border literary influence in line with cross-border political collaboration. Importantly, Welsh oppositional prophecy was a component of the environment into which the *Eagle* was later integrated in Wales. Inserted in the *Brut y Brenhinedd*, the *Eagle* of the Red Book was compiled alongside a version of the *Cyfoesi*, a combining representative of elements of its source material, and the context of its cultural reception.

The *Eagle* presents an important precedent for this thesis as a whole. The cross-border movement of literary materials during periods of common opposition to the English throne in Wales and the March played a significant role in the long history of both English and Welsh political prophecy. The Welsh influences at work in this prophecy show just how important cross-border re-inscription is in some of the most conservative English prophecies. By the reign of Henry IV, the *Eagle*, and *Mortuo leone* in particular, functioned as overt endorsements of the imperial authority of the kings of England.

Conclusion

Through the twelfth and into the early thirteenth centuries there is sizeable evidence of the engagement of Cambro-Norman and later Anglo-Welsh authors and compilers of prophecy with Welsh prophetic material. Although conducted in a partial and highly fragmented manner, this cultural interchange presents a fundamental chapter (indeed, in light of extant evidence, a fundamental *first* chapter) in the development of English political prophecy. This is not only the history of how English groups came to identify as British (although this is an important part of it), but also a history of how shared terms of address came to operate throughout the three nations of the British Isles. As much as prophetic tropes played out contestation, political prophecy was also a site (in cultural, and on occasion, in political terms) of collaboration. After Geoffrey, elements of Welsh material were open to English mobilisation, and vice versa. This field of shared, and split, signifiers also opened up new possibilities in political prophetic discourses far from the Anglo-Welsh border. By the early fourteenth century, both northern English and Scottish interest groups had come to identify with the promised British deliverers of the oldest Welsh political prophecies. This forms the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 2

English Expansionism and the Pan-Celtic Threat:

Prophecy of the Six Kings to Follow John and its Northern Reception History

The early fourteenth century saw northern English applications of Galfridian modes of territorial endorsement in many respects very similar to those in operation amongst the mixed communities of the Welsh March during the late twelfth and early thirteenth. Galfridian prophecy came to function as a powerful form of national and communal address in this region, articulating a similarly defensive territorial position, here orientated against Scotland. This strategy was in large part indebted to the uses of Galfridian history by Edward I during the early years of the century in his claim to the overlordship of Scotland.¹ However, the vogue for British cultural identifications on the northern English border was also a response to another factor: the utility of Galfridian prophecy as part of a Scottish political discourse oppositional to English intervention in Scotland, which also developed during this period. This Scottish material engendered both defensive reactions and significant re-inscriptions in northern English political prophecy.

The influence of Scottish Galfridian materials on the uses of prophecy in northern English political culture has yet to be fully considered by literary historians.² It presents a greatly overlooked field of cultural borrowings, which brings new light to bear on Anglo-Scottish relations during this period. As I have noted in regard to the transmission of literary-political materials on the Anglo-Welsh border in Chapter One, periods of conflict present conditions highly germane for the transmission and re-inscription of national forms of address: this is a time when oppositional discourses are at their most prolific, more visible during times of conflict than peace.

¹ For historical accounts of this period of Anglo-Scottish affairs see G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (1988); Ranald Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots* (1965); Michael Prestwich, *The Three Edwards* (1980) pp.42-78; Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (1988), pp.356-75, 469-516; W. M. Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III* (2011), pp.8-9.

² Anglo-Scottish cross-border literary borrowings from this period have been briefly discussed by R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (1952), pp.207-14, but with no consideration of Galfridian prophetic or historical materials.

This chapter considers the role of cross-border (Anglo-Scottish) literary-political influences, firstly, in the *Prophecy of the Six Kings to Follow John*, also known as the *Last Six Kings of the English*, or *Six Kings to Follow John* (composed c.1312-27). In the figure of the boar of Windsor, the principal hero of the prophecy, we find one of the earliest extant examples of English prophecy associating a vision of imperial English kingship with the cipher from the *Prophetiae Merlini* associated with Arthur, the Merlinian boar of Cornwall (39-42). It is notable that this post-Galfridian reworking is found in a witness which contains no markers of a Welsh or Welsh Marcher provenance, but draws substantially on prophecy material in circulation in northern England. Importantly, the prophetic life of Arthur (in the form we recognise it) owes far more to Geoffrey than any Welsh sources,³ and its most forceful invocations in the early fourteenth century can be found not on the western border, but the northern. This evidence suggests a radical de-stabilisation of a number of prior critical suppositions regarding the function of Arthur in English political prophecy, and its commonly supposed debt to Welsh Arthurian messianism.⁴

Although it saw rapid circulation throughout England, the primary concern of the *Six Kings* is the Scottish threat as understood in relation to the relative successes and failures of Edward I and Edward II, measured against a model of Arthurian kingship, adjudged in line with northern border affairs, if not from the perspective of the border itself. The author of the prophecy draws on English and Scottish prophecies relating to the Anglo-Scottish wars in contemporary circulation in the north of England. Even if the prophecy was not composed in the north of England (although northern witnesses of the *Six Kings* proliferate, southern ones do similarly), the author was certainly in receipt of literary material circulating in this region. Certainly, the *Six Kings* was enthusiastically received within northern border milieux. The second text discussed in this chapter, the Northumberland ballad *Als Y Yod*, reworks a number of figures and concepts found in the *Six Kings* to envisage the final extension of English sovereignty over Scotland, held similarly in relation to an interest in the policies of the English crown regarding the northern border. Although it has attracted little scholarly attention, as will be

³ For relevant considerations of the development of the Arthurian legend see Rachel Bromwich, 'Concepts of Arthur', *Studia Celtica*, 20-21 (1975-76), 163-81; Constance Bullock-Davies, "'Expectare Arturum': Arthur and the Messianic Hope", *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 29 (1981), 432-40; O. J. Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27 (1994), 1-31. The development of the Arthurian legend in Wales is a lengthy topic which I am not able to treat in full here. The fullest discussions of Arthur's role in Welsh literature is found in the essays collected in *Arthur of the Welsh*. The development of the Arthurian return myth has no early Welsh analogues, although it appear to have been in circulation in Brittany and Cornwall in the twelfth century, for which see J. S. P. Tatlock, 'The English Journey of the Laon Canons', *Speculum*, 8 (1933), 454-65.

⁴ Cf. R. S. Loomis, 'The Legend of Arthur's Survival', in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. by R. S. Loomis (1959), pp.64-71; Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.43.

apparent in the following chapters, *Als Y Yod* exerted a considerable influence on the shape of political prophecy in northern England throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

2.1 The *Six Kings*

An English counter-part to the last six kings of British rule following Arthur in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, the *Six Kings* runs from the reign of Henry III, identified as the lamb, through the reign of the dragon (Edward I), the goat of Caernarfon (Edward II), the boar of Windsor (Edward III), and finally, the ass, who is deposed by a mole (identified in the fifteenth century as Richard II and Henry IV).⁵ One of the primary texts through which Galfridian material circulated in England during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the value of the *Six Kings* in the study of English political prophetic culture is immense. Although long associated by scholars with the rebellion of the Percies and Owain Glyn Dŵr during the early fifteenth century, once considered to be the key to its provenance, it is now recognised as a fourteenth-century production, originally conceived as a document in support of the deposition of Edward II, and the accession of his young son, Edward III.⁶

The earliest extant version of the prophecy, an Anglo-Norman text which T. M. Smallwood has termed the *Original Prose Version*, belongs to the reign of Edward II. Smallwood suggested the earliest possible date for its composition as 1312, the year of the birth of the future Edward III, and the death of Piers Gaveston. The *Original Prose Version* contains a reference to the downfall of the king's favourite, figured by his coat of arms, an eagle; and the whole production depends on the presence of a male heir, and alternative, to Edward II.⁷ This argument needs a slight revision: the *Original Prose Version* almost certainly contains a reference to the Great Famine, and therefore, the prophecy must be dated to 1315 at the earliest.⁸ This stands as the latest historical reference in the work. It is part history, and part pure prophecy projected into the reign of Edward III and beyond.

⁵ For the interpretation of these final two figures are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁶ T. M. Smallwood, 'The Prophecy of the *Six Kings*', *Speculum*, 60 (1985), 571-92; Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.101-05; Robbins, 'Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', p.1519. For discussion of the prophecy's critical association with Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Percies see below, Chapter 4, pp.189-94.

⁷ Smallwood, pp.572, 575-76.

⁸ See below, p.75.

The *Revised Prose Version* (composed c.1327) was incorporated in the Anglo-Norman *Brut* (known as the *Common Version*, extending to 1333), and was translated with the whole into the Middle English *Brut*, c.1370-1400.⁹ This version is known as the *English Prose Translation*.¹⁰ Here it is framed as Merlin's reply to Arthur concerning the last six kings to 'regne in Engelond'.¹¹ This incorporates allusions to events from later in the reign of Edward II, including the rebellion of Thomas of Lancaster, and the fall of the Despensers. Elsewhere in the *Brut*, elements of the prophecy are applied to events of the reigns of the three Edwards.¹² Julia Marvin has suggested that, inserted in the *Brut*, the *Six Kings* operated in relation to the complete work as 'a secular British Bible', inviting its first generation of readers to approach the book with a mind to secular exegesis, reading the past in order to learn its lessons for the present, and anticipate the future. For Marvin, the prophecies are not concerned with the last things, but the *next things*.¹³ This is certainly so, yet although a product of secular politics, we must not underestimate both the eschatological onus of the prophecies, and indeed, Arthurian political prophecy as a genre during this period.

The *Six Kings* reads as a literary re-working of contemporary history, and attendant fears and expectations, held above all in relation to threats from Scotland. It can be tentatively placed within the reader-context understood by Lister M. Matheson for the *Brut* as a whole: a literate landed class with a vested interest in royal policy.¹⁴ Marvin has suggested that the prophecy was aimed at an audience at a certain remove from the court,¹⁵ to which – given its use of northern prophecy materials – I add the possibility of a geographical distance also. Its mixture of political pessimism and jingoism reads almost as a mirror for princes, a form of advisory literature concerned with lessons of strong rule and misrule. Certainly, we have evidence it was being used as such in later periods. The chronicler Jean Froissart records the testimony of an old knight named Sir Bartholomew Burghersh concerning a prophecy of the deposition of Richard II and the Lancastrian ascendancy drawn from '*The Brut* which many people believe to be the

⁹ For the dating and development of the *Brut* manuscripts see Lister M. Matheson, *The Prose 'Brut': The Development of a Middle English Chronicle* (1998). For overview of the English *Brut* see pp.6-8. See also Smallwood, p.572.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Julia Marvin, 'Arthur Authorised: The Prophecies of the Prose *Brut* Chronicle', in *Arthurian Literature XII*, ed. by Keith Busby and Roger Dalrymple (2005), pp.84-89 (p.85).

¹² Cf. *Brut*, I, pp.243-47.

¹³ Marvin, 'Arthur Authorised'; see also Tamar Drukker, 'Vision and History: Prophecy in the Middle English Prose *Brut* Chronicle', *Arthuriana*, 12 (2002), 25-49.

¹⁴ Matheson, *The Prose Brut*, pp.9-10.

¹⁵ Marvin, 'Arthur Authorised', p.87.

prophecies of Merlin'.¹⁶ The *Six Kings* is a text which was continually associated with the deposition of kings.

Uses of the Prophetiae Merlini

We must understand the most closely contemporary historical material of the prophecy as the sequence spanning the reign of the goat out of 'Kar' (Caernarfon) to the reign of the boar of Windsor. This refers to the calamities of the reign of Edward II (born in Caernarfon), envisaging restoration through a projected glorious reign of Edward III (born in Windsor). Similar to the uses of *Prophetiae*, 94-104, in application to English history during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries,¹⁷ this sequence is heavily indebted to another passage from the *Prophetiae*: 119-30, similarly brought to bear as historical commentary. Indeed, it is applied directly as such a historical commentary in the Middle English *Brut*.¹⁸

The notion of the *Prophetiae* as direct source material for the *Six Kings* is not a new one. Rupert Taylor suggested that the structure of the *Six Kings* is derived from the sequence following from *Prophetiae*, 105-08, where the reign of the lynx, under whom Normandy is lost, is followed by the arrival of Conanus and the restoration of the native dynasty. Taylor understood the lamb (Henry III) of the *Six Kings* as an unexplained substitute for Conanus of *Prophetiae*, 110-14.¹⁹ Taylor's perception of the importance of the lynx in relation to subsequent uses of the *Six Kings* is not groundless, but it does require revision. Certainly, the *Six Kings* is indicative of continued historical perceptions of the reign of John and the loss of Normandy in relation to *Prophetiae*, 94-104, encouraging the identification of subsequent kings of England as subsequent figures in the *Prophetiae*. The element of the prophecy most overtly governed both by Galfridian structuring, and allusions from across the *Prophetiae*, is its account of the reigns of Edward II and Edward III.

In the *Six Kings*, Edward II appears as the goat, who presides over a time of corruption and famine. I quote here from the earliest version of the prophecy, the *Anglo-Norman Prose Version*, alongside its loose English translation, as given in the Middle English *Brut*.²⁰

¹⁶ Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, transl. and ed. by Geoffrey Brereton (1978 rpt; 1968), p.470.

¹⁷ See Appendix 2.

¹⁸ Cf. *Brut*, I, pp.243-47.

¹⁹ Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp.50-51.

²⁰ The Anglo-Norman text is taken from Taylor's transcription of the *Original Prose Version* as it appears in BL,

Après sa mort vendra un chevre que avera corns d'argent et barbe com hostour et istera de ses narils une broume que signefiera does et graunt damage famine et mortalite des gentz et perte de terre.

And after þis dragoune shal come a gote out of a Kar, þat shal haue hornes & berde of siluer; and þere shal come out of his noseþrelles a drop þat shal bitoken hunger and sorw, & gret deþ of þe peple; and miche of his lande in þe bigynning of his regne shal be wastede.

This is a reworking of material from *Prophetiae*, 119-26:

Succedet hircus Venerii Castris, aurea habens cornua et argenteam
barbam, qui ex naribus suis tantam efflabit nebulam quanta tota
superficies insulae obumbratibur. Pax erit in tempore suo et ubertate
glebae multiplicabuntur segetes. Mulieres incessu serpentes fient...
Omnis humus luxuriabit, et humanitas fornicari non desinet.

(... the goat of the camp of Venus, with golden horns and a silver beard,
who will breath forth from his nostrils a cloud which will cover the
whole surface of the island. There will be peace in his time and the rich
soil will increase its crops. Women will move like snakes... All the soil
will be rank, and mankind will not cease to fornicate.)

The association of Edward II with the goat almost certainly rests on the relationship between the goat and the fertility of the land. The luxury of the *hircus Venerii castris* is one which, importantly, is in the end of the passage associated with the rankness of soil. In both a moral and physical sense, Edward II's reign was understood as a time of profound decline. The association of Edward's reign with the Great Famine of 1315-22 remained deeply entrenched in fourteenth-century prophetic mentalities even decades after the deposition.²¹ The use of the goat also echoes a symbol related to Edward II at the beginning of his reign, found in the 1308 entry for Edward's coronation in the *Annales Londonienses*, where Edward is identified as a goat, prophesied by Merlin, who will pursue a career of international conquest as a British

Harley MS 746, printed in *Political Prophecy*, pp.160-64. The Middle English text is from the *English Prose Translation*, printed in Brie, *Brut*, I, pp.72-76.

²¹ For a closely contemporary northern example, see Chapter 3, p.112.

Alexander.²² Alexander is similarly figured as a goat in continental sibylline prophetic traditions, based on the goat-cipher of Daniel 8.²³ However, in English literary traditions the goat cipher is invariably pejorative, connoting a lascivious nature.²⁴ This was an association with Edward II which became pervasive, and we can understand it as part of a long-lived marginalising process concerned with the king's sexual degeneracy, of which the *Six Kings* is representative.²⁵

This is all part and parcel of the primary process at work in the *Six Kings*, the marginalisation of Edward II in favour of his son, the future Edward III. In the *Prophetiae*, the reign of the *hircus Venerii castris* is followed by the boar of commerce, who restores the nation to health:

Superueniet aper commercii, qui dispersos greges ad amissam pascuam
reuocabit. Pectus eius cibus erit egentibus, et lingua eius sedabit
sicientes.

(The boar of trade will arrive and call the scattered flocks back to their
lost pasture. His breast shall be food for the needy and his tongue drink
for the thirsty.)

(128-130)

Similarly, the reign of the goat of 'Kar', Edward II, is followed by the boar of Windsor, who, tellingly, like the boar of commerce, staunches the thirst of the thirsty:

Après cel chevre vendra un sengler que avera la teste sen et quoe de
leon regard de pite son visage serra repos as malades sa poitrine
estauchement de soif a ceux que soif averount sa parole loauge de
leaute son port humble con aignel.

After þis goote, shal come out of Wyndesore a Boor, þat shal haue an
heuede of witte, a lyons hert, a pitouse lokyng; his vesage shal be reste to
sike men; his breþ shal bene stanchyn of þerst to ham þat bene apreste

²² 'Annales Londonienses de Tempore Edwardi Secundi', in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. by W. Stubbs, 2 vols (1882-83), I, p.151.

²³ Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, p.148.

²⁴ Fulton, 'Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Uses of Prophecy', p.110.

²⁵ W. M. Ormrod, 'The Sexualities of Edward II', in *The Reign of Edward II: New Perspectives*, ed. by Gwilym Dodd and Anthony Musson (2006), pp.22-47.

þerof shal; his worde shal bene gospelle; his beryng shal bene meke as a
Lambe.

However, not only does the boar of Windsor undo the damage of the reign of the goat, unlike the boar of commerce he conquers the British Isles, subduing Wales and Scotland, builds a mighty empire spanning Europe, recaptures the Holy Land, and after his death is interred with the three kings at Cologne Cathedral:

... ces qu'il avra a faire jusques a Burgh de Jherusalem . Espanie
tremblera de poure de lui Aragoun estrevera . En France mettera
posera en Engleterre ou il fuist nee en anguisera ces dentz sur les
portes de Paris. Alemanie fremera de pour de lui . Celui sengler durera
meint temps a deux villes en Engleterre . Celui sengler ferra russeaux de
sant . Et cervel de verte pres rouge . Cel sengler regainera quanquez ces
auncestres unt avaunt perdu . En totes terres si portera trois corounes
avaunt qu'il moerge so mettera une terre en grant subjection me ele
relevra noun pas sa vie . Cel sengler conquerra plus que unques nul de
son saunc en iceste monde . Tous lui enclineront et les terres tendra en
bon poes en sa vie . Si murra estranges si serra por sa noblesse enterre
entre les trois rois .

... he shal do measurabli al þat he shal haue to done vnto þe Burgh of
Ierusalem; and he shal whet his teiþ vpon the 3ates of Parys, and
vpon iiij landes. Spayne shal tremble for drede of him; Gascoyne shal
swete; in Fraunce he shal put his wynges; his grete taile shal reste in
Engeland softely; Almayn shal quake for drede of him. þis Boor shall
3eve mantels to ii tounes of Engeland, and he shal make þe ryuer rynne
wiþ brayn, and he shal make meny medowes reede, and he shal gete as
miche as his auncestres deden; & er þat he ben dede he shal bere iij
crones; and he shal put on lande in his tyme. The Boor, after þat he is
dede, for his dou3tynesse shal bene enterede at Coloigne...

This heroic boar became a mainstay of verse associated with the French wars, featuring prominently in the jingoist poetry of Laurence Minot.²⁶ Henry IV associated himself on at least one occasion with the boar, and during the fifteenth century, the cipher was utilised by both Yorkist and Lancastrian claimants to the throne.²⁷

The Boar and the Last World Emperor

The boar of Windsor is an English reworking of material associated with the Last World Emperor. This is a theme which has yet to be fully contextualised in its medieval English applications, and the *Six Kings* provides valuable material in this respect. As the following chapters will demonstrate, it is a construction with a profound and enduring impact on insular political prophecy, and presentations of English kingship. An important element of political eschatology, the Last World Emperor played a role in the imperial self-casting of kings and princes across Europe from the early Middle Ages through to the Renaissance. Customarily, the Last World Emperor achieves widespread conquest, defeats the tribes of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38.1-3; Revelation 20), wins the holy cross, and then, placing his empire into the hands of God, renounces his crown at Golgotha or Mount Olivet prior to the arrival of Antichrist and the End Times. This narrative is derived from the late seventh-century *Revelation of Pseudo-Methodius* and the fourth-century *Tiburtine Sibyl*, both founded on late Byzantine re-applications of Judaic messianism to a Christian schema, specifically the book of Revelation.²⁸ The relationship between these two texts remains uncertain, but the imperial theme embodied in both had a pronounced influence on the development of European apocalyptic literature. As an important component of the long-lived pan-European political traditions derived from political readings of the prophetic writings of the Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore (c.1135-1202), the Emperor

²⁶ Cf. Laurence Minot, 'How Edward at Hogges unto land wann/ and rade thurgh France or ever he blan', in *The Poems of Laurence Minot, 1333-1352* (1996), ed. by Richard H. Osberg (1996), pp.51-55.

²⁷ See below, Chapter 3, p.150; Chapter 5, pp.210, 233.

²⁸ Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (1979), p.44; P. J. Alexander, 'Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works and Motifs: The Legend of the Last World Emperor', *Medievalia et Humanistica: Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture*, NS 2 (1971), 47-68; P. J. Alexander, 'The Medieval Legend of the Last Roman Emperor and its Messianic Origins', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 41 (1978), 1-15; Marjorie Reeves, 'Joachimist Influences on the Idea of a Last World Emperor', in *Joachim of Fiore in Christian Thought*, ed. by Delno West, 2 vols (1975), I, pp.511-58; M. Reeves, 'The Development of Apocalyptic Thought: Medieval Attitudes', in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, ed. by C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (1984), pp.40-72 (p.45); Norman Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium* (1970), pp.30-33.

appears as a great reformer who ushers in a golden age, offering a brief respite from the turmoil of the reign of Antichrist which follows.²⁹

Although, through the research of Anke Holdenried, there is now an increasing scholarly appreciation for the religious reception, and understanding, of sibylline texts in the Middle Ages, the political utility of the theme of the Last World Emperor is undeniable.³⁰ It codified a perception of Christian togetherness, constructed in highly militaristic terms, against peoples on the margins of Christendom. This came to function as a distinctively factionalist and nationalist term of address amongst Christian communities throughout the later Middle Ages, articulating antipathy towards enemies both non-Christian *and Christian*. The political employment of this material by Guelph and Ghibelline factions has been documented by Marjorie Reeves,³¹ and this was by no means a unique situation. This material assumed a similar function during the Hundred Years' Wars between France and England. Notably, the boar of Windsor invades Paris before going on to conquer Jerusalem. In this schema acts of continental aggrandisement were prophetically ratified. Roughly contemporary to the *Six Kings*, the French king appears as an analogous reformer of Christendom and the Last World Emperor in the sibylline prophecies of John of Rupescissa.³² The Last World Emperor was part of a heavily nationalised, and nationally contested, pan-European apocalyptic grammar, articulating national ambitions and antipathies.

The boar operated as a prophetic cipher for Edward III throughout his reign, encoding great expectations for the king's career, configured in imperial terms. The ambitions of this sequence may have appeared close to realisation when at the beginnings of the Hundred Years' War Edward was appointed by the Emperor Louis IV as 'vicar of the Emperor in the field', with extensive political authority over Germany and the Low Countries.³³ It is almost certainly by virtue of this later historical correspondence that the trope proved so long-lived, and the boar of Windsor came to function as a core component of subsequent English prophecies.

²⁹ For the position of the Last World Emperor in Political Joachimism see P. J. Alexander, 'The Diffusion of Byzantine Apocalypses in the Medieval West and the Beginnings of Joachimism', in *Prophecy and Millenarianism*, ed. by A. Williams (1980), pp.57-75; Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages* (1969; rpt. 1993), pp.306-19; Reeves, 'Joachimist Influences on the Idea of a Last World Emperor'; Robert Lerner, 'The Black Death and Western European Eschatological Mentalities', *The American Historical Review*, 86 (1981), 533-52 (p.544).

³⁰ A. Holdenried, 'The Bedan Recension of the *Sibylla Tiburtina*: New Manuscript Evidence and its Implications', in *Latin Culture in the Eleventh Century*, ed. by Ross Gilbert Arthur *et al* (2002), pp.410-43; A. Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes: Manuscripts and Interpretation of the Latin Sibylla Tiburtina, ca.1050-1500* (2006).

³¹ Reeves, *Influence of Prophecy*, pp.306-19.

³² McGinn, *Visions of the End*, pp.230-33.

³³ Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, p.10; Benjamin Arnold, 'England and Germany, 1050-1350', in *England and her Neighbours*, ed. by Michael Jones and Malcolm Vale (1989), pp.43-52 (p.50).

The *Six Kings* suggests just how early these imperial associations were fostered. The burial of the boar amongst the three kings at Cologne, the three magi, is an important marker of the association of this crusading figure with the Holy Roman Emperors.³⁴ This detail is very likely to have been derived from German crusading prophecies circulating in England during the 1310s, which formed the basis for the long-lived prophecies of the holy oil, briefly applied to Edward II.³⁵ The holy oil narrative re-worked Holy Roman *imperium* in line with English ambitions, forecasting the deeds of an anointed king of England who would recapture the Holy Land, in accordance with a series of prophecies bequeathed by the Virgin Mary to Thomas Becket, alongside the oil. Another important depiction of Edward II as a Holy Roman Emperor and crusader, in circulation roughly contemporary to the period of the composition of the *Six Kings*, is *Adam Davy's Five Dreams*, which recounts Edward II's imperial coronation by the Pope, and a new crusade, prior to a vision of the king's martyrdom (a detail which places it on the eve of the deposition).³⁶ Imperial crusading was naturally carried over into prophecies of the accession of Edward III. The career of the boar of Windsor also bears a possible connection to the early fourteenth-century Latin political prophecy *Anglia transmittet*, which prophesies the conquests of the English king, figured by the leopard, across Europe and Jerusalem. It has been suggested that this prophecy was conceived in relation to Edward I, although on the basis of extant manuscripts its genesis is difficult to date.³⁷ Certainly, however, the conquests of the boar of Windsor are held in relation to those of Edward I, figured in the prophecy as the dragon. This is discussed further below.³⁸

The Boar and the Arthurian Crusader

Importantly, the boar of Windsor is not simply an imperial or pseudo-sibylline cipher, it is also decidedly Galfridian. In the crusading onus of the boar's career, and the whetting of his tusks on the gates of Paris, we can see the influence of another figure from the *Prophetiae* alongside the

³⁴ The *Original Prose Version* refers to the three kings; the *English Prose Translation*, Cologne. See above, p.77. The two are consistent in their meaning.

³⁵ J. R. S. Phillips, 'Edward II and the Prophets,' in *England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1985 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by W. M. Ormrod (1986), pp.189-201 (pp.196-201).

³⁶ John Scattergood, 'Adam Davy's *Dreams* and Edward II', in *Reading the Past* (1996), pp.50-60; Phillips, 'Edward II and the Prophets', pp.192-94; Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp.92-98.

³⁷ The prophecy is printed in *Eulogium Historarum*, II, p.420. It is here glossed as a prophecy of the Norman conquest of Ireland. See also Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.114; Coote and Thornton, 'A Tradition of Popular Political Prophecy', pp.117-18.

³⁸ See below, p.83.

boar of commerce: the boar 'ex conano' who conquers France and extends his rule to the edges of a great eastern empire:³⁹

Ex Conano procedet aper bellicosus, qui infra Gallicana nemora acumen
dentium suorum exercebit. Truncabit namque quaeque maiora robora,
minoribus uero tutelam praestabit. Tremebunt illum Arabes et Affricani;
nam impetum cursus sui in ulteriorem Hipsaniam protendet.

(From Conanus will come forth a warlike boar, who will sharpen his
tusks on the forests of France. He will break all the tallest trees, but give
protection to the smaller. The Arabs and Africans will tremble before
him; for his charge will carry him all the way to further Spain.)

(114-18)

The boar's conquest is constructed in relation to contemporary and long-standing ambitions concerning Muslim territorial holdings in Europe, for the meaning of 'ulteriorem Hispaniam' here can only be Muslim-occupied Spain. This passage articulates an association between the Arthurian cipher of *Prophetiae* 39-42, the boar of Cornwall, and a prophecy of British conquest of the Muslim east. By the identification of the boar as proceeding 'ex Conano' (it directly follows the appearance of the pan-Celtic alliance of 110-14), Geoffrey fosters a relationship between the hero of Welsh political prophecy Cynan and an Arthurian crusader.

Geoffrey was the first to extend the career of Arthur - certainly already a symbol of insular unity in Welsh mythic-history - to one of European conquest.⁴⁰ In *Historia*, IX-XI, he writes of Arthur's conquests across Europe to the gates of Rome, identified as a subject of sibylline prophecy (XI, 491-97). Considerations of the source of this imperial journey have birthed a number of different theories: from distorted memories of a leader of sub-Roman Britain such as Maccsen Wledig and other candidates,⁴¹ to a reflection of far-reaching Norman ambitions.⁴² Only recently has this imperial journey been considered in relation to the twelfth-

³⁹ This parallel is also noted by Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, p.51.

⁴⁰ For a comparison of the mustering of Arthur's army to march on Rome, and the eastern forces of the Roman Emperor Lucius, in *Historia* IX-X to a crusading paradigm see Fulton, 'History and Myth: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*', pp.53-54.

⁴¹ Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, and Brynley F. Roberts, 'Introduction', in *Arthur of the Welsh*, pp.6-7; Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain', p.181; Geoffrey Ashe, "'A Certain Very Ancient Book": Traces of an Arthurian Source in Geoffrey of Monmouth's History', *Speculum*, 56 (1981), 301-23.

⁴² Cf. Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society*, p.45; Finke and Shichtman, *King Arthur and the Myth of History*, p.38;

century vogue for eschatological prophecy. Judith Weiss has suggested that in Arthur's journey to Rome, Geoffrey developed an association between Arthur and Antichrist, functioning as a dark double to the Last World Emperor in German and Italian political prophecy orientated against the Empire during this period.⁴³ However, there is no reason to suppose that Geoffrey's purposes were so subversive. They were certainly not received as such.

The association of Arthur with crusading potentially has a precedent in a tenth-century English recension of the *Historia Brittonum*, known as the Vatican Recension. According to the researches of J. A. Giles, a variant of this manuscript provides a unique coda to Arthur's battles against the Saxons.⁴⁴ Arthur travels to Jerusalem, where in an act of religious devotion, he constructs a cross to the size of that used at the crucifixion of Christ, and prays for success against the pagans (whether Saxon or Muslim remains unclear). This presumably locates the hero at Golgotha. However, Giles's source has proved at present impossible to locate, and remains a mystery.

Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Arthurian boar of Windsor, an English Last World Emperor, represented orthodox English political material, drawing on a pan-European apocalyptic grammar conflated with Galfridian elements. However, although it was later to become commonplace, this preserves a significant innovation in the history of English political prophecy. The field of associations entertained by Geoffrey in his account of the boar *ex Conanus* in the *Prophetiae* was in circulation for almost two hundred years prior to its application to a contemporary figure in the *Six Kings*. The question is, why did this allusion come to cultural prominence in the early fourteenth century? The answer to this lies in the uses of Galfridian history in relation to Anglo-Scottish affairs during this period.

Richard M. Loomis, 'Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth', in *The Romance of Arthur*, ed. by James J. Wilhelm and Laila Zamuelis Gross (1984), pp.57-86 (p.58); Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.81.

⁴³ Judith Weiss, 'Arthur, Emperors, and Antichrists: The Formation of the Arthurian Biography', in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. by Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (2006), pp.239-48.

⁴⁴ Cited by J. A. Giles, ed., *Six Old English Chronicles* (1848), p.408, as appearing in the Vatican Recension, as preserved in Rome, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reginensis Lat. 1964. This was transcribed in 1757 by Charles O' Connor (BL, Stowe MS 1054), and also was transcribed and re-printed by W. Gunn, ed., *The Historia Brittonum commonly attributed to Nennius, from a manuscript lately discovered in the library of the Vatican Palace at Rome* (1819). However, Giles's material does not appear in either of these. The Vatican Recension has been edited by David Dumville, *The Historia Brittonum: Vatican Recension* (1985), where this allusion is also not present. For a description of MS Reginensis Lat. 1964 see Dumville, *Historia Brittonum*, pp.24-29.

Arthur and Insular Overlordship

The crusading career of the boar of Windsor must be understood as the ultimate, eschatologically-inflected, ratification of another ambition, associated with English kingship during the early thirteenth century, which lay closer to home: he restores the territorial holdings of his ancestors, and wears three crowns, uniting England, Scotland, and Wales. The prophecy makes an overt statement of insular overlordship, but it does so through a Galfridian frame of reference, where conquest is presented as native right. The British Isles is presented here as always-already English.

This construction is heavily indebted to the political application of Galfridian history during the reign of Edward I. Indeed, the allusion to the three crowns in the prophecy functions as an overt reminiscence of the reign of Edward I, described as the reign of the dragon, the second of the *Six Kings*. The dragon's body spans England, Scotland, and Wales:

un de ses pies en Wik et l'ature en Lond . Si embracera trois habitatouns
et overa sa bouche de vers gales.

his o foote shal be sette in Wik, and þat oþere in London; and he shal
vnbrace iij habitacions, and he shal oppen his mouþ toward Walys.

Following the death of the last Welsh prince of Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, in rebellion against the English crown in 1282, and the death of Alexander III of Scotland in 1286 and the ensuing crisis of Scottish kingship, English overlordship of the British Isles became a genuine possibility for the first time in nearly three hundred years. With this, a very distinctive English imperial ideology developed, bulwarking these territorial claims.⁴⁵ Galfridian history was instrumental within this. Importantly, the primary threats to the stability of the dragon's reign are a 'people out of þe Northwest', the Scots.⁴⁶ The author of the prophecy is interested in the historical concept of English high kingship from a distinctively northwards-looking perspective, and this positioning is in many respects defensive.

The engagements of Edward I with Galfridian material pertaining to insular high kingship is well-noted.⁴⁷ His re-internment of the reputed bones of Arthur and Guinevere at

⁴⁵ For a brief history of English conceptions of insular overlordship see Davies, *First English Empire*, pp.4-30.

⁴⁶ This portion of the *Original Prose Version* is corrupted in Taylor's transcription.

⁴⁷ The uses of Arthuriana in the public spectacles of the reign of Edward I and Edward III are discussed by R. S.

Glastonbury Abbey in Easter 1278 is commonly regarded as a political claim directed at contemporary Welsh rebellion: Edward became the heir of the Britons.⁴⁸ Important for our understanding of the historical conditions governing the production of the *Six Kings*, is Edward's use of Galfridian material in his claims to the overlordship of Scotland in 1301. In response to Pope Boniface's bull opposing English intervention in Scotland, Edward drew on the myth of Brutus's three sons as it appears in *Historia*, I.⁴⁹ This tells of the division of Britain into three territories (England, Scotland and Wales) between the three sons of Brutus (Locrinus, Kamber, and Albanactus, from whose names Geoffrey constructs etymologies for England, Wales, and Scotland), with the whole to be held under the high kingship of the first of Brutus's sons and king of England, Locrinus. As Brynley F. Roberts has noted, this is one of the most influential re-workings of the scene of insular division of Welsh mythic history and political prophecy,⁵⁰ and it is one which by the age of Edward I was fully appropriated within English historical mentalities. This threefold splitting is the mythic-historical foundation for the three crowns of the *Six Kings*. This was also a manifestly Arthurian representation of insular relations. Edward's 1301 letter also draws on the historical precedent of Arthur's conquest and overlordship of Scotland, arguing the binding nature of this arrangement into the present day.⁵¹ The three crowns of Brutus were also the three crowns of Arthur. A fully Anglicised reworking of a Welsh historical-prophetic theme, this had a long life in English Arthurian iconography of the late Middle Ages.⁵²

The application of Galfridian and Arthurian material to Scottish affairs had a huge impact on the prophetic literature of the northern English border. The impact of Edward I's Arthurian

Loomis, 'Edward III Arthurian Enthusiast', *Speculum*, 28 (1953), 114-27; Juliet Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry* (1983). The extent of Edward I's engagement with Arthurian material has been brought into question by F. M. Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307* (1962), pp.515-56; Michael Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages* (1996), pp.227-29; Thea Summerfield, 'The Testimony of Writing: Pierre de Langtoft and the Appeals to History, 1291-1306', in *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend*, ed. by R. Purdie and N. Royan (2005), pp.25-41 (p.33). The personal nature of Edward III's Arthurian engagements are far clearer, although this has far more to do with the place of Arthurian romance in chivalric discourse than prophecy, for which see Julian Munby, Richard Barber, and Richard Brown, eds, *Edward III's Round Table at Windsor and the Windsor Festival of 1344* (2007).

⁴⁸ James P. Carley, 'Arthur in English History', in *Arthur of the English*, ed. by W. R. J. Barron (1999), pp.47-57; Davies, *First English Empire*, pp.31-53; J. C. Parsons, 'The Second Exhumation of King Arthur's Remains at Glastonbury, 19 April 1278', in *Arthurian Literature XII*, ed. by James P. Carley and Felicity Riddy (1993), pp.179-83.

⁴⁹ E. L. G. Stones, ed. and transl., *Anglo-Scottish Relations, 1174-1328: Some Selected Documents* (1970), pp.94-97; Ullmann, 'On the Influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth in English History', pp.264-68.

⁵⁰ Roberts, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Welsh Historical Tradition', p.37.

⁵¹ Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, pp.97-99; Loomis, 'Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast', pp.121-22; Carley, 'Arthur in English History', pp.51-52.

⁵² Cedric E. Pickford, 'The Three Crowns of King Arthur', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 38 (1954), 373-82. For Welsh traditions of the three crowns, see above, Chapter 1, p.40.

self-casting was felt in this region for centuries, as Galfridian material came to offer a mode of prophetic endorsement for territorial claims on the Anglo-Scottish border.

The Merlinian Prophecies of Pierre de Langtoft

Evidence of the rapid northern English assimilation of this Galfridian construction is preserved in the northern English, and virulently anti-Scottish, chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft.⁵³ A canon of the Augustine Priory at Bridlington in East Yorkshire, the place of Langtoft's work was to become a site of considerable prophetic production through the later Middle Ages.⁵⁴ The chronicle is extant in twenty witnesses, nine of which preserve Langtoft's entire narrative from the Brutus story, reworked from Geoffrey's *Historia*, to the death of Edward I.⁵⁵ The chronicle achieved broad circulation beyond the north of England: it was translated into Middle English in Robert Mannyng's *Chronicle* in c.1338.⁵⁶ Its utility in the construction of English identities – as distinct from Scottish – was, however, nowhere more pronounced than in the north.

Langtoft inserted a short Merlinian verse in his chronicle, pertaining to the English king's rights in Scotland:

Ha, Deus! ke Merlyn dist sovent veritez
 En ses prophecyes, [si]cum ws les lisez!
 Ore sunt les ij. ewes un aryvez,
 Ke par graunz mountaynes ount esté sevez;
 Et une realme fet de [deus] diverse regnez
 Ke solaint par deus rays estre governez.
 Ore sunt les insulanes trestuz assemblez,
 Et Albanye rejoynte à les regaltez
 Des quels li rays Eduard est seynur clamez.
 Cornewaylle et Wales sunt en ses poustez,
 Et Irelaunde la graunde à ses voluntez.

⁵³ Thea Summerfield, *The Matter of Kings' Lives: The Design of Past and Present in the Early Fourteenth-century Verse Chronicles by Pierre de Langtoft and Robert Mannyng* (1998), pp.15-68.

⁵⁴ The priory is best known in this context for the *Prophecies of John of Bridlington* produced in the reign of Edward III. This is discussed below, Chapter 4, pp.172-73.

⁵⁵ Summerfield, 'The Testimony of Writing', p.27; Summerfield, *The Matter of Kings' Lives*, p.22.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.129-58.

(Ah God! How often Merlin said truth
 In his prophecies, if you read them!
 Now are the two waters united in one,
 Which have been separated by great mountains;
 And one realm made of two different kingdoms
 Which used to be governed by two kings.
 Now are the islanders all joined together,
 And Albany reunited to the royalties
 Of which King Edward is proclaimed lord.
 Cornwall and Wales are in his power,
 And Ireland the great is at his will.)⁵⁷

This reworks the pan-Celtic union of *Prophetiae*, 110-14, as a prophecy of the conquests of Edward I. Rather than the calling of Wales to Albany, Albany is re-united to the ‘regalitez’; and the mountains and streams which rejoice in *Prophetiae*, 110-14 are here boundaries that are overcome by the English king. In the reworking of British unification as an endorsement for English conquest, Langtoft follows a general convention from this period. In an unpublished commentary on the *Prophetiae* from the reign of Edward I, preserved in Dublin, Trinity College MS 496. E. 6. 2 (printed by Jacob Hammer), the sequence is glossed explicitly in relation to Edward’s conquest of Scotland and Wales.⁵⁸ This represents an important moment in English Galfridian reception history: the ultimate scene of British (Welsh) vengeance against the Saxons, derived from the anti-English vitriol of *Armes Prydein*, was interpreted during this period in England as a figure of English aggrandisement: the rule of Edward I over three insular nations, high king as once was Brutus. The pan-Celtic alliance was no longer the subject of Welsh prophecy, but of English history.

Langtoft supplements this with another element crucial to constructions in the *Six Kings*: the identification of this British high king as an Arthurian crusader:

Rays n’y ad ne prince de tuz les countrez
 Fors le ray Eduuard, ke ensi les ad joustez;
 Arthur ne avayt unkes si plainement les fez.

⁵⁷ *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, ed. by Thomas Wright, 2 vols (1866-68), II, pp.264-65.

⁵⁸ Jacob Hammer, ‘An Unedited Commentary on the *Prophetiae Merlini* in Dublin, Trinity College MS 496. E. 6. 2’, in *Charisteria Thaddaeo Sinko*, ed. by Kazimierz Feliks Kumaniecki (1951), pp.81-89 (p.88).

Desore n'y ad ke fere for purver ses alez
 Sur li ray de Fraunce, conquere ses heritez,
 Et pus porter la croyce où Jhesu Cryst fu nez.

(There is neither king nor prince of all the countries
 Except king Edward who has thus united them;
 Arthur had never the fiefs so fully.
 Henceforward there is nothing to do but provide his expedition
 Against the king of France to conquer his inheritances
 And then bear the cross where Jesus Christ was born.)⁵⁹

This material saw an obvious application to Edward I. Although he never crusaded whilst king, Edward was active in Jerusalem in the years before his succession, and it is from Jerusalem that he returned to claim his crown, a subject written of admiringly in a number of late thirteenth-century chronicles.⁶⁰ These ambitions, we have seen, were transferred to both his son and his grandson. The boar of Windsor's recovery of the lands of his ancestors corresponds particularly closely to Langtoft's French journey of the Arthurian Edward I, to 'conquere ses heritez'.

Despite a long association of Edward I with crusading, it is in Langtoft that we find the most completely articulated precedent for the crusading Arthurian boar of Windsor. Although much of Langtoft's source material was in wide English circulation, his Arthurian interest belongs to a distinctively northern English political climate. Arthurian material was not simply powerful cultural capital in the north of England, it was aggressively employed. The most virulent, indeed apocalyptic, invocations of the British theme during this period are found as one moves closer to the contested territories of the Anglo-Scottish border, and it is potentially here that the boar of Windsor was first developed. The apocalyptic onus of Arthurian prophecy on the northern border, was not just the product of fevered wartime mentalities, but the result of cross-border dissemination of literary-political materials, and the active exercises in cultural neutralisation and re-inscription such contact inspired. For contemporary to Langtoft, and doubtless informing his practice, were a number of anti-English and highly apocalyptic Scottish re-workings of *Prophetiae*, 110-14, in circulation in Scotland and across the border.⁶¹ This is material of which the author of the *Six Kings* was also aware.

⁵⁹ *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, pp.266-67.

⁶⁰ Prestwich, *Edward I*, pp.66-85.

⁶¹ For Langtoft's use of material in regional circulation see Wright, *Political Songs* p.lxxvii; Wright, *Chronicle of Pierre de*

Regnum scotorum

Although Scottish dismissal of Galfridian material following Edward I's 1301 letter is well-noted,⁶² elements of the Galfridian tradition proved formative in the structuring of anti-English prophecy in Scotland. From the end of the thirteenth century, enduring into the seventeenth, even as Scottish writers issued their most virulent rejections of Geoffrey's prophet Merlin,⁶³ others enthusiastically invoked the terms of *Prophetiae*, 110-14 as a prophecy of English exile and Scottish restoration. By the early years of the fourteenth century, the sequence had been reworked in one of the most widely circulated prophecies of the British Isles: *Regnum scotorum*.

Tatlock has dated the first appearance of the prophecy to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, in the wake of English intervention in the matter of the Scottish succession, although he suggests it was potentially based on the precedent of a loose alliance between Wales and Scotland in 1258.⁶⁴ The prophecy is commonly attributed to Gildas, although the first component additionally invokes the eagle as a prophetic source, and the second Merlin and the Sibyl. Like the pan-Celtic alliance, the use of the prophetic eagle alongside the Sibyl and Merlin as prophets of British restoration is also borrowed from Geoffrey. The prophecies of Merlin, sibylline books and a mysterious prophecy of the eagle of Shaftsbury are consulted by the Breton king Howel in relation to the question of British return at the close of *Historia*, XI.⁶⁵

The prophecy appears in most manuscripts in two component parts.⁶⁶ The first, beginning, 'Bruti posteritas cum scotis associata...' ('the posterity of Brutus, joined with the Scots...'), prophesies an anti-English alliance, English extermination, and the restoration of the island's ancient name: Britain. The second, beginning 'Fata ducis celebris super omnia scotia flebit' ('All Scots will cry over the death of a renowned commander'), an allusion to the death of Alexander III, elaborates on the nature of Scottish suffering prior to a final victory, achieved this

Langtoft, p.ix; Matthews, *Writing to the King*, pp.63-67.

⁶² Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, pp.128-30; Flora Alexander, 'Late Medieval Scottish Attitudes to the Figure of King Arthur', *Anglia*, 93 (1975), 17-34; Susan Kelly, 'The Arthurian Material in the *Scoticronicon* of Walter Bower', *Anglia*, 97 (1979), 431-39; Juliette Wood, 'Where does Britain end? The reception of Geoffrey of Monmouth in Scotland and Wales', in *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend*, pp.9-24 (pp.11-13).

⁶³ Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics, and the People in Early Modern England*, p.49; David Allan, "'Arthur redivivus': Politics and Patriotism in Reformation Scotland', in *Arthurian Literature XV*, ed. by James P. Carley and Felicity Riddy (1997), pp.185-204.

⁶⁴ J. S. P. Tatlock, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Date of *Regnum scotorum*', *Speculum*, 9 (1934), 135-39 (p.137). The prophecy is also discussed by Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.72-73.

⁶⁵ *Historia*, XI, 575-76.

⁶⁶ Printed in Wright, *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, II, pp.448-50. English translation appears in Bower, *Scoticronicon*, II, pp.58-61.

time through a Franco-Scottish alliance.⁶⁷ *Regnum scotorum* came to be held in relation to Scottish national history and expectations in a manner similar to the uses of the *Six Kings* in England. Just as the *Six Kings* was incorporated in the *Brut*, *Regnum scotorum* was incorporated in Walter Bower's continuation of the chronicle of John of Fordun, the early fifteenth-century *Scotichronicon*.⁶⁸

Prophetiae, 110-14 saw a long-lived utility in Scottish oppositional discourse. It survives in corrupted form in the late fourteenth-century *When Rome is Remoyd*. The texts of this prophecy show considerable variations across extant manuscripts, and these variants have been grouped by their earliest, and most detailed, cataloguer, into the α , β , and γ texts (referred to here as the A, B, and C texts, in accordance with the *DIMEV*).⁶⁹ As it appears in the fifteenth-century northern border witness, CUL, MS Kk. I. v, the A-text prophesies a time when 'Tatcalders sall call on Carioun the noyus... And erth on tyll Albany' (23).⁷⁰ Although a corruption of the heroes' names (Cadwaladr and Cynan, or the Galfridian Cadualadrus and Conanus), the reference to the pan-Celtic alliance is preserved here. This particular variant saw considerable circulation in England.⁷¹

Scottish anti-English uses of *Prophetiae*, 110-14 were known on the northern English border by the early years of the fourteenth century. Copies of *Regnum scotorum* were often incorporated into northern English manuscripts alongside the chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft.⁷² The anti-English union of Cadualdrus and Conanus was reworked as a vernacular prophecy in Scotland as early as the mid-century. Evidence of this survives in the *Scalacronica*, a work of history written by an English knight, Sir Thomas Grey, with a particular interest in prophecy, who was imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle during the 1350s.⁷³ Grey quotes an anti-English Scottish prophecy, ascribed to 'Merlyn': 'þat Cadwaladre sal on Conan cal, etc.-'.⁷⁴ This is an English vernacular translation of *Prophetiae*, 110-14 (the source text for *Regnum scotorum*). Grey's chronicle provides a notable example of cultural encounters through the most inhospitable of situations: Scottish prophecy-material could potentially find an English audience through the practice of hostage-taking. An even earlier English vernacular translation of *Prophetiae*, 110-14

⁶⁷ The death of Alexander III was a long-lived component of Scottish retrospective prophecy of the fourteenth century. This is discussed further in Chapter 3.

⁶⁸ Bower, *Scotichronicon*, II, pp.58-62; VIII, pp.110-11.

⁶⁹ Reinhard Haferkorn, ed., *When Rome is Removed into England* (1932).

⁷⁰ Printed in Haferkorn, pp.92-103 (with German translation); J. Rawson Lumby, ed., *Bernardus de Cura Rei Familiaris with Some Early Scottish Prophecies* (1870), pp.32-34 ('Ancient Scottish Prophecy No. 2'), pp.32-34; Rossell Hope Robbins, ed., *Historical Poems of the XIV and XV Centuries* (1959), pp.118-20; James M. Dean, ed., *Medieval English Political Writings* (1996), pp.13-15.

⁷¹ For an overview of the manuscripts see *DIMEV*, 6398.

⁷² Cf. BL, Cotton MS Julius A. v. This manuscript is discussed below, pp.87-88.

⁷³ Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II* (1982), pp.93-96.

⁷⁴ *Scalacronica by Sir Thomas Grey of Heton, Knight*, ed. by Joseph Stevenson (1836), p.3.

survives from Yorkshire during the 1320s in the English translation of the *Prophetiae Merlini* included in the Galfridian portion of Thomas of Castleford's *Chronicle*.⁷⁵ The prophecy's dissemination was expansive throughout the period, particularly in Scotland and northern England.

On the Anglo-Scottish border *Prophetiae*, 110-14 represented a field of contested cultural-political meanings, with competing English and Scottish applications. During the early decades of the fourteenth century, the *Prophetiae* also continued to colour the way Welsh oppositional prophecy was understood in England. In an entry for 1315 the biographer of Edward II refers to Welsh rebellion as inspired by the prophecies of Merlin, located within a Welsh national narrative of the loss of insular sovereignty and the future ambition of the overthrow of the English.⁷⁶ This is a paradigm lifted by the author directly from *Prophetiae*, 110-14. Although in its application to Welsh prophecy this was certainly a reductionist and highly Anglo-centric position, there is evidence that during the early decades of the fourteenth century Galfridian material was drawn on in Wales, specifically in address to Scotland. The *Prophetiae* presented a prophetic discourse shared between Welsh and Scottish political actors, a striking testament to the function of Geoffrey's text as a latinate mediator. During the 1310s *Prophetiae*, 110-14, and almost certainly its reworking in *Regnum scotorum*, were invoked as part of a genuine political strategy concerning a pan-Celtic alliance, drawn on as a Scottish overture to Wales and Ireland. We possess records of letters exchanged between Edward Bruce and the Welshman Gruffydd Llwyd between 1315 and 1318, discussing an alliance between the Welsh, Irish, and Scots.⁷⁷ Here, as in other documents of the period, such as the *Remonstrance of the Irish to the Pope* (c.1317) and the *Declaration of Arbroath* (1320),⁷⁸ a Celtic confederation is founded on historical precedent: the peoples of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales have been oppressed by the English since their arrival in Britain, and must reclaim their territorial rights.⁷⁹ Bruce's letter extends this to a prophecy of a pan-Celtic alliance expelling the English from Britain. Llwyd responded to this in kind.⁸⁰ The letters evidence the

⁷⁵ *Castleford's Chronicle or The Boke of the Brut*, ed. by Caroline Eckhardt, 2 vols (1996), I, p.426.

⁷⁶ 'Vita Edwardi Secundi', in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, II, p.218; *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. and transl. by Wendy R. Childs (2005), pp.118-19.

⁷⁷ J. Beverley Smith, 'Gruffydd Llwyd and the Celtic Alliance', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 26 (1976), 463-78.

⁷⁸ *Scotichronicon*, VI, pp.384-403, 465-81; A. A. M. Duncan, *The Nation of the Scots, and the Declaration of Arbroath* (1970), pp.34-37.

⁷⁹ Smith, 'Gruffydd Llwyd and the Celtic Alliance', pp.477-78; Colm McNamee, *The Wars of the Bruces: Scotland, England and Ireland 1306-1328* (1997), pp.190-94.

⁸⁰ This was a period of expectation in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and in September 1315 Scottish ships landed on the west coast of Wales, and raided Holyhead. A prompt English response followed. Davies, *Age of Conquest*, p.387.

manipulation of a Galfridian political language by this period recognised universally across the British Isles.⁸¹

Fundamental to the Scottish, and in Gruffydd Llwyd's letters the Welsh, uses of Galfridian prophecy during this period is an emphasis on the three-fold division of the island. Galfridian prophecy was being used to encode demands for the restoration of independent territories.⁸² The next significant historical juncture in which the pan-Celtic alliance functioned as a term of address from one enemy of the English crown to another, is in the early 1400s, in Owain Glyn Dŵr's address to the kings of Scotland and Ireland.⁸³

Insular Splitting

The final sequence of the *Six Kings* suggests that contemporary demands for independence shaped the terms of English paranoid perception during the fourteenth century, articulated in re-workings of the pan-Celtic alliance of a distinctively different type to the jingoistic interpretations found in the reigns of the dragon and the boar of Windsor. Functionally, this was very similar to the original invocation of *Prophetiae*, 110-14 by Geoffrey of Monmouth: an attempted reconstruction of the oppositional discourse of a hostile nation.

The boar of Windsor is followed by an ass, who is deposed by a mole, the subject of considerable antipathy. The term 'moldwarp', employed in the Middle English translation, was even lifted from a Lollard insult.⁸⁴ The mole's reign sees the invasion of a coalition of a dragon from the north, a wolf from the west, and a lion from Ireland, under whom Britain is conquered and divided in three:

... serra la terre d'engleterre departie en trois entre le Dragoun et le lou et
le leon si serra tost en apres cele temps terre de conquete . E si
finerount les heirs d'engleterre hors de heritage.⁸⁵

⁸¹ McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, p.190.

⁸² The movement towards a Welsh rather than British identity in Welsh history-writing from the twelfth-century onwards has been discussed by Huw Pryce, 'British or Welsh: National Identity in Twelfth-century Wales', *English Historical Review*, 16 (2001), 775-801.

⁸³ See below, Chapter 5, n.10.

⁸⁴ Fulton, 'Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Uses of Prophecy', p.112. Any association of the prophecy with Lollard movements remains obscure.

⁸⁵ Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp.163-64.

þan shal the lande bene departede in iij parties, þat is to seyn, to the
 Wolf, to þe Dragoune, & to þe lioun; and so shal it bene for euermore.
 And þan shall þis land bene callede 'þe lande of conquest', & so shal þe
 riȝt heires of Engeland ende.

A reworking of the pan-Celtic alliance of *Prophetiae*, 110-14, this also draws on the extended paradigm of *Prophetiae*, 147-69, which stages the threefold splitting of insular territory prior to reconquest by a pan-Celtic alliance.⁸⁶ Here this figure forecasts the exile of the English and the establishment of Welsh and Scottish independence.

This prophecy has an important later reception history, discussed further in Chapters Four and Five, as it was held in relation to the deposition of Richard II, the accession of Henry IV, and the anti-Lancastrian Tripartite Indenture. However, as it stands in the *Original Prose Version* and *English Prose Translation*, this sequence encodes a wealth of decidedly contemporary anxieties. The movement, led by a force from the north, is almost certainly a reference to the Bruce faction's contemporary activities in Scotland and Ireland, and overtures to Wales, rallying support against royal English claims to insular hegemony. In its account of the ass it also suggests an anxiety about the matter of deposition, particularly relevant to the final years of the reign of Edward II. After all, what assurance was there that the future Edward III was a boar and not a mole?

The construction of the mole, and his exile, stands in an important relationship to another strand of contemporary northern English prophetic verse, concerned not with the decline of England but of Scotland. The account of the exile of the mole comes very close to a border-prophecy relating to Balliol rule, named from its opening lines as *Ecce dies veniunt*. Although in extant forms a work of English jingoism – the prophecy concludes, 'Illuc tende vias, et daemonis assecla fias!' ('Hasten thither, and become the companion of the devill!') – the work may well combine themes in circulation on both sides of the Anglo-Scottish border.⁸⁷ In its account of Scottish suffering, it could well be a variation upon the 'Fata ducis celebra...' element of *Regnum scotorum*, without the restorative conclusion, functioning as an unredeemed Scottish lament. The prophecy draws on Jeremiah 31.31, which describes the decline of Judea, and also on the myth of Troy, the destruction of which it similarly holds analogous to that of

⁸⁶ See above, Chapter 1, pp.38-41.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.72. The poem is printed in Wright, *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, II, pp.450-51, and also by Peter Coss, ed. *Thomas Wright's Political Songs of England* (1996), pp.180-82 (from which the above is quoted).

contemporary Scotland. Thirteenth and fourteenth-century pejorative use of the Trojan myth in application to the Scots, is, as far as I am aware, without precedent, and the work demands further investigation. Here I tentatively suggest its composite status.

Like *Regnum scotorum*, *Ecce dies venient* was inserted into copies of Langtoft's *Chronicle*, and appears alongside *Regnum scotorum* in a number of important late medieval northern English prophecy collections.⁸⁸ Its most important allusion, potentially drawn on by the author of the *Six Kings* as a source, is its opening description of the decline of the kingdom under John Balliol, and the passing of his rule from Scotland: 'Ecce dies veniunt, Scoti sine principe fiunt, / Regnum Balliolus perdit, transit mare solus' ('Behold, the days come, the Scots are leader-less / Balliol destroys the kingdom, [and] passes by the sea alone') (1-2).⁸⁹ These lines allude to Balliol's exile to France in 1299, and without a doubt predate the production of the *Six Kings*. The account of the downfall of the Scottish kingdom following the passing of an antipathetically viewed king, alone and friendless, from the coast into the sea, is reworked in the *Six Kings* in the account of the mole's exile: 'for he shal bene drenchede in a flode of þe se, his seede shal bicompe pure faderless in straunge lande for euermore'.⁹⁰ The representative value of the mole here doubtless stands in relation to its place in contemporary bestiaries as a figure of cowardice: in bestiaries the mole is said to flee the light.⁹¹

Importantly, the scene of the mole's exile was associated, at least in the minds of northern English writers, not exclusively with an English king but, as with the exiled leader of *Ecce dies veniunt*, a Scottish. This is a feature of one of the earliest prophecies derived from the *Six Kings*: *Als Y Yod*, a ballad in circulation in the north of England.

⁸⁸ Cf. BL, Cotton Vespasian MS E. vii; BL, Cotton Julius MS A. v.

⁸⁹ My translation.

⁹⁰ These lines are corrupted in Taylor's transcription of the *Original Prose Version*.

⁹¹ This correspondence is noted by Coote, although she does not observe this figure as one of exile. *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.108.

2. 2 *Als Y Yod*

Als Y Yod (composed c.1333)⁹² is an important, and hitherto un-noted, example of the uses of the *Six Kings* in application to Anglo-Scottish affairs during the early years of the personal reign of Edward III. Composed in a northern Middle English dialect, it describes an encounter of an English messenger (the narrator of the piece), travelling between Wytlinden (Whittington) in Cumberland and Wall (a town on Hadrian's Wall) in Northumberland, with a 'litel man' possessed of fairy-like powers. The first eighty lines of the ballad concern the little man, his demeanour, and his home. With a supernatural figure and an (albeit brief) otherworldly journey, this material is functionally analogous to the fairy mistress narrative of the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceuldoune*, discussed in Chapter Three, and is best understood as an authorising prologue, indicating a sphere of extraordinary knowledge.⁹³ This is followed by one hundred and seventy lines of prophecy delivered by the little man, concerning a dispute between a cowardly mole and a brave boar, representative of the Scottish Bruce faction (during the minority government of David II) and Edward III. This utilises a symbolic organisation modelled on the *Six Kings*, and it is this material with which I am here concerned.

Als Y Yod has hitherto only ever been discussed in relation to the *Six Kings* as a possible Celtic source.⁹⁴ This hypothesis rests on the presence of a British returning hero in the text, and is decidedly spurious: there is no linguistic trace of Scottish Gaelic influence (what is more, the Scottish prophecies in circulation in this region were Latin and English). Importantly, *Als Y Yod* (and its British hero) has a manifestly English agenda (rooted in the early years of the reign of Edward III), and must be regarded as a valuable marker of the reception and uses of the *Six Kings* in the cultivation of a distinctively Galfridian national identity amongst English communities on the Anglo-Scottish border. It is the earliest extant English language treatment of the *Six Kings*, pre-dating the *English Prose Version* by nearly four decades. However (and this may have fuelled critical perceptions of the text's Celticity) it does evidence an engagement with Scottish prophecy-materials in circulation on the northern border during this period, in many respects similar to the influences at work on the *Six Kings*.

⁹² This dating is given on the basis of my own analysis, which here follows.

⁹³ See below, Chapter 3, p.137.

⁹⁴ Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.118.

The ballad had a far greater influence on subsequent northern English political prophecy than is suggested by the single extant text preserved in BL, Cotton MS Julius A. v. As Chapter Three will detail, it exercised a formative influence on the later Erceldoune tradition which developed in this region. This is a relationship which has been briefly noted by scholars, but demands fuller attention.⁹⁵

BL, Cotton MS Julius A. v

Als Y Yod is extant in a single English manuscript, BL, Cotton Julius MS A. v, compiled c.1330-60.⁹⁶ The manuscript has been regarded as an anchor text for early fourteenth-century northern Middle English, and it is a regional production we can locate with great certainty.⁹⁷ Alongside *Als Y Yod*, the manuscript contains extracts from Pierre de Langtoft's *Chronicle*, also in a northern Middle English dialect.⁹⁸ A reference to 'Lanchestre the park syde' (11) appears in the opening lines of *Als Y Yod*, and the prophecy locates itself on the border of Northumberland and Cumberland.

It appears in the manuscript alongside a variant version of the *Original Prose Version of the Six Kings* (fols 177v-179r).⁹⁹ The folios containing the *Six Kings* were originally part of BL, MS Royal 20. A. ii, a northern English collection of Arthurian and historical material in Latin and French, including a copy of the *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*.¹⁰⁰ A similar nexus of national and Galfridian literary-political influence is apparent in Cotton Julius A. v, which contains a number of items concerned with the Anglo-Scottish wars, including *Ecce dies veniunt* (fol. 5r), and a copy of Langtoft's abridgement of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, from the reign of Brutus to Cadualadrus (fols 7r-52v), the *Prophetiae Merlini* (fols 54r-57v), and the rest of Langtoft's chronicle (fols 58r-170v).¹⁰¹ The ballad follows the *Six Kings* and another item in the same hand concerning the homage of the Scottish kings and border lords to Edward I in 1291 (fols 179v-180r). The

⁹⁵ Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp.65-66; and Ingeborg Nixon, ed., *Thomas of Erceldoune*, 2 vols (1983), II, pp.23, 35; Robbins, 'Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', p.1528.

⁹⁶ *IMEV*, 639-1. Smallwood, p.574. Ward's analysis of the manuscript as late thirteenth century is far too early. See Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, pp.299-300.

⁹⁷ Margaret Laing, 'Anchor Texts and Literary Manuscripts in Early Middle English', in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. by Felicity Riddy (1991), pp.27-52 (p.51).

⁹⁸ *LALME*, I, p.106; *LAEME*, 188; Margaret Laing, *Catalogue of Sources for a Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* (1993), p.77. Laing misdates the manuscript to c.1300.

⁹⁹ Smallwood, p.574.

¹⁰⁰ G. F. Warner and J. P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*, 4 vols (1921), II, pp.350-51.

¹⁰¹ Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, pp.299-300.

manuscript context for the ballad suggests its composition and reception in northern England, amongst a community or communities with a considerable interest and investment in the course of contemporary Anglo-Scottish conflict and Galfridian historical and prophetic material. The arrangement of the manuscript suggests how closely Langtoft's chronicle was associated with the Galfridian historical tradition. The integration of the *Prophetiae* between Langtoft's reworking of the *Historia* and his treatment of more contemporary events suggests the utility of the *Prophetiae* not simply in relation to the *Historia*, but recent history also, specifically, the recent history of Anglo-Scottish affairs.¹⁰² It is with this northern application of Galfridian material that *Als Y Yod* must be aligned.

The manuscript is a relatively high-end production. It contains three full-page illustrations notable for their proximity to the manuscript's political prophecies. An illustration of a number of kings setting out to sail precedes the first item in the manuscript, *Ecce dies veniunt*, and the two items are almost certainly related. Two additional illustrations on fol. 53r and fol. 53v follow the account of Cadualdrus's exile and death at the close of Langtoft's version of the *Historia*, and precede the *Prophetiae Merlini*. The Galfridian illustrations are particularly noteworthy for what they suggest about contemporary understandings of the relationship between kings and prophets; and potentially the scribe's own self-fashioning. Ward identified both images as depictions of Merlin's address to Vortigern which frames the *Prophetiae*. However, it is more likely that they stage a general consultation with prophecy, marking the transition between the conclusion of the *Historia*, where the last king Cadualdrus consults a number of prophecies of British exile and return, and the opening of the *Prophetiae*. It suggests two clerical settings for the contemporary transmission and use of prophecy. The first shows a holy man in black robes addressing an un-bearded youth; and the second shows a tonsured man addressing a king, perhaps reminiscent of Thomas Becket and Henry II, who was increasingly aligned with prophetic address during this period.¹⁰³ The second bears an inscription, only partially extant, concerned with honest addresses to kings : '... regals... honeste', perhaps a motto for the speakers of prophecy. This is very much the prophetic activity at the heart of *Als Y Yod*: an address to the king from the perspective of the Anglo-Scottish border (possibly, although not necessarily,

¹⁰² The removal of the *Prophetiae* from the *Historia* and its insertion as a coda has been noted by Jean Blacker in Anglo-Norman manuscripts from the thirteenth-century onwards. See Jean Blacker, ed. and transl., 'Anglo-Norman Verse Prophecies of Merlin', *Arthuriana*, 15 (2005), 1-125.

¹⁰³ Walter Ullmann, 'Thomas Becket's Miraculous Oil', *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS 8 (1957), 129-33; J. W. McKenna, 'The Coronation Oil of the Yorkist Kings', *The English Historical Review*, 82 (1967), 102-04; T. A. Sandquist, 'The Holy Oil of St Thomas of Canterbury', in *Essays in Medieval History, Presented to Bertie Wilkinson*, ed. by T. A. Sandquist and M. R. Powicke (1969), pp.330-44.

conceived within an ecclesiastical milieu), endorsing an active royal policy towards the defence of the Anglo-Scottish border.

Historical Allusions in the Ballad

The ballad reads as a composition of the 1330s: a largely retrospective prophecy written in the period following the (temporary) restoration of Edward Balliol as an English puppet-king on the Scottish throne and the battle of Halidon Hill in 1333, with allusions extending back to the 1328 Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton.¹⁰⁴ It engages with an Arthurian prophetic grammar lifted from the *Six Kings* to construct a model of English overlordship in Scotland. This is undertaken from a highly localist perspective, and is valuable as a partisan overview of Anglo-Scottish affairs, 1328-33.

The substance of the prophecy rests on a confrontation between two figures lifted from the *Six Kings* and drawn into a new historical framework. The events with which the ballad is concerned are centred around an encounter between a heroic boar and a cowardly mole (given as the French *toupe*):¹⁰⁵

Ay toupe, he sayde, es redy thare,
 agayn him yitte es nane that don
 On yondealfe Humbre is ay bare
 be he sped salsides son
 Bi he have sped als sal thai sped
 and redi gates on to fare
 And man be mensked for his mede,
 And stablestat for evermare.

(89-96)

This is an early translation of names and concepts from the *Six Kings* into (Frenchified) Middle English. Asking for the identification of the participants at this great battle, the narrator asks ‘Wat hate the tope and wat the bare?’ The little man replies cryptically:

¹⁰⁴ For an account of Anglo-Scottish relations in this period see Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*, pp.42-162; Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp.3-15; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp.368-69; Michael Prestwich, ‘England and Scotland During the Scottish Wars of Independence’, in *England and her Neighbours*, pp.181-97.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Wright translates the ‘bare’ as ‘bear’. This is erroneous. Wright, *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, p.459.

...Outen nay, hate the tane,
 trou thou my lare.
 Ar thou may that other say,
 that sal be falden wyt that fare

(113-16)

The identities of the boar and mole are firmly entrenched as victor and vanquished, understood by the terms in which they appear in the *Six Kings*. However, in this context the mole is clearly not intended to be the last king of England but the last king of Scotland. Although the mole is not a figure elsewhere applied to the Bruces, this coheres with the casting of the Scots as hares in the *Brut* and contemporary English jingoistic verse (both are understood as animals which flee).¹⁰⁶ We read in the *Six Kings* that the mole will be ‘a cowarde as an here’; and of the people of the Northwest, the Scots, led by ‘an wickede hare’, which the *Brut* commentary interprets as John Balliol.¹⁰⁷ This Scottish antipathy is transferred in the ballad from a Balliol king to a Bruce.

The 1330s saw a renewed interest in prophetic materials associated with John Balliol in the north of England. *Ecce dies veniunt* is the first extant item in Cotton Julius A. v, and was probably the subject of the first illustration also. The application of this marginalising material to the Bruce faction must be associated with the role played by John’s son, Edward Balliol, in relation to English ambitions in Scotland during the 1330s. In the ballad, Edward Balliol is alluded to as a Scottish sub-king, a lion who claims Scotland for the English boar. This meaning is made explicit in the conclusion of the prophecy: ‘The lion thare sal fare to fexit, / the lande til the bare sal go’ (215-16). This is a clear figure of English overlordship of Scotland, the product of a period during which the English crown refused to recognise the Bruces as kings of Scotland, and understood Scottish kingship to constitute sub-kingship, for which Balliol was its candidate.¹⁰⁸ In this framework, highly compatible with English Galfridian constructions of insular overlordship, there could be no Scottish kings, only sub-kings.

The allusion to the lion’s activities roots the prophecy in the period following Edward Balliol’s success at the battle of Dornock in March 1333, and the English victory at Halidon Hill the following July, the first battle of the ballad. The little man speaks of the boar’s first personal

¹⁰⁶ For a number of pejorative applications of cowardice, and the hare, to the Scots in jingoistic English poetry see Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, p.158.

¹⁰⁷ *Brut*, I, p.75.

¹⁰⁸ Prestwich, ‘England and Scotland during the Wars of Independence’, p.187; Cynthia Neville, *Violence, Custom, and Law: The Anglo-Scottish Border Lands in the Later Middle Ages* (1998), p.16.

intervention on the Anglo-Scottish border, resulting in the death of twenty thousand Scotsman, as a matter of recent historical memory: ‘For twenti souzand mot thou day / that deyed tother day on this hald Twede’ (189-90). Although surely an inflated assessment of Scottish casualties, English chroniclers similarly estimated the Scottish losses at incredible figures, from the 35, 712 of the Bermondsey Annalist to the 60, 000 of Geoffrey Baker’s chronicle.¹⁰⁹ The reference to this event as ‘tother day’ suggests the ballad was composed relatively close in time to the battle. As in other accounts of the battle from the north of England, the ballad author by no means considers Halidon Hill as bringing any manner of definitive conclusion to the wars with Scotland.¹¹⁰ However, it was considered a by-word for Scottish devastation. The little man prophesies another similar battle (and this portion of the prophecy is genuinely futurist), apocalyptic in the devastation it wreaks upon the Scots. The eschatological resonances of this battle are discussed further below,¹¹¹ but suffice it to say here: for the ballad author, Halidon Hill was just a taster of the sufferings yet to be inflicted upon the Bruce faction.

These battles provide the backdrop for a confrontation of a decidedly more personal nature: the encounter between the boar and the mole in 89-92. This personal confrontation corresponds to a distinctively northern judicial practice, reflected in a number of political literary texts from the Anglo-Scottish border-during the late Middle Ages.¹¹² From the mid-thirteenth century onwards, disputes between English and Scots on the Anglo-Scottish border were intermittently settled by judicial combat. Although border tribunals were infrequent during the later years of the Scottish Wars of Independence, they were a still a feature of border life during the early 1330s.¹¹³ The Anglo-Scottish conflict of this period was not limited to the battlefield: the period also saw a series of raids upon local landowners on both sides of the border. This was the kind of occurrence customarily dealt with by the tribunals, although on a far larger scale. In the encounter between the mole and the boar, this judicial mechanism is scaled up: the king of England challenges the Scottish pretender for his transgressions (against his royal property) and meets him at the Humber. Edward III appears in the ballad as at once an Arthurian high king of the British Isles defending his right to Scotland, and an English champion acting in opposition to a Scottish one.

¹⁰⁹ Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*, p.137.

¹¹⁰ See below, Chapter 3, pp.120-21.

¹¹¹ See below, pp.109-11.

¹¹² See below, Chapter 3, p.157.

¹¹³ Neville, *Violence, Custom, and Law*, p.29.

This remains a scene rooted in local grievances and expectations. The notion of Edward as a long-awaited northern champion must be aligned with a strong sense during the late 1320s and early '30s that the issues of the northern border were to be settled locally rather than by a geographically and politically removed royal government. This must be understood as in part a demonstration of the virulent disapproval in the north of the 1328 treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton, signed by Isabella and Mortimer in the young king's name; and rejected by Edward following his assumption of active rule in 1331.¹¹⁴ The treaty restored the border to conditions of the reign of Alexander III, and the so-called 'shameful peace' it instigated was unpopular across England, but particularly amongst the northern English borderers.¹¹⁵

The ballad contains a clear allusion to the *de facto* government of Mortimer and Isabella and the treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton: a leopard lets a lion ravage the north of England, whilst constraining the noble boar, future champion of the north, as the mole and 'his folke' commit all manner of abuses:

So lange the lebard loves the layke
 wit his onsped your sped ye spille,
 And lates the lion have his raike,
 wit werke in wedl als he wille.
 The bare es bonden hard in baite,
 wit foles that wil folies fille,
 The toupe in toune your werkes wayte
 to bald his folke he bides stille.

(121-28)

The leopard must be understood as a reference to the government of Isabella and Mortimer and the absence of a consolidated defensive policy on the Anglo-Scottish border following 1328. The leopard is recognisable as a symbol for England as found on the national standard, invoked in a number of contemporary English political prophecies.¹¹⁶ The lion is similarly a conventional cipher for Scotland. Importantly, the lion is the site of multiple inscriptions in the poem. Whilst it is applied elsewhere to Edward Balliol as a Scottish sub-king, here it functions as cipher for another Scottish faction (the Bruce), in treaty with Isabella and Mortimer's English government,

¹¹⁴ Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*, pp.55-56; Ormrod, *Reign of Edward III*, pp.14-17; Neville, *Violence, Custom, and Law*, p.27.

¹¹⁵ *The Chronicles of Lanercost, 1272-1346*, transl. by Herbert Maxwell (1913), p.261; *Scalacronica*, p.83.

¹¹⁶ Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.112-13.

for the leopard lets the lion have his 'raike'. This means to do as he will, literally to have his 'movement'. The verb 'raiken' is also applied to fire, and this meaning is very likely to have been in mind: the razing of settlements, particularly those surrounding major fortifications, was a feature of border warfare during this period.¹¹⁷

Notably, in the reference to the Bruce monarchy as a lion, the ballad author associates him overtly with Scottish kingship, a movement made nowhere else in the text - he is elsewhere always the mole. This is a telling slip. However, for the most part, the ballad author is consistent in his application of ciphers. Just as the lion is for the most part distinct from the mole, the leopard and the boar similarly represent two very different forces. A division between the interests of English communities on the Anglo-Scottish border and the interests of the government of Mortimer and Isabella is well-noted.¹¹⁸ Perceived neglect of the north during the minority of Edward III is a prominent feature of writings from the border during this period.¹¹⁹ In the ballad, this sense of abandonment by royal government prompts the invocation of a very specific grammar of the defence of English liberties. Nearing its conclusion, the ballad forecasts Edward III's overlordship of Scotland:

A T. biside an L. ij founde,
chese thi selven sege and see,
An Ed the thred wyt hope and hande,
the baillife bee.

(221-24)

This sequence makes use of a feature derived from sibylline prophecy: the use of an initial to represent a particular individual or individuals, and has long remained obscure to commentators on the text.¹²⁰ The Scottish overlordship of Edward III is clearly what is meant by 'Ed the thred', bailiff of the land. 'T. biside an L.' is a coded reference to a guarantor of this process, which we must associate not only with Scottish conquest but with Edward III's break from Mortimer and Isabella: Thomas of Lancaster.

First cousin of Edward II, 'viceroy of England', and leader of the baronial opposition of the 1310s, Thomas was one of the chief movers in the capture and execution of Piers Gaveston,

¹¹⁷ Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*, p.182.

¹¹⁸ May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century, 1307-1399* (1959), pp.32-33.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Lanercost*, p.211. See also McKisack, pp.40-41.

¹²⁰ Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, p.66.

which took place on Lancaster's lands in 1312.¹²¹ Lancaster was executed at his estate in Pontefract in 1322 following a failed rebellion against the crown, and, held to have been engaged in an alliance with the Scottish king, was doubly branded a traitor. Although some chroniclers were quick to acknowledge that Thomas was a man with a mixed reputation, a cult quickly grew up around him following his death, not only in Pontefract where his body was entombed in the priory, but throughout England.¹²² A number of miracles were reported at Thomas's tomb: chroniclers record the restoration of sight to the blind, healing of the lame, even resurrection of the dead.¹²³ The early years of the reign of Edward III saw the young king's appeal to the Pope to canonise Thomas.¹²⁴ A papal commission was never authorised to investigate the reputed miracles and so the canonisation process was never begun, and yet Thomas continued to be regarded as a saint, with a cultic centre at Pontefract and pilgrim badges, Psalter illustrations, and even tankards, bearing his image.¹²⁵ The ballad belongs to a period in which the cult of Thomas of Lancaster was gaining firm ground.

As a number of historians have noted, the post mortem validation of Lancaster is a process in many respects analogous to that of Simon de Montfort, leader of the baronial opposition to Henry III, although his cult proved to be far less enduring than Thomas's.¹²⁶ The similarities between the two men, their opposition to royal abuses, and their deaths, were not lost on contemporary commentators.¹²⁷ Thomas's name was not simply a feature of the religious life of northern England, but its political life also. He is recollected in a number of northern chronicles as a figure acting against the corruptions of the reign of Edward II, and this reputation as an enemy of corruption was long-lived.¹²⁸ It is commonly noted that adoration of a political saint, such as Thomas, functioned as a way of codifying opposition to an unpopular regime, channelled through pious activity as a form of indirect, and therefore un-punishable,

¹²¹ J. R. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster, 1307-22* (1970); Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, p.91.

¹²² John Edwards, 'The Cult of 'St' Thomas of Lancaster and its Iconography', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 64 (1992), pp.103-22; Edwards, 'The Cult of 'St' Thomas of Lancaster and its Iconography: A Supplementary Note', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 67 (1995), 187-91; Danna Pirovansky, 'Bloody Miracles of a Political Martyr: The Case of Thomas Earl of Lancaster', *Studies in Church History*, 41 (2005), 228-38; John T. McQuillen, 'Who Was St Thomas of Lancaster? New Manuscript Evidence', in *Fourteenth Century England IV*, ed. by J. S. Hamilton (2006), pp.1-25. For a contemporary account of Thomas's double reputation see *Polychronicon*, VIII, pp.312-15.

¹²³ *Ibid.*; *Brut*, I, pp.228-31.

¹²⁴ Edwards, 'The Cult of 'St' Thomas of Lancaster', p.107; Pirovansky, 'Bloody Miracles', p.232.

¹²⁵ Edwards, 'The Cult of 'St' Thomas of Lancaster', pp.109-17; Hugh Tait, 'Pilgrim-signs and Thomas of Lancaster', *British Museum Quarterly*, 20 (1955-56), 39-47.

¹²⁶ McQuillen, 'Who Was St Thomas of Lancaster?', pp.15, 19. For Simon de Montfort's immortalisation in contemporary political song see *Thomas Wright's Political Songs of England*, ed. by Peter Coss (1996), pp.125-27.

¹²⁷ Edwards, 'The Cult of St Thomas of Lancaster', p.106; Simon Walker, 'Political Saints in Later Medieval England', in *Political Culture in Later Medieval England*, ed. by Mike J. Braddick (2006), pp.198-222 (p.202).

¹²⁸ *Lanercost*, pp.233-34. For another northern English account see V. H. Galbraith, ed., 'Extracts from the *Historia Aurea* and a French *Brut*', *English Historical Review*, 43 (1929), 203-17 (pp.215-16).

political challenge.¹²⁹ Certainly, the cult of Thomas presented a profound irritation to Edward II and the Despenser faction in the months following Thomas's death. The *Brut* records the efforts of the younger Despenser to shut off access to the shrine at Pontefract.¹³⁰ In June 1323 Edward II demanded that St Paul's Cathedral remove a shrine to Thomas – a challenge to Edward's authority in the heart of London.¹³¹ Thomas's name, and image, became a codification of opposition to the perceived tyranny of Edward II and his favourites. The naming of Thomas of Lancaster in the ballad suggests the perception of a crisis on the northern border deemed analogous to the worst abuses of the reign of Edward II, and the utilisation of a long-lived oppositional strategy.

Thomas also appears in the *English Prose Version of the Six Kings*. This details the rebellion of the bear (Lancaster) against the goat (Edward II), his flight, his capture at Boroughbridge (a 'broken brigge'), and his beheading, constructed in hagiographic terms:

and þe Bere taken & biheuedede, alþer nexte his neste, þat shall [stand]
vpon a broken brigge, vp wham þe sone shal cate his bemes, and meny
shal him seeche, for vertu þat fro hym shal come.¹³²

The seeking of Lancaster, that is, the pilgrimages undertaken to Pontefract in the hope of miraculous cures, the 'vertu þat fro hym shal come', is the framework in which we must place the 'ii founde' of *Als Y Yod*.¹³³ I am not suggesting that the author was interested in pilgrimage specifically, rather that he made use of a commonplace allusion, later found in the *Brut*, to the seeking and finding of Thomas. In *Als Y Yod* a miraculous intervention is sought not in personal but in political terms, and is very similar in this respect to Langtoft's invocations in his *Chronicle* to John of Beverley, Becket (who Thomas of Lancaster was found alongside in this period) and St Cuthbert to support Edward I in his Scottish venture.¹³⁴ This is the broader context in which we must place the uses of Thomas of Lancaster in the ballad: a patron saint of English freedoms

¹²⁹ J. W. McKenna, 'Popular Canonization as Political Propaganda: The Cult of Archbishop Scrope', *Speculum*, 45 (1970), 608-23; Edwards, 'The Cult of 'St' Thomas of Lancaster', p.109. Edwards takes his argument from McKenna's assessment of the cult of Scrope. The Lancastrian-Yorkist civil wars of the fifteenth century and its propagandist practices, however, by no means provide an exact and unqualified historical analogue to the treatment of Thomas of Lancaster material around and following the deposition of Edward II.

¹³⁰ *Brut*, I, p.230.

¹³¹ Edwards, 'The Cult of 'St' Thomas of Lancaster: A Supplementary Note', p.187.

¹³² *Brut*, I, p.74.

¹³³ The first person singular pronoun is always rendered 'ii' in the text.

¹³⁴ Wright, *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, II, pp.284-85; Summerfield, 'The Testimony of Writing', p.40. The use of Becket as such is almost certainly indebted to perceived relationship between the saint and Henry II's 1174 victory in Scotland. See Appendix 1 [2].

on the Anglo-Scottish border, and guarantor of the conquest of Scotland in the vein of Becket *et al.* This is a movement which we must understand as territorially defensive, as much as it was aggressive. May McKisack has pithily summarised Lancaster's post mortem political function as 'the upholder of ancient liberties against new-fangled tyranny'.¹³⁵ We might think of no place in England during the fourteenth century where English liberty was felt more under threat than on the Anglo-Scottish border.

Cultural Encounters on the Anglo-Scottish Border

The cultural situation on the Anglo-Scottish border during this period was very different to the circumstances of the Welsh March discussed in Chapter One. The aristocracy of this region did not have the same vested interests in warfare as did many in the Welsh March. Prior to 1286 and the beginning of the Scottish Wars of Independence there were no names to be made here through regional conflict, nor territory won.¹³⁶ The militarist culture which saw the creation of the offices of the wardens of the March through which families like the Percies and the Nevilles rose to prominence by the end of the fourteenth century, was a relatively new invention.¹³⁷ Yet from the late thirteenth century onwards, Cumberland and Northumberland were on a permanent war-footing.

There has been a movement in recent scholarship concerning the Anglo-Scottish border, to treat the region as a frontier society governed by local feuds and affiliations rather than national politics.¹³⁸ From this, historians and literary historians have put forward the concept of a shared system of heroic values common to both sides of the border: a vision of a military society which displayed mutual respect. This has been raised in connection with a number of Anglo-Scottish border ballads, particularly in comment upon the universal heroic schema of the *Battle of*

¹³⁵ McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, p.70.

¹³⁶ Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, p.42; J. A. Tuck, 'Northumbrian Society in the Fourteenth Century', *Northern History*, 6 (1971), 22-39.

¹³⁷ R. R. Reid, 'The Office of the Warden of the March: Its Origin and Early History', *English Historical Review*, 32 (1917), 479-96; R. L. Storey, 'The Warden of the Marches of England towards Scotland, 1377-1489', *English Historical Review*, 72 (1957), 593-615; Neville, *Violence, Custom, and Law*, pp.19-24.

¹³⁸ Anthony Goodman, 'The Anglo-Scottish Marches in the Fifteenth Century: A Frontier Society?' in *Scotland and England, 1286-1815*, ed. by Roger Mason (1987), pp.18-33. Goodman's argument is not limited to the fifteenth century, but is rooted in the beginning of the Scottish Wars of Independence. See also James Reed, 'A Ballad and the Source: Some Literary Reflections on *The Battle of Otterburn*', in *War and Border Societies in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Anthony Goodman and Anthony Tuck (1992), pp.94-123.

Otterburn.¹³⁹ However, as recent scholarly interrogations of the term ‘frontier’ (and its multiple historiographical meanings) suggest, a frontier zone, where two political-national cultures meet, is not necessarily defined by shared frameworks of meaning alone, but virulent antipathies also.¹⁴⁰ We might better consider the Anglo-Scottish border of the early fourteenth century as a space where articulations of national identity were at their most aggressive, whilst simultaneously open to cross-border influences. In the Bhabian terms of my analysis, the literature of the border is a locus of politicised cross-border re-inscription.

There are few locales where the perception of cultural difference was more deeply felt than on the Anglo-Scottish border in the later Middle Ages, and it is precisely the exclusivity of the myth of Galfridian Britishness which made it so powerful in this region. English border communities were saturated in anti-Scottish propaganda, in circulation since the reign of Edward I, further transmitted through works like Langtoft’s chronicle, which incorporates a number of these productions and saw continuing circulation throughout the fourteenth century.¹⁴¹ Similarly, on the other side of the border, the traditional practice of *flyting*, the composition of poetic calumnies, found new English targets.¹⁴² These calumnies entered English circulation: Langtoft records a number of anti-English Scottish verses in his chronicles.¹⁴³ The borders were an environment where rumours circulated, codified in literary propaganda: Scottish songs proclaimed that Englishmen had tails, whilst in response English writers recounted tales of baby-murdering Scots.¹⁴⁴ As Cynthia Neville notes, on the northern border during the later Middle Ages there may not yet have been nation states, but there were national enemies.¹⁴⁵ The extent of the animosity between English and Scottish border communities by the 1330s must not be under-estimated.

However new this animosity was in broad historical terms, by the 1330s the region had seen an entire generation of conflict. Although it is often noted that the division between Scottish and English families was exceptionally porous prior to 1286 (when families like the

¹³⁹ Reed, ‘A Ballad and the Source’, pp.106-13.

¹⁴⁰ Nora Berend, ‘Medievalists and the Notion of the Frontier’, *Medieval History Journal*, 2 (1999), 55-72; Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay, eds, *Medieval Frontier Societies* (1989); Daniel Power and Naomi Standen, eds, *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700* (1999); David Abulafia and Nora Berend, eds, *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices* (2002).

¹⁴¹ Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, pp.106-07; Thea Summerfield, ‘The Political Songs in the *Chronicles* of Pierre de Langtoft and Robert Mannyng’, in *The Court and Cultural Diversity*, ed. by Evelyn Mullally and John Thompson (1997), pp.139-48.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Wilson, *Lost Literature of Medieval England*, pp.207-08, 212-13.

¹⁴⁴ Prestwich, *Three Edwards*, p.77.

¹⁴⁵ Cynthia J. Neville, ‘Local Sentiment and the “National” Enemy in Northern England in the Later Middle Ages’, *Journal of British Studies*, 35 (1996), 419-37 (pp.421, 435-37).

d'Umfravilles and the Balliols held lands on both sides of the Scottish border and were subject to both the Scottish and English kings),¹⁴⁶ by the 1330s the battle lines had been drawn. This situation yielded both a perception of political difference, and an essentially functional cultural commonality. This commonality is apparent in basic linguistic terms. Over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the use of Scottish Gaelic was diminishing and by c.1350 was a minority language in lowland Scotland.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, extant Scottish prophecy from the wars survives in Latin and English. This linguistic commonality was an important factor governing the circulation of Scottish political prophecies and songs in England and vice versa. Galfridian-inflected Scottish prophecy also appears completely outside a nationalist context in saint's lives of this period: for example, Scottish Merlinian prophecy integrated into the *Life of St Kentigern* saw circulation in northern English houses during the later Middle Ages.¹⁴⁸ Lines for the transmission of Scottish material into northern England were multiple, particularly amongst ecclesiastical milieux. Furthermore, when Scottish texts were based on Galfridian material, as was *Regnum scotorum*, they entered English circulation with a ready-made frame of reference: the *Historia* was read on both sides of the border. To borrow a phrase from Anthony Goodman, if there was a regional sense of brotherhood during the Scottish Wars of Independence, it was 'a brotherhood of hostility', which experienced 'some degree of material acculturation'.¹⁴⁹

English Scots and Scottish English

Through a cultivation of a strong sense of Anglo-Scottish difference, the ballad author constructs a very clear statement of antipathy towards the historical government of Mortimer and Isabella, and the Anglo-Scottish policy represented by this administration. Both the Bruce faction and the minority government are recurrently referred to as fools in the ballad. Just as the boar, imprisoned by Isabella and Mortimer, is surrounded by 'foles that wil folies fille' (126), it is a similar group of fools, this time Scottish, who the boar acts against following his arrival in the north:

Thare sal the foles dreege is paine,
and folie, for his false fare,
Lie opon the feld slayne,

¹⁴⁶ Prestwich, *Three Edwards*, p.43.

¹⁴⁷ G. W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots* (2003, 2nd edn; 1973), pp.332-33; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp.9-10.

¹⁴⁸ Winifred Macqueen and John Macqueen, 'Vita Merlini Silvestris', *Scottish Studies*, 29 (1989), 78-93 (p.92).

¹⁴⁹ Goodman, 'The Anglo-Scottish Marches in the Fifteenth Century', p.19.

and lose his live for evermare.

(157-60)

This comes very close to the tone of anti-Scottish verses in circulation during this period, a number of which are preserved in Langtoft's chronicle.¹⁵⁰ During the earlier part of the century the nickname for John Balliol, Tom Tabard ('empty surcoat' - a reference to the stripping of the Balliol arms) appears in anti-Scottish verse as an English synonym for fool. Langtoft describes Balliol, whose 'tabard is tom':

Pur veir quant Jon de Balliol
 Lessa sun liver á l'escol
 Desceu fu tremalement

(For truth when John de Balliol
 Left his book at the school,
 He was very ill deceived)¹⁵¹

In the ballad English and Scottish fools are drawn into the same faction, destroyed by the boar. But these antagonists are always in some sense Scottish, allied with a long chauvinist tradition of anti-Scottish literature, which Thea Summerfield has aptly termed a 'discourse of abuse'.¹⁵²

This same manipulation of a perception of Scottish difference is apparent also in the author's use of the lion cipher for Edward Balliol. This is rooted in an acquaintance not with anti-Scottish verse but Scottish political prophecy. The Scottish lion is not a customary symbol in English political prophecy from the wars. It is not as manifestly pejorative as the mole, or the hares I have noted elsewhere in the anti-Scottish literature of this period. It is also far less intentionally offensive than the casting of the Scottish king and his forces as they appear in prophecies of the mid-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: the untrustworthy, backward-moving crab, amongst other aquatic animals.¹⁵³ In heraldic terms the Scottish lion is essentially

¹⁵⁰ Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, pp.77; Lionel Stones, 'English Chroniclers and the Affairs of Scotland, 1286-1296', in *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages*, ed. by R. H. C. Davies and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (1981), pp.323-47 (p.337); Summerfield, 'The Testimony of Writing', p.40; James Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland: Historical Narrative in Medieval Scotland* (1993), p.46.

¹⁵¹ Wright, *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, II, p.258.

¹⁵² Summerfield, 'Political Songs', p.139; Summerfield, *Matter of Kings' Lives*, p.34.

¹⁵³ Wright, *Political Poems and Songs*, p.141; Michael Curley, *The Prophecy of John of Bridlington: An Edition* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 1973), pp.260-65 ('Prophecy of the Fishes').

interchangeable with the leopard, and just as the leopard appeared as a cipher for England in English prophecies of this period, the Scottish lion functioned similarly in Scottish works.¹⁵⁴ The clearest example of this is found in the *When Rome is Removyd* A-text. The earliest pro-Scottish versions conclude:

Busk ye wyell, Berwyk, be blyth of this wordis,
That Sant Bede fand in his buk of the byg bergh.
The trew towne upon Twede wytht towrys fayre!
Thow sall releve to thi keng, that is the kende eyr.
Ande othir burghys abowte, wytht thar brade wall,
Sall wytht the Lyoune be leffe ande longe for-ever.

(66-71)

Material of this nature was certainly in circulation during the 1330s: the use of the lion cipher in the ballad's allusion to Balliol's sub-kingship rests on this same framework of meaning, re-inscribed in line with an English political agenda. In Edward Balliol, the lion, the ballad author creates an acceptable Scottish hero, ultimately bound by English service. Scottish prophecy here becomes an endorsing coda to English victory.

The ballad has both Scottish heroes and English villains, but all are understood in terms of their affiliation to the Scottish or English cause. This is an important feature in a prophecy that never uses the terms Scottish or English directly. Identifications of its figures rest on a network of pre-existing meanings which can be drawn on not only to endorse national conceptions, but to complicate them, denying the Englishness and Scottishness of particular subjects. This ambiguity is part of the author's practice: he is interested in the space of overlap, where English governments like that of Edward III's minority might betray its northern subjects and so become honorary Scots. A rigid sense of cultural-national boundaries is coupled with an anxiety that such boundaries are never entirely stable. This reads very much as a product of a period when the difference between the English and Scots was the subject of xenophobic perception, but the possibility of the defection of Englishmen to the Bruce cause remained a genuine reality and anxiety.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Michael Powell Siddons, *Heraldic Badges in England and Wales*, 3 vols (2009), II, p.157; Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (1929), pp.172-90; Charles Boutell, *English Heraldry* (1904), pp.67, 83.

¹⁵⁵ C. J. Neville, 'The Law of Treason in the English Border Counties in the Later Middle Ages', *Law and History Review*, 9 (1991), 1-30.

Bhabha's theories regarding cultural difference are useful in the movement towards an understanding of the process of cultural borrowings and engagement with malleable identities at work in the ballad. Bhabha writes: 'Designations of cultural difference interpellate forms of identity which, because of their continual implication in other symbolic systems, are always 'incomplete' or open to cultural translation'.¹⁵⁶ In the context of the ballad, a Scot might easily be rendered servile to an English king, and an English queen turned Scottish. Yet this contingency is based on a fundamental perception of difference: it is open to translation precisely because these constructs have been rigidly policed. In such a fraught environment, cultural translation always makes a political statement.

Political Eschatology and the Pan-Celtic Union

The final borrowing from Scottish material in the ballad with which I am concerned in this chapter is its use of apocalyptic allusions in the formation of a national honour group. This rests on a direct re-inscription of a Scottish prophecy model.

The basic structure of the ballad corresponds fundamentally to that of *Regnum scotorum*. Although in its account of the boar's prowess the ballad conforms to the restoration-structure found in the *Six Kings*, the eschatological resonances which inform its structure as a whole are of a very different character to those found in the *Six Kings*. The author of the ballad is not concerned as in the *Six Kings* with the journey of an imperial monarch across Europe to the Holy Land, but a secularised Last Judgement which takes place not in Jerusalem but on the Anglo-Scottish border.

The second battle of the prophecy, following Halidon Hill, is orientated within an overtly eschatological context. The narrator is told by the little man of a great battle of which he must 'warn em' (presumably the people of the northern English counties) to occur 'a time bifor the Trinité', that is, the Last Judgement:

Rymitte reith als thou may
 for ay skill ii tellit the
 And warn em wel wytouten nay

¹⁵⁶ Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, p.233.

A time bifer the Trinité
 Thare sal deye on ay day
 A folke on felde, ful fa sal flee.
 Wa so flees sal duelle in care,
 for thare may naman time tyde
 A toupe sal stande agayn ay bare
 he es ful bald, him dar habide.

(99-108)

A futurist counterpart to Halidon Hill, this final battle may well be the source of the bloody English restoration at Gladismore, the mythic battle found in the late fourteenth-century *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune* and the sixteenth-century *Prophecies of Rymour, Marlyng, and Beid*, which will ‘glade us more’.¹⁵⁷ This is the battle which sees the permanent retreat of the Scottish host from the border: ‘folke on feld’ will ‘flee’.

The allusion to the Day of Judgement situates this battle as the definitive moment not only in the history of the region but in a salvation history understood not in pan-European but overtly regional terms. This conceptual framework is first found in relation to border affairs in *Regnum scotorum*. Here the restoration of the island to its rightful owners (understood here as the Welsh and the Scots) is similarly placed in relation to an insular golden age, extending to the Day of Judgement:

Ut refert aquila veteri de turre locuta,
 Cum Scotis Britones regna paterna regent.
 Regnabunt pariter in prosperitate quieta
 hostibus expulsis iudicis usque diem

(As the eagle speaking from the old tower proclaims,
 the Britons along with the Scots will rule their ancestral kingdoms.
 They will rule equally in peaceful prosperity

¹⁵⁷ This was plausibly based on an original reference to ‘Gladeleye’, a place near to Duplin Moor, in a reference to the Battle of Duplin Moor in the *Prophecy of John of Bridlington*. Nixon, II, p.35.

till Judgement Day, once the enemy is driven away.)

(26-29)¹⁵⁸

The notion of an ancestral territory ruled over by its native people until Judgement Day is a common theme of Welsh prophecy, and a conventional conclusion.¹⁵⁹ However, it is distinctly unlikely that *Regnum scotorum* is directly indebted to Welsh models. Although its correspondence to Welsh prophecy is often noted, and it is sometimes hypothesised that *Regnum scotorum* saw renewed circulation in Scotland during the rebellion of Owain Glyn Dŵr, in origin the prophecy is very unlikely to have been subject to any substantial Welsh influence.¹⁶⁰ The theme may well have arisen in Scotland entirely independently. The most likely direction of influence at work here is not between Welsh and Scottish texts, but Scottish and English: *Als Y Yod* takes its basic structure from *Regnum scotorum*.

The event which precedes the final resolution of the wars as it appears in *Als Y Yod* is very close to that of *Regnum scotorum*: a pan-Celtic union. This is subject to an important re-inscription. Just as *Regnum scotorum* stages a military union between geographically diffuse forces (the pan-Celtic confederation of *Prophetiae*, 110-14), the ballad author is similarly concerned with a military coalition. The ballad details the journey of an instrumental southern force, led by a ‘blessed brether’, almost certainly a synonym for the boar, who joins with the lion who then succeeds to Scottish rule as a sub-king under the boar. This is worked out over a long sequence which I quote here in full:

On southalf Tyne sal he [the boar] wone,
 wyt thou wel it sal be saw.
 Fra suth sal blessed brether comen,
 And dele the lande even in twa,
 When domes es doand on his dede,
 sal na mercy be biside,
 Na naman have mercy for na mede,
 na in hope thair hevedes hide.
 Bor soffid sal be mani of stede,

¹⁵⁸ *Scotichronicon*, II, pp.58-59.

¹⁵⁹ See above, Chapter 1, p.17.

¹⁶⁰ Wood, ‘Where does Britain End?’, pp.19-20. Wood does not recognise this prophecy as *Regnum scotorum*. For Bower’s acquaintance with Welsh affairs see G. W. S. Barrow, ‘Wales and Scotland in the Middle Ages’, *Welsh History Review*, 10 (1981), 302-19 (pp.316-18). Barrow also notes the prophecy.

for res that thai sal after ride,
 And seen sal leaute falsed lede
 in rapes sone after that tyde.
 Fra twa to three the land es liest,
 not nameli sal it fra the twa;
 The lion thare sal fare to fexit,
 the lande til the bare sal go.

(201-16)

The 'Bruti posteritas' of *Regnum scotorum* are substituted with the new heirs of Brutus: the English. The army from the south is not the Welsh coming to the aid of the Scots, but the movement of the English (presumably from Newcastle, a centre for negotiations between the king and Balliol, and military supply base *en route* to the border),¹⁶¹ to join the forces of Balliol.

Similarly, this alliance concludes with the apportioning of territory, here not understood as an equal division amongst allies as in *Regnum scotorum*, but, as is conventional in the English uses of Geoffrey's sequence observed in the first part of this chapter, as a model of English overlordship resting on the three insular crowns.¹⁶² The construction of this in terms of a two-fold, and later a three-fold, division suggests a highly localised understanding of this trope. The division in two is a reference to the decisive drawing of the Anglo-Scottish border, the final settlement of the great territorial dispute at the heart of the ballad. The subsequent division of the land into three, sees a broadening of vision which takes in the whole of the British Isles: a reference to the Brutus myth, and a fully anglicised interpretation of *Prophetiae*, 110-14. This is a conscious substitution of the pan-Celtic threat with the tripartite Britain of the reign of Edward I.

The conclusion of *Als Y Yod* represents a significant re-inscription of the pan-Celtic alliance in England, reflecting not simply English overlordship but a historical cross-border alliance (albeit in service of the former). The Scottish lion is here drawn on as an authorising strategy: a mechanism through which English activity in Scotland is endorsed through a reformulation of *Prophetiae*, 110-14, pertaining not to aggrandisement but ancestral right. The symbol is useful to the English author of the ballad not in spite of, but because of, its Scottish resonance. Again, we see here the dependence of the Bhabhian supplement on a field of anterior,

¹⁶¹ Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*, cf. pp.33, 159-60.

¹⁶² See above, pp.84.

and culturally displaced, meanings. On the Anglo-Scottish border, perceptions of cultural-political difference could prove as authorising as calumnious. *Als Y Yod* set a precedent which endured throughout the later Middle Ages. The Anglicisation of the pan-Celtic alliance was a feature of northern English political prophecy into the fifteenth century.¹⁶³

The fundamental importance of the structural relationship between *Als Y Yod* and *Regnum scotorum* in both the study of Anglo-Scottish literary influence, and the broader history of English prophecy, must not be under-stated. The protracted nature of the apocalyptic vision, appended by the pan-Celtic alliance and British restoration has stronger claims as an endemically Scottish rather than English structure, for *Regnum scotorum* is substantially the earlier witness. Yet this borrowing birthed an entire English prophecy tradition: it lies at the foundation of the English Erceldoune tradition as it emerged on the Anglo-Scottish border through the later years of the fourteenth century. This forms the discussion of Chapter Three.

Conclusion

During the early decades of the fourteenth century, Galfridian terms of national address, centred on the notion of an Arthurian high kingship of the British Isles, came to function on the northern English border as a fundamental component of a political prophetic discourse expressing antipathy towards Scotland, and operating as a strategy of corporate address. However, even as the border was a place of profound perceptions of national difference, and threat, it was also a site of cultural exchange, and elements of northern English political prophecy from this period rest on the re-inscription of Scottish material. Even (and especially) the most jingoistic productions from the northern English border contain trace elements of Scottish prophecy, chief amongst them a vein of localised apocalypticism which came to be long-lived in northern English prophetic productions.

¹⁶³ This later reception history is discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3

The Arthurian King of England on the Anglo-Scottish Border:

The English Erceldoune Tradition, c.1335-88

The influence of *Als Y Yod*, and its Anglo-centric re-inscription of the eschatological exile and return paradigm of *Regnum scotorum*, is strongly apparent in the northern English prophecies ascribed to the Scottish border prophet, Thomas of Erceldoune, also known as Thomas the Rhymer.¹ Thomas's prophecies provide rich examples of the localised application of Galfridian prophecy, as it continued to articulate a strategy of national address amongst northern English border communities during the later Middle Ages. They are also important sources in the history of cross-border influences and re-inscriptions. In these texts Thomas appears as an ostensibly Scottish prophet with his own mythic status in Scotland, attributed prophecies after a distinctively northern English Galfridian tradition.

This chapter is concerned with the earliest English vernacular prophecies ascribed to Thomas, spanning the period c.1335-88. The most significant amongst these is the latest from this period, the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, a deeply influential text not simply in the history of English prophecy but of English literature more widely.² However, the author of the *Romance and Prophecies* is considerably indebted, in terms of both the use of Thomas's name, and the structural predicates of the text, to Erceldoune prophecies circulating in northern England earlier in the century. This chapter is intended as a chronological survey of the earliest English prophecies ascribed to Thomas, a tradition which culminated in the *Romance*; and a study of the prophecy-structures and conventions common to works in the fourteenth-century Erceldoune tradition.

Prophecies attributed to Thomas have commonly been connected to crisis years.³ Whilst this is a broadly accurate assessment of the Erceldoune prophecies, the earliest phase in the development of the tradition is far more firmly rooted in political affairs and identifications

¹ Cyril Edwards, 'Thomas of Erceldoune [called Thomas the Rhymer]', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8833>> [accessed 17 December 2011]; Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune'.

² This status is recognised by Robbins, 'Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', pp.1526-27.

³ Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.100; Coote and Thornton, 'Merlin, Erceldoune, Nixon', p.129.

towards the Anglo-Scottish border than has hitherto been noted. The early Erceldoune prophecies are neither, as some scholars have argued, distinctively Celtic, nor intended as politically subversive.⁴ Rather, the earliest prophecies evidence a profound anxiety about the breakdown of royal authority in the English border counties, and are deeply invested in the power of the English king as a crucial component of (heavily Galfridianised) English identities understood in line with a mythic sense of Britishness. The texts discussed in this chapter exhibit a strong notion of a northern English ‘British’ identity, framing a claim to English overlordship in Scotland. This is precisely the same process as that found in *Als Y Yod*, and the early Erceldoune tradition owes a considerable debt to both the structural conventions and distinctively northern English political-territorial interests at work in the ballad. The development of the Erceldoune tradition through the fourteenth century suggests just how important the notion of the English Arthurian hero-king continued to be amongst English communities on the Anglo-Scottish border, even into the 1380s when the English king (Richard II) came under attack from factions within England.

3.1 *Thomas de Essedoune’s Reply*

The very earliest extant Erceldoune prophecy, *Thomas de Essedoune’s Reply* is found in BL, Harley MS 2253, a miscellany with a period of compilation now estimated between c.1326 and c.1340, compiled in Herefordshire.⁵

*La countesse de Donbar demanda a Thomas de Essedoune quant la guere descoce
prendreit fyn e yl la respoundy e dyt:*

When man as mad a kyng of a capped man;
When mon is levere othermones thyng then is owen;
When Londyon ys forest, ant forest ys felde:

⁴ Coote and Thornton, pp.126-27, 131-33. Coote and Thornton’s comparison of Erceldoune prophecies to outlaw narratives is not a helpful position.

⁵ Susanna Fein, ed., *Studies in the Harley Manuscript* (2000). For earlier conjectures concerning the dating of the manuscript see N. R. Ker, ed., *Facsimile of BM MS Harley 2253* (1965), pp.ix-xxiii; Robbins, *Historical Poems*, pp.xxxiii-xxxiv; *LALME*, I, p.111; Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, pp.328-29.

been suggested that its semi-alliterative lines, depicting various evils of the age, exerted an influence on William Langland, in the composition of *Piers Plowman*.¹⁰

Carter Revard has demonstrated that the Harley scribe was working in and around Ludlow during the years 1314-49,¹¹ and also produced BL, Royal MS 12. C. xii during this period. In the Royal manuscript the scribe shows a considerable interest in political prophecy associated with the imperial image of the English king. Two sibylline verses pertaining to a great British king who will conquer Europe appear on fol. 15r, the first a prophecy ascribed to Methodius concerning the conquest of France, and the second a self-consciously Merlinian prophecy of a red dragon who will defeat a white dragon, conquer Europe and form a powerful alliance with the German Emperor. This is a variation on the theme of *Lilium regnans*, a long-lived and influential prophecy of an Anglo-German alliance, which follows on fol. 16r,¹² which is in turn followed by another imperial prophecy, concerning the holy oil of St Thomas (fol. 16v).¹³ This is the same local culture of political prophecy into which the *Reply* was integrated. Although it is often regarded as a space filler, and has not been treated in assessments of the political contents of the Harley manuscript,¹⁴ the *Reply* must nonetheless be understood, like the sibylline materials of the Royal manuscript, as a political text, interested in kingship and, I shall argue, military conquest.

Ludlow and the surrounding area is an important locale in the history of the textual production of political prophecy. The next century and a half saw a coalescing of private interests in this region against the crown, particularly in association with the Mortimer family of Wigmore, a dynasty whose relationship to political prophecy during the later fourteenth and fifteenth century is discussed in Chapter Five. Although there is nothing to specifically link Harley 2253 to the Mortimers themselves, previous scholarly conjecture has associated the scribe with persons or families associated with Roger Mortimer, the first earl of March and lover of Queen Isabella, who was instrumental in the deposition of Edward II.¹⁵ The Talbot family of

¹⁰ Elizabeth Salter, 'Piers Plowman and 'The Simonie'', *Archiv*, 203 (1966), 241-54 (pp.253-54).

¹¹ Carter Revard, 'Richard Hurd and MS Harley 2253', *Notes and Queries*, NS 26 (1979), 199-202; Carter Revard, 'Three More Holographs in the Hand of the Scribe of MS Harley 2253 in Shrewsbury', *Notes and Queries*, NS 28 (1981), 199-200; Carter Revard, 'The Scribe of MS Harley 2253', *Notes and Queries*, NS 29 (1982), 62-63.

¹² Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.96-97.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.94-96.

¹⁴ For a brief overview of the prophecy see John Scattergood, 'Authority and Resistance: The Political Verses', in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript*, pp.163-202 (pp.177-78). Carter Revard does not mention it in his brief overview of the political contents, 'Scribe and Provenance', in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript*, pp. 21-110 (pp.74-75).

¹⁵ Charles Hopkinson, 'The Mortimers of Wigmore 1282-1330', *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, 38 (1995), 303-34 (pp.312-26); L. C. Perfect, 'The Mortimers of Wigmore', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, 9 (1939),

Richard's Castle near Ludlow have been suggested as likely candidates, associated with the Mortimers of Wigmore.¹⁶ Other suggestions include an attachment of the scribe to the household of Adam Orleton, the bishop of Hereford, also instrumental in opposition to, and the deposition of, Edward II.¹⁷

Certainly, the *Reply* is highly antipathetic to the memory of Edward II. Its opening line – ‘When man as mad a kyng of a capped man’ – is generally assumed to be a reference to Edward, recalled as a fabled *rex inutilis* of English history.¹⁸ It has been noted that other manuscripts in the hand of the Harley scribe contain items ‘highly critical of Edward II and his administration’.¹⁹ The *Reply* circulated within a milieu with a vested interest in the deposition. However, in its original northern English function, the *Reply* must be understood in line not simply with opposition to Edward II but with the hopes placed in the young Edward III and the concomitant demonization of the regime of Edward II, as articulated in the *Six Kings*, specifically in relation to Anglo-Scottish affairs. The matter of Edward II's deposition, the kingship of Edward III, and the Scottish wars, remained inextricably linked in the minds of commentators in the early decades of the fourteenth century, particularly on the Anglo-Scottish border.

Although the prophecy has previously been regarded as directly oppositional to the continuation of the wars with Scotland,²⁰ for reasons discussed in this chapter, it can be better understood as a fantasy of English victory. However, this is not to deny that there is an element of pessimism at the heart of the *Reply*. It is precisely this aspect which saw the movement to, and use of, the prophecy in the west Midlands: its interests were regionally translatable. The prophecy envisages devastation on a grand apocalyptic scale. If the reference to ‘Londyon’ in the third line of the prophecy was originally intended as Lothian (as is more than likely), in the Harley witness devastation in southern Scotland was reworked in the Midlands as a reference to suffering in the

4-18 (pp.16-17); R. R. Davies, ‘Roger Mortimer (V), First Earl of March’, *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19354?docPos=2>> [accessed on 28 April 2012]

¹⁶ C. Revard, ‘Scribe and Provenance’, in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript*, pp. 21-110.

¹⁷ Hathaway, ed., *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, pp.xxxvii-xxxviii; Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.264.

¹⁸ For an account of Edward's reign see Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, pp.79-114. For associations of Edward II with this concept see Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.100.

¹⁹ Jason O'Rourke, ‘Imagining Book Production in Fourteenth-century Herefordshire’, in *Imagining the Book*, ed. by Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (2005), pp.45-60 (p.30).

²⁰ Scattergood, ‘Authority and Resistance’, p.178.

English capital.²¹ With this one substitution, the onus of the prophecy shifts from a presentiment of Scottish decline to one of broader chaos: localised northern English jingoism becomes universalised English pessimism. This perception was undoubtedly fuelled by elements of the *Reply* which engage in a direct critique of the conditions of the reign of Edward II.

It is in this respect that the author draws on memories of the Great Famine, for this is surely the intended meaning of the reference to the rising price of wheat: ‘When a quarter of whaty whete is chaunged for a colt of ten markes’ (11). During the 1330s famine was by no means a distant memory. As Ian Kershaw has observed, its effects were felt into the 1320s.²² These inhospitable conditions did not affect all regions throughout the British Isles in the same way throughout the period, but the effects of the famine were particularly enduring on the war-ridden Anglo-Scottish border.²³ However, in this historical allusion, the author is not constructing a contemporary socio-political critique, but a retrospective one. It addresses the evils of the reign of Edward II as a mode of endorsement for Edward III, the hero of Halidon Hill, who had a very specific function in the prophecies of the northern border. The *Reply* is not a work primarily or solely concerned with the evils of the old king’s reign, but with the victories of the new king, Edward III: a restorative conclusion to the national misfortunes of the reign of his father.

A product first and foremost of the northern English border, like *Als Y Yod* the Harley *Reply* exhibits a strong engagement with both contemporary (re-inscribed) Scottish, and English anti-Scottish literary currents, and its author enthusiastically envisages the devastation of Scotland. It belongs to a distinctive northern border tradition resting on the same crucial question as *Als Y Yod*, echoed across fourteenth-century Erceldoune prophecy: when, and how, will the Scottish wars end? Nowhere in England did this question have more meaning than on the Anglo-Scottish border. Here to prophesy concerning the wars was not simply to make a political statement concerning the hardships of the reign of Edward II, but to frame a highly contemporary question pertaining to the fundamental conditions of existence on the border.

²¹ These two possible meanings are also noted by James A. H. Murray, ed., *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune* (1875), p.xviii; Dean, *Medieval English Political Writings*, p.3 (although Dean suggests it might be a reference to the site of the 1307 Bruce victory at Loudon Hill in Lothian in 1307).

²² Ian Kershaw, ‘The Great Famine and Agrarian Crisis in England, 1315-22’, *Past and Present*, 59 (1973), 3-50; William Chester Jordan, *The Great Famine: Northern Europe in the Fourteenth Century* (1997). This movement can be traced back to the work of post-war historians such as M. M. Postan, see Kershaw, p.3, n.1,2.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.42.

The Harley Reply and the Anti-Scottish Tradition

The prophecy's reference to the Battle of Bannockburn, 'When Bambourne is donged wyth dede men' (9), was for a long time taken as the only surely datable event within the text.²⁴ This formed a key argument of nineteenth-century scholarship amongst both English and German scholars of the prophecy, who regarded it as propaganda intended to inspire the English and dispirit the Scots on the eve of Bannockburn.²⁵ This was based on the misdating of Harley 2253 itself to c.1320. A modern reassessment of the date of the manuscript suggests that the prophecy belongs to the years following the English victory at the Battle of Halidon Hill in 1333, a battle at which, the English *Brut* records, the Scottish host was chased into the sea.²⁶ The prophecy's depiction of the fleeing and drowned Scots presents one such variation on this jubilant English theme. In the prophecy we read: 'When a Scot ne may hym hude ase hare in forme that the Englysshe ne shal ne hym fynde; /... When Scottes flen so faste that for faute of ship hy drouneth hem-selve' (13, 16). Similarly, the association of the Scots with the hare cipher accords with the terms of the *Six Kings*, where in the reign of Edward I, the people of the 'northwest' the Scots, are 'lade þrough an wickede hare'.²⁷ Originally an allusion to John Balliol, the English transplantation of this and analogous conceptual frameworks to the Bruce antagonists of the fourteenth century is a process noted in Chapter Two.²⁸ The use of this material strongly suggests the author of the *Reply* was aware of the *Six Kings* (further evidence of its circulation in the north of England). Its association of the misrule of Edward II, a contemporary *rex inutilis*, with famine rests on the same conventions found in the account of the goat in the *Six Kings*. It is further indicative of the northern English reception history of the *Six Kings*, representative of a mentality invested in the heroism of Edward III, held in association with memories of the failures of Edward II's northern border policy.

Structurally the organisation of the prophecy – a historical retrospective spanning the period between Bannockburn and Halidon Hill – conforms to a pervasive English conception of Halidon Hill as the ultimate corrective to defeat at Bannockburn, and a check to Scottish pride.²⁹ However, although an English victory, the Battle of Halidon Hill is by no means considered the

²⁴ Ker, pp.xxi-xiii; Robbins, *Historical Poems*, p.xxxii.

²⁵ Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, p.xix; Alois Brandl, *Thomas of Ercelesdonne* (1880), p.16.

²⁶ *The Romance of the Battle of Halidon Hill* reads: 'þe Englysche men pursued hem so,/ þille þe fflode was alle a-Goo', *Brut*, I, p.287 (Appendix A). See also Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*, p.136.

²⁷ *Brut*, I, pp.72-73, with direct application in I, pp.204-05, although the hares are here substituted with a greyhound for John Balliol and a fox for Robert Bruce.

²⁸ See above, Chapter 2, p.98.

²⁹ Wyntoun, II, p.420; Hall, *Poems of Laurence Minot*, p.5; Lanercost, pp.279-81.

end of Anglo-Scottish conflict in the *Reply*. The prophecy is very similar in its historical perspective to *Als Y Yod*. Like the ballad author, the author of the *Reply* is interested in English supremacy and Scottish defeat. Yet for both, Halidon Hill does not provide a definitive conclusion to the wars, for the greatest battle is yet to come.

It is in this sense that we must understand the prophecy's conclusion. The final answer to the countess of Dunbar's question (how and when the Scottish wars will end) reads: 'Whenne shal this be? Nouthur in thine tyme ne in myne. /Ah comen and gon with-inne twenty wynter ant on' (17-18). This twenty-one year period has proved a source of much scholarly speculation.³⁰ However, given the loose chronology common to political prophecies, more concerned with key events and the possibility of pattern-forming than strict historical record, the prophecy's resolution is almost certainly formulaic. The twenty-one years may well be intended to be read as over a generation: the scope of the conflict is such that it endures long after the 'capped man' of the first line of the prophecy, Edward II, into the reign of Edward III. This type of apocalyptic conclusion echoes Matthew 24.34, asserting the validity and immediate historical pertinence of the prophecy, 'Amen I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done'. The generational limit in Matthew refers to the first stages of apocalyptic desolation rather than to conclusive eschatological fulfilment, and if we view the Harley prophecy in terms of apocalyptic progression, the Scottish wars can be regarded as a symptom of this preliminary Scottish decline, although by no means its culmination. It is itself testament to the protracted nature of the apocalyptic worldview, as it is given in the so-called Little Apocalypse of Matthew:

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that ye be not troubled. For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be pestilences, and famines, and earthquakes in places: Now all these are the beginnings of sorrows.

(Matthew 24.6-8)

³⁰ Critical conjecture here varies. Murray and Brandl understood the prophecy as written in anticipation of the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, p.xix; Brandl, *Thomas of Erceldoune*, p.16. Robbins regarded the prophecy as intended for fulfilment in the years 1286 or 1306. Robbins, 'Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', p.1525.

Within the quasi-apocalyptic schema of the *Reply*, Halidon Hill is only the ‘beginnings of sorrows’, an apocalyptic symptom rather than a definitive conclusion. Unlike *Als Y Yod*, the *Reply* does not extend to the final battle of the wars or the arrival of the Arthurian hero-king. Although Edward III’s presence in the north is implicit in its invocation of Halidon Hill, the great Arthurian arrival remains unremarked. In this respect, the prophecy is greatly indebted not to English jingoism, but to a prevalent strand of Scottish catastrophism associated with Thomas’s name.

Scottish Background Traditions

Despite a number of scholarly attempts to associate the *Reply* with specific contemporary apocalyptic and complaint schema, from the political complaint tradition rooted in perceptions of the sufferings of Edward II’s reign found in poems such as the *Simonie*,³¹ to the *Fifteen Signs Before the Judgement*,³² and the seven deadly sins paradigm found in a number of extant fifteenth-century Merlin prophecies,³³ none of these analogues present an entirely accurate or satisfying application. The immediate cultural context for the *Reply* was not a broader English complaint movement, but a decidedly Anglo-Scottish one. A product of the same cultural milieu as *Als Y Yod*, the *Reply* is heavily indebted not only to anti-Scottish English traditions, but also Scottish elements. In early English Erceldoune prophecy, we see the development of a northern English literary tradition with, in many respects, far more in common with lowland Scotland than the west Midlands.

The names Thomas of Erceldoune and Thomas the Rhymer survive in a number of historical documents of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries (referring to two, or possibly three, generations of Thomases), relating to Melrose Abbey and the village of Erceldoune, modern Earlston, in Berwickshire.³⁴ The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* records this

³¹ Salter, ‘*Piers Plowman* and ‘The Simonie’, pp.253-54.

³² E. B. Lyle, ‘Thomas of Erceldoune: The Prophet and the Prophetied’, *Folklore*, 79 (1968), 111-21 (p.111). Lyle understood the tokens of the *Reply* as related to versions of the *Fifteen Signs* and a Gaelic prophecy of the rising seawalls. The latter, however, was only recorded in the early twentieth century. For the development of the *Fifteen Signs* see W. W. Heist, *The Fifteen Signs Before Doomsday* (1952); Catherine McKenna, ‘Fifteen Signs before Doomsday’, in *Celtic Folklore and Christianity: Studies in Memory of William W. Heist* (1983), pp.84-112.

³³ Siegfried Wenzel, *Preachers, Poets, and the Early English Lyric* (1986), pp.175-77.

³⁴ Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, pp.ix-xiii; Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, pp.328-29; Cooper, ‘Thomas of Erceldoune’, p.179.

provenance for the historical person ‘Thomas the Rhymer’.³⁵ Understandably, an originally Scottish source for a great number of the extant English vernacular literary prophecies ascribed to Thomas has been long conjectured. The foremost proponent of this was James A. H. Murray, the nineteenth-century editor of the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*.³⁶ As Helen Cooper has observed, acquainted with traditions of Thomas and his prophecies still active in southern Scotland, Murray brought a level of familiarity to material which has struck generations of English critics with its ‘strangeness’.³⁷ Scholars of the Erceldoune tradition remain indebted to his edition and compilation of material attributed to the prophet. However, the relationship of the earliest surviving prophetic texts attributed to Thomas, all of which are English, to Scottish prophetic material is more complicated than a direct transmission: these texts draw on Scottish traditions relating to Thomas, re-inscribed with decidedly anti-Scottish meanings. This process (in Bhabian terms) is precisely as we find in *Als Y Yod*: an English supplement rests heavily on an anterior field of Scottish allusions.

Although extant Erceldoune prophecies from Scotland are all late, allusions to his name and the nature of his vaticinations are preserved in Scottish chronicle traditions. In his account of the events of the year 1335, the Scottish chronicler Andrew of Wyntoun (c.1350-1423) refers to the Battle of Culblean in light of an undisclosed prophecy ascribed to ‘Thomas off Ersyldowne’:

Off this fycht qwhilum spak Thomas
Of Ersyldowne, that sayd in derne,
Thare suld mete stalwartly stark and sterne.³⁸

Although Wyntoun does not repeat a particular prophecy, the implication here is a reputedly accurate pessimism, for although the battle was commonly regarded as a turn in Scottish fortunes for the better, the prophet’s words are ‘derne’ [obscure, lit. dark], and the battle ‘stark and sterne’ [fierce]. Thomas’s prophetic authority was invoked in Scotland in similar terms into the sixteenth century: his name appears in retrospectives of the 1547 Battle of Pinkie Cleugh, a catastrophic Scottish defeat.³⁹ Thomas’s prophecies were not necessarily associated with Scottish

³⁵ See above, n.1.

³⁶ For Murray’s argument about the Scottish origin of the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune* see below, p.135.

³⁷ Cooper, ‘Thomas of Erceldoune’, p.172.

³⁸ Wyntoun, II, pp.423-7.

³⁹ BL, MS Sloane 1802, fols 22v-28v. Discussed by Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, p.336.

victory, but the bloody activity of war itself. Possessing a certain obscurity – in Wyntoun’s terms, ‘derne’ - prophecies of Thomas (particularly those pertaining to a scene of Scottish defeat) were open to re-inscription and cross-border application.

Wyntoun wrote in relation to a long Scottish historical tradition, now lost apart from a few distinctive markers, regarding Thomas as the prophet of the Scottish Wars of Independence. An association with Alexander III, and prophecies of his death, was almost certainly an early element in Thomas’s Scottish legend. Although the fullest articulation of this is found in a relatively late Scottish source, it makes sense of a number of earlier extant allusions, including those found in English sources. In the entry for 1286 in the *Scotichronicon*, Thomas’s prophetic ability is traced back to the very beginning of the crisis of Scottish kingship. On the eve of the death of Alexander III, ‘Thomas de Ersildon’ expounds to the earl of Dunbar a prophecy of a great storm in Scotland, unprecedented in its ferocity.⁴⁰ The meaning of this storm was both figurative and literal: Alexander III died when his horse went over a cliff during a storm.⁴¹ Thomas’s prophecy of the death of Alexander saw a number of later re-workings into the early modern period, and formed a staple of Scottish myths concerning the prophet.⁴²

The apocalyptic character of the Harley *Reply* stands indebted to portraits of apocalyptic decline in contemporary Scottish circulation in relation to the death of Alexander III. Another good example which may well have seen earlier use is a verse drawn on by Wyntoun in his chronicle:

Sen Alexander our king wes deid,
That Scotland left in luf and le
Away wes sons of aill and breid,
Off wyne and wax, of gamyn and gle.⁴³

In Scottish historical retrospectives, the death of Alexander III signified the beginning of unprecedented Scottish calamity, an event around which prophecies, and the names of prophets,

⁴⁰ *Scotichronicon*, V, pp.428-29. This reference must be indebted to the historical association of the village of Erceldoune with the Scottish earls of March, for which see Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, p.xi.

⁴¹ Prestwich, *Edward I*, p.358; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp.3-4.

⁴² Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, pp.xiv-xv.

⁴³ Wyntoun, II, p.266; cited also in Wilson, *Lost Literature of Medieval England*, pp.205-06.

might accrue.⁴⁴ Another Scottish story attaches itself to Thomas concerning this period of Scottish calamity, although it survives in a late text. In Harry the Minstrel's fifteenth-century life of William Wallace, Thomas is the bearer of news concerning Wallace's miraculous survival following apparent starvation in prison, and recites a prophecy similar to those found in *Als Y Yod* and the *Harley Reply* (in terms of its enumeration of the casualties of Anglo-Scottish conflict, catastrophic in its scale) but here with a positive Scottish outcome:

*Th*an thomas said: 'forsuth or he decess,
 Mony *th*ousand in field sall mak *th*ar end.
 Off *th*is regioun he shall *th*e sothroun send;
 And scotland thriss he shall bryng to *th*e pess:
 So gud off hand agayne sall *neuir* be kend.'⁴⁵

The banishing of the southerners (the English), and the establishment of a stable Scottish kingdom, is a counterpart to the northern English expectations associated with Edward III. Harry the Minstrel suggests a pervasive association of Thomas with the early years of the Scottish Wars of Independence, and its final battle.

The *incipit* to the Harley prophecy, relating not to the earl but the countess of Dunbar, creates a variant version of the tradition preserved in the *Scotichronicon* (evidencing the circulation of the legendary 1286 prophecy as early as the 1330s), positioning Thomas once again as a prophet of the Scottish Wars of Independence. Yet in its allusion to the countess, the author of the *Harley Reply* draws on a more contemporary frame of reference. During the 1330s, Dunbar was an infamous Bruce-faction centre of resistance.⁴⁶ The substitution of the earl by the countess potentially alludes to the role played by an equally infamous countess of Dunbar, known as Black Agnes (d.1369), during the late 1330s.⁴⁷ In the absence of the earl in January 1338, Agnes assumed an instrumental role in the castle's defence, holding out against an English siege. Her legend, like that of Thomas of Erceldoune, was long-lived in Scotland: in the nineteenth century

⁴⁴ Murray takes this in association with documents bearing Thomas's name, discussed above, as evidence that the man on whom the myths of the prophet is based was still alive in c.1289. *Romance and Prophecies*, p.xv. This remains conjectural.

⁴⁵ Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, p.xvi.

⁴⁶ Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*, p.225.

⁴⁷ Fiona Watson, 'Dunbar, Patrick, eighth earl of Dunbar or of March, and earl of Moray (1285-1369)', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8206/8200>> [last accessed 17 October 2012]

Walter Scott wrote of her personal destruction of English siege machinery with a specially prepared rock dropped from the battlements of Dunbar Castle.⁴⁸

There is no reason to attribute the prophecy as we find it in Harley 2253 a date any earlier than 1338. Agnes formed a notable point of accretion to the Erceldoune legend, appearing also in the witness of the late fourteenth-century *Romance of Thomas of Erceldoune* found in CUL, MS Ff. 5. 48 (which may well take its interest in the countess from her association with the Erceldoune tradition entertained in the *Harley Reply*). Here Agnes is a personal antagonist of Thomas. Following his sexual rejection of her she has ‘put me in hir prison depe’ (661), a reworking and inversion of the fairy mistress theme of the *Romance*.⁴⁹ This is followed by a highly vitriolic prophecy of Agnes’s ignoble death in a ditch:

Off blak Agnes cum neuer gode:
 Wher for, thomas, she may not thee;
 ffor al hir welth and hir worldly gode,
 In london cloysed shal she be.
 þer prëuisse neuer gode of hir blode;
 In a dyke þen shall she dye;
 Houndis of hir shall haue þer fode,
 Magrat of all hir kyng of le

(665-72)

Antipathy towards Agnes features elsewhere in English jingoist verse against Scotland: Wyntoun records a song sung against her by English soldiers in Scotland, referring to her as ‘The Scottish wenche with her ploddeil’.⁵⁰ ‘Ploddeil’, puddle, refers to the moat surrounding Dunbar Castle: the siege line which Agnes kept unbroken throughout January 1338. This provides the broader context of the song of the English soldiers, which Wyntoun recounts with some pride: ‘For cum I airly, cum I lait, / I fynd ay Annes at þe 3ait’. That in the *Romance and Prophecies* a ditch becomes the site of Agnes’s death preserves a distorted memorialisation of such verses, and a statement of profound antipathy cast back to the events of 1338. The identification of the countess of Dunbar as the recipient of the *Harley Reply*, envisaging the defeat of the Scots at Halidon Hill and the destruction of southern Scotland, preserves a vestige of this anti-Scottish discourse. Transplanted

⁴⁸ W. Scott, *Tales of a grandfather*, ed. by E. M. Lang, abridged edn (1925), pp.98–99; cited by Watson.

⁴⁹ See below, p.133.

⁵⁰ Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England*, p.213.

to Dunbar in the 1330s, Thomas became a contemporary prophet of Agnes's downfall, and with her, the Bruce faction. As we find in *Als Y Yod*, the incorporation of Scottish elements in English prophecy is double-edged, combining Scottish traditions with English anti-Scottish discourse.

3.2 The Arundel *Reply*

In a closely contemporary variant of the *Reply*, found in BL, Arundel MS 57 (c.1340), Thomas's prophecy is addressed to another Scottish historical figure, Alexander III.⁵¹ Although the manuscript itself (which also contains the autograph copy of *Ayenbite of Inmyt*, and is often considered to be an important witness of southern Middle English dialect),⁵² is a product of the Benedictine House of St Augustine's in Canterbury, the prophecy preserves northern dialectal elements.

The prophecy situates itself within a Scottish context, giving the words of Thomas the 'Escot'. From this perspective it issues a statement of overt English imperialism: the English right to the length and breadth of Scottish territory. Through its inclusion of the figure of an English hero king, the Arundel *Reply* comes closer to *Als Y Yod* than does the Harley *Reply*. Its interest in English overlordship closely aligns it with the prophecy of Edward III's insular conquests of the *Six Kings*. Certainly it circulated alongside the *Six Kings*: the *Original Prose Version of the Six Kings* is found also in Arundel 57.⁵³

In the Arundel *Reply*, the tokens from the Harley prophecy, drawn on there as figures of the devastation of Scotland, are preceded by the appearance of a 'barn':

To-nyght is boren a barn in Kaernervam,
That ssal wold the out ydlis ylcen.
The kyng Alesandre acsede,

⁵¹ Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, pp.307-08.

⁵² *LALME*, I, p.105.

⁵³ Smallwood, 'The Prophecy of the *Six Kings*', p.574.

Hwan sall that be?

(1-4)

By virtue of the birth of the ‘barn’ [bairn] in Caernarfon, this prophecy has been understood as a vestige of the imperial associations with Edward II, similar to *Adam Davy’s Five Dreams*, carried over into the 1340s.⁵⁴ However, although the locus of the hero’s birth suggests Edward II, there is no precedent for the application of Arthurian prophecy to Edward II in the north of England. Clearly, there is some element of confusion in the hero’s birthplace, perhaps resting on a hasty reading of the *Six Kings*. It is the boar of Windsor whose British conquests form the model for this prophecy.

The prophecy has been associated with the *Five Dreams* in so far as it has been assumed to be a crusading prophecy. This is because ‘ydlis’ has been understood as idols, encoding expectations for a new crusade.⁵⁵ However, the allusion is better placed within the context of Anglo-Scottish affairs which the reference to Thomas, Alexander, and the tokens from the *Harley Reply* suggest. The ‘ydlis’ must be understood, in line with the usage recorded by the Middle English dictionary, as islands.⁵⁶ The ‘out ydlis’ would be the outlying islands, presumably, the Scottish islands off the west and northern coast of Scotland, which mark the furthest reaches of the British Isles. These will be ruled, and implicitly the rest of the British Isles with them, by a great ‘barn’, a prophesied hero king. The career of this hero king is situated in an overtly Arthurian frame of reference. It reads as a Galfridian allusion of the type prevalent in northern English political prophecy from Pierre de Langtoft onwards: a jingoistic invocation of an Arthurian king of England, exercising overlordship in Scotland.

The foundation of an influential mythic-historical vision, the Arthurian subjugation of the islands off the northern coast of Scotland is figured in the gathering of the sub-kings at Arthur’s court in Caerleon in *Historia*, IX, which includes Gunuasius, king of the Orkneys.⁵⁷ In the *Prophetiae*, Arthur’s conquests of the islands off the British coast are multiple (although this may well also preserve a reference to his conquest of Ireland). We read of the boar of Cornwall: ‘Insulae oceani potestati ipsius subdentur’ (‘the islands of the ocean will fall under his sway’) (41). In his early fourteenth-century translation of the *Prophetiae* in his verse chronicle of c.1300,

⁵⁴ Coote and Thornton, p.120.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ This is how the term is understood by Dean in his edition of the prophecy. *Middle English Political Writings*, p.12.

⁵⁷ *Historia*, IX, 339-51. *Historia*, IX, 220-22, tells of Gunuasius’s unprompted submission to Arthur.

Robert of Gloucester records of the boar of Cornwall: 'Mani yles winne he ssal londe & oþer stude' (2805).⁵⁸

The author of the *Arundel Reply* brings this Arthurian perception into an explicitly Anglo-Scottish frame of reference, reworking Geoffrey's Arthurian history as a contemporary prophecy pertaining to the Scottish islands. The mention of the 'ydliis' in relation to Alexander III may well preserve a specific historical reference. The Western Isles and the Isle of Man were ceded by Norway to Scotland with the Treaty of Perth in 1266, brokered by Alexander III, and reputedly were a subject of considerable personal investment on the part of the Scottish king. The treaty has been understood as a definitive shift in the balance of power in the British Isles.⁵⁹ The *Arundel Reply* stages a reply to Alexander, prophesying the loss of these gains to the English Arthurian hero-king. English conquest is presented as inevitable from the perspective of Alexander's own lifetime, even when the treaties for the Western Isles were a recent memory.

The *Arundel Reply* presents a variation on the Alexander death-prophecy of the Scottish chronicle tradition, and like the *Harley Reply* functions as an English supplement to Scottish source material.

3.3 The *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*

Like the *Arundel Reply*, the late fourteenth-century *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune* is also concerned with the prowess of a king of England on the Anglo-Scottish border: not the boar, Edward III, but his grandson Richard II, who appears in the *Romance and Prophecies* as the Arthurian bastard, conqueror of Scotland and ruler of all Britain, whose arrival marks the culmination of the prophecies. Although long held in relation to a single Scottish source, the *Romance and Prophecies* must be understood as a product of the northern English border, engaging with pervasive regional uses of Galfridian material in the structuring of local territorial claims and

⁵⁸ *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. by William Aldis Wright, 2 vols (1887), I, p.200. Noted as an English vernacular translation of the *Prophetiae* by Caroline Eckhardt, ed., *Prophetia Merlini of Geoffrey of Monmouth: A Fifteenth-Century English Commentary* (1982), p.17.

⁵⁹ Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p.16. For historical analysis of the treaty see Richard Lustig, 'The Treaty of Perth: A Re-examination', *Scottish Historical Review*, 58 (1979), 35-57.

national identities. The remainder of this chapter addresses the function of the prophetic image of English royal authority in structuring cultural identifications on the northern English border in the final decades of the fourteenth century, even (as is often supposed by historians) Richard II's grip on the north was reputedly weakening.

The long-lived literary influence of the *Romance and Prophecies* is now commonly accepted. As Helen Cooper has observed, we find references to it in one of most famous works of canonical English literature, the *Faerie Queene*.⁶⁰ Furthermore, I argue, the *Romance and Prophecies* also preserves a particular historical strategy of national address as employed amongst English communities on the northern border, which with the broader dissemination of the *Romance and Prophecies* saw sizeable re-use across the British Isles throughout the subsequent centuries. The changing function of its core allusion, the Arthurian king identified as the bastard, presents an important measure of the political mentalities and affiliations of the different milieux through which it circulated through the later middle ages and into the early modern period. This is further discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

The *Romance and Prophecies* exerted an influence on prophetic literature beyond the small number of extant copies of the full work. The prophecies, and a number of notable derivatives, also survive independently to the romance in a range of English manuscripts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁶¹ The Tudor uses of the text have been most fully remarked upon. As Helen Cooper has shown, following Henry Tudor's victory at the battle of Bosworth the first Tudor monarch came to be identified with the victorious bastard. This inspired a sixteenth-century re-working of the prophecies entitled the *Prophecies of Rymour, Beid and Marlyng*, which explicitly refers to Henry's landing at Milford Haven and his defeat of Richard III at the battle of Bosworth.⁶² Sharon Jansen's research suggests that this prophecy was later employed in opposition to Henry VIII following the break with Rome in the 1530s, although it almost certainly also retained some element of hegemonic appeal also.⁶³ In the early seventeenth century both prophecies were incorporated in the *Whole Prophecie of Scotland* as a figure for the Scottish king James VI as he

⁶⁰ Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', pp.185-87; Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p.263.

⁶¹ A number of these applications are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁶² BL, Lansdowne MS 762, fols 75r-88r: A series of prophecies ascribed to 'Bede', 'Marlionis', and 'Thomas Asslaydon'. Incipit: 'Well on my way as I forthe wente/ ouer a londe beside a lee'. Fol.87v is glossed with the year 1531, besides which a later hand has added 1561. Printed as the *Prophecies of Rymour, Beid and Marlyng* by Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, pp.52-61; Jansen, *Political Prophecy and Protest*, pp.69-90. See also Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', pp.180-81; Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p.192.

⁶³ Jansen, 'Prophecy, Propaganda, and Henry VIII', pp.284-89.

acceded to the English throne as James I of England.⁶⁴ A London production bearing a fake Edinburgh printer's mark, the *Whole Prophecie* evidences a perceived Scottish application of the *Romance and Prophecies* in circulation in the English capital.⁶⁵ Through the changing function of the prophecies, Thomas of Erceldoune remained to English readers an ostensibly Scottish name, yet one engaging with great events of English politics.

The Manuscripts

The original *Romance and Prophecies* survives in five manuscripts, dated from the mid-fifteenth to the sixteenth century.⁶⁶ A stemma hypothesising the relationship between extant witnesses is included as Figure 1, taken from the nineteenth-century German scholar Alois Brandl's study of the text. Whilst much work from this period on political prophecy is now out-dated, Brandl's stemma remains a convincing thesis: regarding each copy as at least one exemplum removed from a hypothetical *ur*-text. Brandl posited a source X from which Lincoln MS 91 (also known as the Thornton manuscript, produced c.1440-50), and indirectly, BL, Sloane MS 2578, including only the prophecies (1547), and CUL, MS Ff. 5.48 (c.1480) copies were derived. Source X in turn is based on a hypothetical source O, to which BL, Cotton MS Vitellius E. x (c.1470) and BL, Lansdowne MS 762 (c.1520s-30s) are directly related.

The absent text O began its life on the Anglo-Scottish border. Extant fifteenth-century versions of the text all share residual northern features to a greater or lesser degree,⁶⁷ and the *Romance and Prophecies* shares linguistic features with material we can locate with some certainty towards the northern border.⁶⁸ It is no surprise then to see that the *Romance and Prophecies* evidences the same regional interests and concerns as *Als Y Yod* and the earlier Erceldoune prophecies, forecasting the conclusion of Anglo-Scottish hostilities and the final English

⁶⁴ *Whole Prophecie of Scotland*, extract printed by Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, pp.48-51.

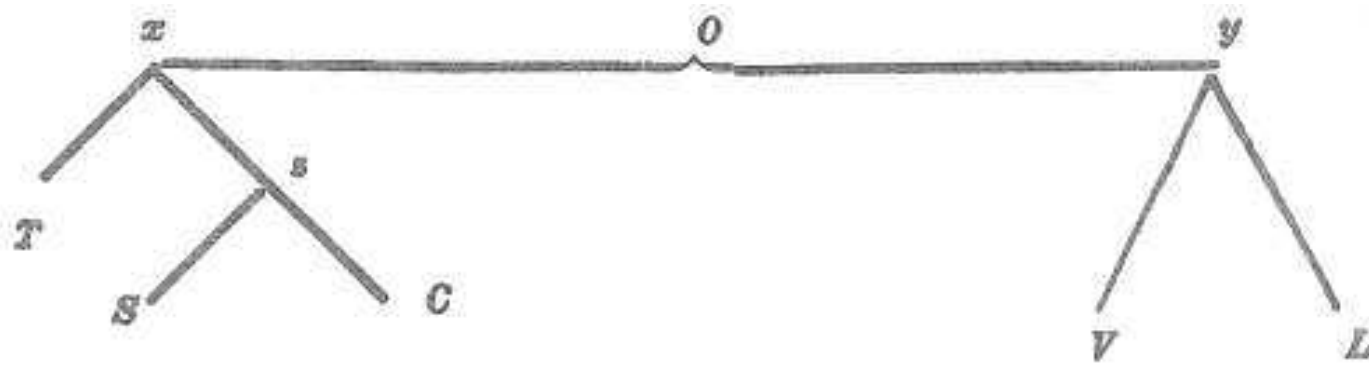
⁶⁵ Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', pp.181-82; Cooper, 'Literary Reformations of the Middle Ages', p.259.

⁶⁶ For discussion of the manuscripts see Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, pp.lvi-lxi; Brandl, *Thomas of Erceldoune*, pp.1-11; Nixon, II, pp.3-18.

⁶⁷ Nixon, II, pp.15-16.

⁶⁸ The description of Thomas's journey to the Otherworld, passing under the hill into darkness, as 'myrke as night', is a proverbial formula common to northern productions. It is found in the *Anyntys of Arthur at the Terme Wathelyne*, a text with linguistic traces locating its composition on the north-west Anglo-Scottish border. This correspondence has been commented upon by previous scholars. Josephine M. Burnham, 'A Study of Thomas of Erceldoune', *Periodical of the Modern Language Association*, 23 (1908), 375-420 (p.397); Nixon, II, p.39.

Figure 1: Alois Brandl's stemma of the manuscripts of the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune* (Brandl, *Thomas of Erceldoune*, p.6).



T= Lincoln MS 91 (Lincoln Thornton)

S= British Library, Sloane MS 2578

C = Cambridge University Library, MS Ff. 5. 48

V = British Library, Cotton Vitellius MS E. x

L = British Library, Lansdowne MS 762

overlordship of Scotland after the Arthurian paradigm. Like the earlier *Erceldoune* texts, it is invested in the presence of English royal authority on the border.

Summary of the Text

A brief summary of the work is in order here. The *Romance and Prophecies* is divided into three fyttes. The first introduces Thomas on Huntley Banks, his meeting, and sexual encounter with his fairy mistress (as she is known), who warns him that if he lies with her she will lose her beauty. Thomas breaks this taboo and the fairy mistress undergoes a monstrous change (recognised as a variant of the loathly lady motif).⁶⁹ The pair journey to the Otherworld, during which time the fairy regains her beauty. Thomas dwells in the Otherworld for, he believes, three days but in fact three years. The fairy mistress speeds Thomas's return to Huntley Banks prior to hell's tithes on the fairy realm. Back on Huntley Banks, Thomas asks for a token of his adventure, and is granted a true tongue: the gift of prophecy, associated here also with tale telling:

‘Guyve me some token, Lady gaye,
that I may say I spake *witb* the.’
‘to harpe or carpe, whither thowe can,
thomas, þou shalt haue sothely.’
he said ‘herpinge kepe I none;
for tonge is chief of mynastrely.’
& þou wilt speake, & tales tell,
thowe shalt neuer leasyngge lye

(311-18)

The association of Thomas with truth and tale telling was clearly an important part of his prophetic reputation by this period. In many respects we might understand the fairy mistress encounter as an origin story for authorship, even the authoring of the text itself.

⁶⁹ Cooper, ‘Romance as Prophecy’, p.177; William Price Albrecht, *The Loathly Lady in ‘Thomas of Erceldoune’, with a text of the poem printed in 1652* (1954).

Authorship was an early accretion to the Thomas legend. The much-cited testimonies of Robert Mannyng (writing in c.1338) and the author of the *Romance of Tristrem* in the Auchinleck manuscript (c.1340), claim Thomas as an authority for the Tristrem tale.⁷⁰ As Helen Cooper has observed, this suggests an early fourteenth-century association of Thomas with romance.⁷¹ I suggest we can extend this to a distinctively Arthurian association. The *Romance and Prophecies* is a species of (highly political) Arthurian literature, in that the text culminates in the appearance of the Arthurian deliverer, the bastard. It is in this element of the text, rather than the characterisation of Thomas himself, that we approach the conventional royal or aristocratic hero of English romance (Thomas's deviation from which is well-noted).⁷² This is essentially a continuation of the process at work in the *Arundel Reply*, which takes its portrayal of the Arthurian deliverer from the terms of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Notably, this material was incorporated in Arundel 56 roughly contemporary with the production of the Auchinleck manuscript. The association of Thomas with Galfridian and post-Galfridian Arthurian romance appears to have been an English one, circulating as early as 1340. It is feasibly related to the late medieval uses of Arthuriana in formulating English claims to Scottish overlordship. This Arthurian association was long-lived: in the possible use of Erceldoune material Cooper has observed in the *Faerie Queene*, we find this material orientated within not simply a romance, but an Arthurian, framework.⁷³

The prophecies which follow from the fairy narrative are attributed to the fairy mistress, as a series of prophecies in two fyttes concerning the major battles, and future (eschatological apocalyptic) outcome of the Scottish Wars of Independence. The prophecies of the second fyttte are for the most part retrospective, encompassing the major battles of the wars from Bannockburn to Otterburn in 1388.⁷⁴ The third fyttte moves beyond the scope of thirteenth and fourteenth-century history to prophesy future battles at Gladismore, 'spynkarde cloughe', between Edinburgh (or 'Sembery') and Pentland, and between Seton and the sea. This is described as a period of great suffering which precedes the arrival of the bastard, who unifies the

⁷⁰ Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, pp.xx-xxi; Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', pp.174-75. The *Tristrem* romance was at one time attributed a Scottish provenance, and by virtue of this Thomas's authorship was deemed plausible. However, this provenance is uncertain, and Thomas's authorship unlikely. Ibid, n.11.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.176.

⁷² Cf. Cooper, 'Romance as Prophecy', p179; James Wade, 'Ungallant Knights', in *Heroes and Antiheroes*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (2012), pp.201-18 (pp.212-13).

⁷³ Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', pp.186-87.

⁷⁴ Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, pp.lxxv-lxxviii; 20-31; Robbins, 'Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', p.1526.

island and goes on to conquer Jerusalem, following the last battle of the Anglo-Scottish wars, the Battle of Sandyford, an English victory.⁷⁵ In its conclusion, the text shows the influence of the *Six Kings* (in particular, the career of the boar of Windsor) on northern English political prophecy: it concludes with the Arthurian hero's departure for Jerusalem. Yet, as with the other prophecies in circulation on the Anglo-Scottish border, discussed in this and the previous chapter, the *Romance and Prophecies* is also indebted to a number of perceptible Scottish influences.

English and Scottish Influences

Before we address the evidence for Scottish influences on the text as extant, a number of pervasive misconceptions concerning the relationship between the *Prophecies and Romance* and Scottish source material must first be dealt with. Hitherto, the argument for a Scottish source for all three fyttes - first espoused by Murray - has proved enduring. Given the long life of Erceldoune material in southern Scotland, this is not a surprising conclusion, yet it stands that in its earliest function, the *Romance and Prophecies* is an English political text, governed by English interests. In the recent work of Coote and Thornton, Murray's supposition of a Scottish source has become confused with ideas concerning the role of material in oral circulation, understanding the perceived orality of the *Romance and Prophecies* as a clear constituent element of a Celtic prophecy.⁷⁶

The evidence compiled in Murray's edition suggests that the fairy mistress narrative assumed a long life in later Scottish oral culture. As Helen Cooper has observed, the *Romance and Prophecies* has strong claims to be the first medieval text rediscovered on the weight of contemporary oral traditions.⁷⁷ A ballad detailing Thomas's encounter with the fairy mistress, extant in its earliest copy from c.1800, is closely related to the *Romance and Prophecies*, and its status as a source for (rather than a derivation from) the romance is a possibility which certainly we cannot preclude.⁷⁸ However, the oral claims for the fairy mistress material should not condition our attitude towards the prophecies incorporated in the text. We cannot assume (as do Coote and Thornton) that the Galfridian material of the prophecies is dependent for its existence on

⁷⁵ For one critic's identification of this fyte as English in sentiment and content, see Nixon, II, p.46.

⁷⁶ Coote and Thornton, pp.126-27.

⁷⁷ Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', p.172.

⁷⁸ E. B. Lyle, 'The Relationship between *Thomas the Rhymer* and *Thomas of Erceldoune*', *Leeds Studies in English*, NS 4 (1970), 23-30.

oral traditions and oral circulation alone. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, there is no reason to suppose that late medieval prophecy was any less indebted to contemporary manuscript culture than any other genre of medieval literature. The English Erceldoune tradition stands aligned with the circulation of the *Prophetiae Merlini* and the *Six Kings* in the north of England, a framework of literary-political influence preserved in northern miscellanies like Cotton Julius, A. v, for example. Furthermore, even if (and we have no particular reason to do this), we can credit the oral circulation of the prophecies as a definitive factor governing their composition, there is no reason to suggest that the very possibility of oral circulation was a specifically Scottish feature. In assessing the Scottish (rather than Celtic) debt of the *Romance and Prophecies*, we must look not to the practice of orality, but for material found within the text which possesses Scottish analogues or contains Scottish linguistic or geographical markers.

Extant versions of the text suggest a composite work, with fytte one originating in either Scotland or England, based on Scottish material concerning Thomas. This section contains the single Gaelic linguistic feature of the text: the use of the word ‘spraye’ from the Gaelic ‘spréidh’ (meaning to sprout, or spread out, but on one occasion used in allusion to Bruce victories, against the English, in 354).⁷⁹ However, even if this does preserve a remnant of a Bruce prophecy, the Gaelic word is all the same highly anomalous, and the precise nature of this linguistic debt remains uncertain. I discuss the appearance of this word in another prophecy further below, as more feasibly representative of English ventriloquism of a Scottish prophetic discourse than genuine Scottish material.⁸⁰ More telling are the geographical interests of fytte one. As Nixon notes, place names such as Huntley Banks and the Eildon Hills, where the fairy-narrative of the *Romance and Prophecies* begins, were unlikely to have been of any general significance in England.⁸¹ Neither were the sites of momentous battles or contested territory, and their place in the text most plausibly relates to Scottish source traditions concerning Thomas. The Eildon Hills are in Melrose, the site of the charters signed by a historical Thomas of Erceldoune, discussed above.⁸² It is also a site with a long life in Scottish Arthurian legend, although this may not have pre-dated the Erceldoune prophecies (which indeed, may have helped to facilitate this association).⁸³ That this location had no specific meaning in English

⁷⁹ Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, p.lxxvi; Nixon, II, pp.46-47.

⁸⁰ See below, p.138.

⁸¹ Nixon, II, pp.47-48.

⁸² James B. Johnston, *Place Names of Scotland* (1934, 3rd edn; 1970 rpt), p.172, 206; Mike Darton, *Dictionary of Scottish Place Names* (1990), p.149.

⁸³ David Munro and Bruce Gittings, *Scotland: An Encyclopedia of Places and Landscape* (2006), p.190.

scribal treatments of *fytte* one is suggested by the confusion we find between the site of Thomas's abduction and the site of the prophesied (historical) Battle of Halidon Hill in the Lincoln Thornton and Sloane texts. Both scribes substitute Halidon Hill with Eildon Hill (352). The assumption appears to be that Eildon was another name for Halidon, an English misunderstanding and point of interpretative corruption across national lines.

The fairy narrative itself has been long understood to be Scottish, and a derivative from a now lost Celtic source.⁸⁴ However, in the context of the work as a whole we can better understand it as an important example of the functional and authorising use of Galfridian structures in Scotland during the late fourteenth century. Thomas's encounter with his fairy mistress, and her hideous transformation, bears a strong correspondence to the use of incubus or succubus encounters as origin tales for prophetic ability and prophecies. The place of demonic or quasi-demonic encounters in such a narrative is rooted ultimately in Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of the demonic parentage of Merlin.⁸⁵ This provides a 'supernatural endorsement' for political prophecy, of the type noted by Cooper.⁸⁶ We find this drawn on as a form of authorisation for prophets throughout the British Isles: most famously (an oft-cited analogue to Thomas), in Gerald of Wales's account of the Welsh soothsayer Meilyr in the *Itinerarium Cambriae*.⁸⁷ As Murray details in his account of the Erceldoune myths of southern Scotland, this narrative was long-lived in Scotland, and certainly did become an element of oral culture.⁸⁸ However, it is founded on an ultimately literary reference: a Galfridian model as powerful in Scotland as it was in England and Wales.

Although of English provenance, the prophecies appended to the fairy-narrative are the work of a writer well-acquainted with Scottish politics, and of the names of prominent Scottish families. The fairy mistress begins her prophecies with an overview of northern border and related Scottish affairs, exhibiting a particular interest in the Bruce kings of Scotland. We read of the decline of the great dynasties of Scotland, with the exception of the Bruces:

Thomas herkyne what j the saye:

⁸⁴ E. B. Lyle, 'The Celtic Affinities of the Gift in *Thomas of Erceldoune*', *English Language Notes*, 8 (1971), 161-64; Coote and Thornton, p.127.

⁸⁵ See above, Chapter 1, p.24.

⁸⁶ Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', p.185; Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p.188.

⁸⁷ *Journey through Wales*, pp.116-20; Burnham, pp.397-98; Nixon, II, p.20. I discuss the use of the incubus narrative in Gerald's tale, and its relationship to the Welsh circulation of the *Historia*, in 'Political Prodigies in the Writings of Walter Map and Gerald of Wales', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* (forthcoming, March 2013).

⁸⁸ Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, pp.xlix-lii.

Whene a tree rote es dede,
 The ledes fadis þane & wytis a-waye;
 & froyte it beris nane þane, whyte ne rede.
 Of þe baylliolfes bloos so sall it falle:
 It sall be lyke a rotynne tree;
 The comyns, & þe Barclays alle,
 The Ryssells, & þe ffresells free,
 All sall þay fade, and wyte a-waye:
 Na ferly if þat froyte than dye.
 And mekill bale sall after spraye,
 Whare joye & blysse was wont [to bee]

(Thornton, 325-336)

This reads as a prophecy of the crisis of Scottish kingship, and the decline of the major claimants to the Scottish throne. From the ashes of the declining dynasties of Scotland, the Bruce faction emerges as the poem's accepted cipher for the Scottish nation: the 'Bruces' who engage in battle with the English 'Britons' throughout fyfte two. Although this sequence is given from a Scottish perspective, it is almost certainly one ventriloquised by an English author. The reference to the English as the Britons is not a component of Scottish Galfridian culture. Where they appear in Scottish prophecies, the Britons are always the Welsh held in alliance with the Scots. Rather, this usage must be understood as part of a distinctively northern English political prophetic type, indicative of the same desire to know, and textually define, anti-English oppositional prophecy that I have observed from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the *Six Kings*.

Murray suggested that the conclusion of fyfte one and the movement into fyfte two preserves a piece of Scottish propaganda on the eve of Halidon Hill, chiefly because in the Lincoln Thornton manuscript the victory is given to the Scots.⁸⁹ This is more likely to have been a matter of historical confusion on the part of the scribe than a vestige of an earlier Scottish function, for there is no evidence whatsoever to suggest the Scottish circulation of this material in relation to the battle. However, a Bruce association with Thomas may well have been known to the English author of the *Romance and Prophecies*. John Barbour's *Bruce* (composed c.1375-76) preserves a prophecy of Thomas relating to Robert Bruce's accession:

⁸⁹ Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, pp.xxv-xxvi.

I hop Thomas prophecy
 Off Hersildoune sall veryfyd be
 In him [Robert Bruce], for swa Our Lord help me
 I haiff gret hop he sall be king
 And haiff this land all in leding

(II. 86-90)⁹⁰

A work written under the patronage, and reflecting the partisan national interests, of the Stewarts, for Barbour's purposes Robert Bruce represented a model Scottish royal hero fighting for national freedom against the English. Yet although Thomas was a Scottish prophetic authority, the paradigm at work here may well have been lifted from English models. Antonia Gransden has suggested that Barbour was highly influenced by the English *Brut*, noting that both are similarly engaged with the Arthurianisation of national history.⁹¹ Thomas of Erceldoune's Bruce prophecy is an important component of this process. Here Thomas functions as a Scottish Merlin, placing prophecy at the centre of history much in the manner of Merlin in the English *Brut*; while we might understand Robert Bruce, who appears as a heroic deliverer who holds all Scotland under his rule, as a Scotto-centric reworking of the boar of Windsor of the *Six Kings*.

The transmission of prophecy, and its uses, across the Anglo-Scottish border was a two-way process. Cultural-political re-inscription across the border rests not simply on the re-use of isolated phrases or elements, but in the wholesale appropriation of literary structures: ways of writing and thinking about what differentiates Scottishness from Englishness, and vice versa. The chief mechanism of this is the long-prophesied royal hero of each nation, a Bhabhian supplement replete with anterior and accumulated meanings both English and Scottish.

The Royal English Hero

The arrival of the bastard marks the culmination of the prophecies, and establishes the work's prime value as Galfridian political capital. The career of the bastard and the conclusion of fyttre three of the text is not, as one early twentieth-century scholar of the *Romance* once deemed it,

⁹⁰ John Barbour, *The Bruce*, ed. and transl. by A. A. M. Duncan (1997), p.83.

⁹¹ Gransden, *Historical Writing II*, pp.81-83.

‘unintelligible’,⁹² but the most significant key to understanding the work’s national and political provenance. It consciously utilises a tradition aligned with the politically powerful: the imperial image of the king of England. The prophecy is yet another indication of the appeal of the Arthurian crusading hero in the north of England through this period, as a signifier for the kings of England and their activities in Scotland.

The passage describing the arrival of the bastard is damaged in our earliest witness, the Thornton (c.1450s). The omission of the British deliverer from a copy of this period is potentially of great interest in terms of charting the later uses of the Erceldoune tradition, and is discussed in its broader political-historical context in Chapter Four.⁹³ The bastard’s arrival is preserved in the Cambridge, Cotton, Sloane and Lansdowne manuscripts. These four versions are included below as parallel texts, to display their similarities and differences to aid in a conjecture which might bring us closer to the absent text O.

(Cotton)

...of þe forest
 In south ynglond born sal be,
 ... (f)or best
 and al ledes bretayns sal be.
 ... al he ryde,
 est & west *witb* much tene,
 ... ment *witb* myche pryde
 þat neuyr non sych be fore was sene.
 es he sal dyng downe ,
 þat we begun in hys cuntre;
 ... wirke he sal be bown,
 trewly, thomas, as I tell þe.

(Cambridge)

A bastarde shal *cum* fro a forest,
 Not in ynglond borne shall he be
 And he shall wyne þe gre for þe best,
 Alle men leder of Bretan shal he be.
 And *witb* pride to ynglond ride,
 Est And West as... in certain,
 alle false lawes he s(hall)...
 truly to wyrke he shalbe boun
 And alle lede of bretans shal he be.

(Lansdowne)

A basterd shall come out of the west.

(Sloane)

a basted shall *comme* owte of a fforeste,

⁹² Burnham, p.379.

⁹³ See below, Chapter 4, pp.196-201.

And there he shall wyne the gre,	in sothe england borne shalbe,
He shall bothe Est and west,	he shall wynne þe gre for þe beste,
And all the lond breton shall be.	& all þe land after, bretans shalbe.
he shall In to Englodn ryde,	then he shall into England ryde,
Est and west, in hys tyme,	easte, weste, as we heare sayne.
And holde a <i>parlament</i> of moche pryde,	all false lawes he shall laye downe,
That neuer no <i>parlament</i> byfore was seyne.	þat are begonne in þat contre;
And fals lawes he shall ley doune,	trewthe to do he shalbe bone,
That ar goyng in that countre;	& all þe land after bretons shalbe.
And trey werkes he shall begyn,	
And bothe londes bretton shalbe.	

(609-20)

The weight of evidence suggests a hero born in (or from) England. In Middle English uses of the verb ‘born’ we are not here necessarily looking at an identification of the birthplace of the hero, but the locus from which he first emerges (from which he is ‘born’), to take control of the island. The Cambridge allusion to his provenance beyond Britain is notable, although not essentially at odds with the function of the hero as an English royal cipher during a period when English kings held interests in France and were sometimes (literally) born in English territories in mainland France. Richard II (the most likely focus for this prophecy - for reasons detailed below) was born in Bordeaux, in the principality of Aquitaine.⁹⁴ The primary meaning here is the hero’s English affiliation. The reference to the western provenance of the bastard in the sixteenth-century Lansdowne version, preserved also in the contemporary *Prophecies of Rymour, Beid and Marlyng*, is related to a later political use of the prophecy, aligned with memories of the Tudor accession.⁹⁵ However, as is discussed in Chapter Five, the introduction of a western locale to the bastard was almost certainly an innovation rooted in the partisan uses of the *Romance and Prophecies* on the Welsh March during the mid-fifteenth century.⁹⁶

The bastard then travels to the heart of English administration (presumably, although not necessarily, London), where he reforms laws, and in the Lansdowne and Cotton versions calls a parliament. From here he unites the island, an implicit statement of the conquest of Scotland. All

⁹⁴ Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (1997), p.12.

⁹⁵ See above, p.130.

⁹⁶ See below, Chapter 5, p.241.

copies then proceed, after a fashion, to give an account of the Battle of Sandyford starting with a very specific identification of its location in line with geographical markers (Nixon has tentatively suggested an association with a location in the Flodden Hills).⁹⁷ Sandyford is identified explicitly as the site of a 'last battle' in the Cambridge and Sloane versions (623). This is followed by the death of the bastard in the Holy Land (another example of late medieval English Last World Emperor prophecy) in the Sloane and Cotton versions (the Lansdowne breaks off prior to this event, and the Thornton is damaged here), whilst the Cambridge version places his death prior to Sandyford. I consider the Cambridge variant here anomalous, for the bastard's involvement in Sandyford (a battle which secures the English overlordship of Scotland) is a structural precondition for his death in Jerusalem. As a conventional conclusion within English political prophecy of this period, the king's subordination of the British Isles is always prior to his career of international conquest. The Cotton and Cambridge versions then continue to discuss the fate of Black Agnes in a devastated Scotland, an English *idée fixe* within Thomas's mythic biography.⁹⁸ All conclude with the lady's final, grief-stricken farewell to Thomas.

The meaning of the bastard's identification is commonly glossed, as far back as Murray's edition, as an allusion to Arthur's conception out of wedlock in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*. In Book VIII, Arthur is conceived when the British king Uther visits the wife of the duke of Cornwall, Igera, disguised by Merlin's magic as her husband.⁹⁹ However, Murray also understood this frame of reference in relation to a reputedly historical Arthur, whose legendary status in the Old North, he posited, endured into the later Middle Ages. Murray conjectured that the prophecy of the Arthurian bastard draws on an older Cumbrian type, closely related to Welsh, in regional circulation since the *adventus Saxonum*:

It is well known that the flush of enthusiasm and hope which swelled the breasts of his countrymen, during Arthur's series of victories over the pagan invaders, was too fondly cherished to be willingly renounced on his premature removal from the scene... That belief was common to all the relics of the Cymric race, from Strathclyde to Cornwall...¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Nixon, II, p.78.

⁹⁸ See above, pp.125-26.

⁹⁹ *Historia*, VIII, 475-512.

¹⁰⁰ Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, pp.xxvii-xxviii.

Murray, and a number of later scholars after him, confuses myth with history. Arthurian material was not valuable to the authors of political prophecy on the Anglo-Scottish border because Arthur was a mythic-historical warrior of Cumbria, but because as a Galfridian signifier, Arthur was a valuable contemporary propagandist symbol in the cultural armoury of northern English communities under threat from Scotland. By the fourteenth century there is no evidence of a residual British influence in northern England and the Scottish lowlands: it belongs to a dim and distant history, in which the role of Arthur, and the extent of pre-Galfridian Arthurian myth, remains uncertain. The Arthur of the *Romance and Prophecies* is not a Celtic hero of a Scottish prophetic culture, but a British hero of an English one.

In structural terms, the *Romance and Prophecies* are aligned with a northern English prophetic tradition, assuming a functional role in the delineation of English identities in the north of England. The consistency, and development, of material in the Erceldoune tradition has not hitherto been noted by scholars. The table in Appendix 2 sets out the structural predicates common to texts in the English Erceldoune tradition, traced back to *Als Y Yod*.

The *Romance and Prophecies* shares its *chanson d'aventure* opening (as it has been identified by Cooper) with *Als Y Yod* [1].¹⁰¹ Notice of this correspondence potentially sheds light on the much-noted shift in the speaker of the *Romance and Prophecies* from the first to the third person in lines 73 and 276. The first person prologue may well take its cue directly from *Als Y Yod*: the 'Als j me wente þis Endres day' (26) of the romance is a formulation which comes strikingly close to 'Als y yod on ay Monday', which opens the ballad.¹⁰² In both texts, prophecy is one component of a tale of wonder associated with a particular formulaic introduction. The association between the two prophecies was long-lived: a similar encounter with a supernatural male authority is invoked in the introduction of the sixteenth-century *Prophecies of Rymour, Beid and Marlyng*.

Most importantly of all, the fairy mistress's words, like those of the little man, are held in relation to a question common to *Als Y Yod* and all three of the fourteenth-century English Erceldoune texts: how and when will the Anglo-Scottish wars end? [2]. In all, this is associated with a perception of death in battle (both Scottish and English) across the social spectrum [3], followed in *Als Y Yod*, the *Arundel Reply* and the *Romance and Prophecies* by the appearance of an

¹⁰¹ Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', p.178.

¹⁰² For previous discussion of this shift see Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', p.178; Nixon, II, pp.37-38; Burnham, p.377.

Arthurian hero understood as a king of England [4], who brings the wars to their apocalyptic conclusion [5], a framework overt in *Als Y Yod* and the *Romance and Prophecies*, and implicit in the *Arundel Reply* in its re-use of apocalyptic material from the Harley. The *Romance and Prophecies* presents an important innovation to this tradition, drawn on in subsequent Erceldoune prophecies (discussed in Chapters Four and Five): the king's conquest of Europe and Jerusalem, and his death in the holy land [6].

The career and death of the bastard shows the influence of the full career of the boar of Windsor to a greater degree than any prior prophecy in the Erceldoune tradition, (including *Als Y Yod*). It is the earliest Erceldoune text to extend the Arthurian hero-king's achievements past Halidon Hill and the future restoration of English rule in Scotland, to the conquest of Europe and Jerusalem, as found in the *Six Kings*. It is no wonder that in the fifteenth-century derivative of the *Romance and Prophecies*, *Cock in the North*, the victor of the battle of Sandyford is also identified as the boar.¹⁰³ By the early years of the fifteenth century, the conclusion of the bastard's career in Jerusalem was established as an important English prophecy convention. It was long associated with the Arthurian kings of England. By the age of Malory, prophecies of Arthur's return incorporated the English conquest of Jerusalem. In the *Le Morte Darthur*, the account of Arthur's death is appended by an allusion to contemporary prophecies of such a type:

Yet som men say in many p[ar]tys of Inglonde that kynge Arthur ys nat dede, but h[ad] by the wyll of oure Lorde Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall com agayne, and he shall wyne the Holy Crosse.¹⁰⁴

Certainly, by the time Caxton published his edition of Malory's text in 1485, this allusion would have recalled contemporary Arthurian expectations invested in Henry Tudor.¹⁰⁵ This was manifest during this period in the new uses of the bastard of the *Romance and Prophecies*, as a referent for a new English king. In its Arthurian form, this was a specifically English model of political eschatology; and although it saw later appropriation and re-inscription in Welsh political prophetic culture (both in association with Henry Tudor, and as is discussed in Chapter Five, earlier in the course of the fifteenth century, with the earls of March), it saw no contemporary use (of which I am aware) in Scottish history or prophecy-writing.

¹⁰³ See below, Chapter 4, p.174.

¹⁰⁴ Eugène Vinaver, ed., *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 3 vols (1949 rpt; 1947), III, p.1242.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur: The Original Caxton edn*, ed. by Edward Strachey (1868), p.481.

The Historical Function of the Original Text

A question commonly related to the Celticity of the *Romance and Prophecies*, like its reputedly oral composition, is its status as an example of popular literature oppositional to English government.¹⁰⁶ In their analysis of the Erceldoune tradition, Coote and Thornton have regarded the *Romance and Prophecies* as representative of a language harnessed by ‘non-elite’ groups in an attempt to direct the policies of the ‘powerful’.¹⁰⁷ This argument is highly problematic. As Helen Fulton has observed, political prophecies of this period are concerned with kings, saints, and members of the upper nobility, ‘never the commonalty, as we might expect in a popular oral genre’.¹⁰⁸ In its engagement with the British hero-king, the *Romance and Prophecies* is no exception.

However, I do not categorically deny an oppositional function to the text. It is often observed in the study of oppositional literature of the late Middle Ages, that throughout all challenges levied against the government loyalty to the king himself was nearly always professed.¹⁰⁹ The *Romance and Prophecies* articulates opposition not to the person of the king but to the government of the so-called Lords Appellant – functioning as governors of the realm following the effective coup of 1386 – and their unpopular policies on the Anglo-Scottish border during the late 1380s. Although the earliest surviving witness of the *Romance and Prophecies* is the mid-fifteenth-century Lincoln Thornton version, I suggest that the text’s genesis belongs to the reign of Richard II, fairly close to the events of August 1388, the date of the final historical reference in extant copies of the text: the Battle of Otterburn, and the final months of the governorship of the Appellants.

June 1388 saw the resumption of Scottish raids, catching the English, engaged in France under the policy of the Appellants, unawares.¹¹⁰ Successive Scottish raids culminated in the indecisive Battle of Otterburn. This was a period of considerable distress on the northern border which brought pronounced antipathy towards the Appellants, a magnification of oppositional

¹⁰⁶ Coote and Thornton, p.118.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.124.

¹⁰⁸ Helen Fulton, ‘Arthurian Prophecy and the Deposition of Richard II’, in *Arthurian Literature XXII*, ed. by Keith Busby and Roger Dalrymple (2005), pp.64-83 (p.64). For the absence of popular uses of political prophecy in the fourteenth century see also Steven Justice, ‘Prophecy and the Explanation of Social Disorder’, in *Prophecy, Apocalypse and the Day of Doom*, ed. by Nigel Morgan (2004), pp.139-59.

¹⁰⁹ Simon Walker, ‘Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest in the Reign of Henry IV’, *Past and Present*, 166 (2000), 31-65 (pp.58-69), re-printed in *Political Culture in Later Medieval England*, pp.154-82; Dan Embree, ‘The King’s Ignorance: A Topos for Evil Times’, *Medium Aevum*, 54 (1985), 121-26.

¹¹⁰ For an overview of this period see Saul, *Richard II*, pp.176-204; Anthony Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility* (1973), pp.105-33.

feeling elsewhere.¹¹¹ The account of the bastard's return reads as a genuinely futurist prophecy of Richard's re-assertion of power against the Appellants, and his subsequent restoration of English rights on the Anglo-Scottish border. The *Romance and Prophecies* either belongs to the period of considerable popular disillusionment with the Appellants during the summer of 1388, at its strongest on the northern English border; or that which followed, when Richard formally asserted his majority and looked to usher in a new period of justice, emerging as one of the 'leading princes of Christendom'.¹¹² In this respect the text suggests an early wave of the imperial prophecy associated with Richard II, which became more pronounced into the early 1390s but was almost certainly in circulation during the later 1380s. This broader context is discussed below.¹¹³

In understanding attitudes towards Richard II in the north of England during the 1380s, we must not read the events of the late 1390s and the king's deposition back onto this earlier period. It is commonly argued by historians that the final decades of the fourteenth century saw a rejection of the authority of Richard II on the northern border, superseded by a network of regional loyalties to families such as the Percy earls of Northumberland,¹¹⁴ yet what was true for the later 1390s was not necessarily so earlier. Part of being English on the Anglo-Scottish border in the late 1380s, at least from the point of view of the author of the *Romance and Prophecies*, meant loyalty to the king of England, and an awareness of the power of his imperial image. National sentiments were an inextricable component of regional identities.

The Anglo-Scottish Border, c.1380s

In its use of Arthurian prophecy-material, the *Romance and Prophecies* must be held in relation to a long historical view of Northumberland, and the crisis facing the region following the death of

¹¹¹ N. E. Saul, 'The Commons and the Abolition of Badges', *Parliamentary History*, 9 (1990), 302-15.

¹¹² Alistair Dunn, *The Politics of Magnate Power in England and Wales, 1389-1413* (2003), p.52.

¹¹³ See below, pp.152-54.

¹¹⁴ J. A. Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', *Northern History Review*, 3 (1968), 27-52; J. A. Tuck, 'The Emergence of a Northern Nobility, 1250-1400', *Northern History*, 22 (1986), 1-17 (pp.13-17); Cynthia Neville, 'Scotland, the Percies and the Law in 1400', in *Henry IV: The Establishment of the Regime*, ed. by Gwilym Dodd and Douglas Biggs (2003), pp.73-93 (pp.81-82).

Edward III in 1377, the great Arthurian deliverer of the northern English political prophetic tradition.¹¹⁵

The period following Edward's death saw a renewal of Scottish hostilities. Cynthia Neville has noted that the early years of the reign of Richard II saw hardships on the northern English border preceded only by those encountered during the heyday of Robert Bruce.¹¹⁶ Consequently, the late 1370s and much of the '80s saw a re-enforced royal presence on the northern English border, through John of Gaunt's appointment as the lieutenant of the North (1379-84). This is generally understood, like the appointment of the Nevilles as the wardens of the eastern March in 1385, as an active attempt to counter-balance the power of the wardens of the western March, the Percies: Northumberland and his son 'Hotspur'. Attempts to neutralise Percy power in the region almost certainly inspired the family's support for the coup of Henry Bolingbroke, the future Henry IV, in 1399.¹¹⁷ However, the re-enforced royal presence in the region appears to have been a formative factor in regional mentalities. The *Romance and Prophecies* suggests that from the vantage point of c.1388, Northumbrian allegiance to the Percies (whose regional influence, in evidence in fyfte three, is discussed below), still appeared compatible with broader allegiance to the English king.¹¹⁸

During the period of the governorship of the Appellants in the late 1380s, memories of Richard II's 1385 Scottish campaign re-surfaced in the north of England. Following Robert II's welcoming of a French expeditionary group to Scotland in 1385, Richard II marched on Scotland.¹¹⁹ Although ultimately inconclusive, Richard established an English presence as far as Edinburgh, a significant royal intervention on the border during this period. Indeed, in 1385 contemporary chroniclers devoted far more words to Richard's Scottish campaign than they did to Henry IV's in 1400.¹²⁰ Victory in Scotland was not only of tactical importance, but in the life of a young English king, of great symbolic value: Richard II's 1385 campaign was understood by contemporaries as something of a rite of passage.¹²¹ The limited success of 1385 was followed by

¹¹⁵ For an overview of the politics of the Anglo-Scottish border during this period see Neville, *Violence, Custom, and Law*, pp.65-95.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.65.

¹¹⁷ Storey, 'The Wardens of the Marches of England Towards Scotland', pp.594, 596-99; Dunn, *The Politics of Magnate Power*, pp.46-47; Tuck, 'The Emergence of a Northern Nobility', p.14; Tuck, 'Richard II and the Northern Magnates', pp.50-52.

¹¹⁸ See below, pp.154-58.

¹¹⁹ Neville, *Violence, Custom, and Law*, pp.66-67.

¹²⁰ Neville, 'Scotland, the Percies, and the Law in 1400', p.73, and n.7.

¹²¹ Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, p.97; Neville, 'Scotland, the Percies, and the Law in 1400', p.86.

simultaneous Scottish strikes on the western and eastern Marches during the autumn of 1385 and the spring of 1386. A new period of crisis, the raids continued into 1388, culminating in the English losses at the Battle of Otterburn. However, during these later years a second royal campaign was unlikely. Richard II was embroiled with the Appellants, and had little time for, or more to the point, practical power, to direct, northern affairs.¹²² It is possible that the text's final vision of English conquest and regional restoration under the king emerged not because it was realisable in 1388, but because it was needed.

Contemporary Scottish Prophetic Influences

The mid-late 1380s was a time of prophetic interest in both Scotland and England, and the account of the bastard's British victory may well present a reaction to, and re-inscription of, anti-English Scottish prophecy associated with the events of 1385, specifically the historical renewal of the Auld Alliance between France and Scotland, and corresponding fantasies of pan-Celtic military union. During this period, the *When Rome is Removyd* A-text is very likely to have been in Scottish circulation. A number of witnesses give dates, through a sibylline formula, during the 1380s.¹²³ The text draws on the Auld Alliance between Scotland and France (the lily), as a movement precursory to a pan-Celtic alliance and the expulsion of the English from the British Isles. The combination of the pan-Celtic alliance and French aid is a long-lived theme of Scottish political prophecy, which we first find in *Regnum scotorum* (long recognised as a source text for *When Rome is Removyd*):¹²⁴

And the Lilly so lele wytht lovelyche flouris
 For harmes of the hardé heyte sall hillyne his ledis,
 Syne speyde hime at sped, and spawne in the wynter.
 All the Flowris in the Fyrth sall folow hime one.
 Tadcalders sall call on Carioun the noyus,
 And than sall worthe up Wallys and wrethe othir landis,

¹²² Neville, *Violence, Custom, and Law*, p.67.

¹²³ The date varies across witnesses. See Robbins, *Historical Poems*, p.315. Importantly, at least one witness preserves 1385. Coote has held the meaning in relation to the Peasants' Revolt (dating it to the year following, 1382), *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.148, n.75. 1385 is a more likely possibility given the prophecy's interest in a Franco-Scottish alliance.

¹²⁴ Haferkorn, *When Rome is Removed into England*, p.55.

And erth on tyll Albany, if thai may wyne.
 Herme wnto alienys, anever thai sall wakyne!
 The Bruttis blude sall thame wakyne and bryttne wyth brandis of stell:
 Ther sall no bastarde blode abyde in that lande.

(19-28)

It is very likely that this material was known to the author of the *Romance and Prophecies*. This is the closest analogue for its use of the formulaic ‘Bruts blood’, which recurs across the text (cf. the sequence from 352-90, recounting the Battle of Halidon Hill and events from the minority of David II). In *When Rome is Remoyd* the possession of ‘Bruttis blude’ is an essentially non-English quality, meaning British (the Welsh element of a Cambro-Scottish alliance), or perhaps Scottish (that is, of Bruce). This finds a very different meaning in the *Romance and Prophecies*, where it stands fundamentally opposed to the ‘Brusse blood’, Bruce’s blood. As much as the *Romance and Prophecies* builds on a northern English culture of Galfridian political prophecy, it also reclaims much of this material from contemporary Scottish use (similar to earlier English uses of *Regnum scotorum*). It is also possible (although this remains purely conjectural) that the rejection of the English as ‘bastarde blode’ (28) in the Scottish poem was reworked in the *Romance and Prophecies* as the victorious Arthurian bastard, in possession of *the* fundamental right to the British Isles. We see here a defensive English appropriation of Scottish oppositional material, associated with the same historical event.

The association between these prophecies was long-lived. The fifteenth-century B-text of *When Rome is Remoyd* incorporates a good deal of material from the *Romance and Prophecies*, and is ascribed to Thomas of Erceldoune.¹²⁵

The Contentions of Earlier Scholarship

The association of the *Romance and Prophecies* with Richard II and the broader Anglo-Scottish political context of 1388 put forward here represents a significant departure from earlier scholarship on the text. The identification of the bastard not with Richard, but his cousin Henry IV, was a staple conjecture of nineteenth and early twentieth-century students of Thomas.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.108.

Brandl was the first to associate the *Romance and Prophecies* with expectations placed on Henry, dating the composition of the final work between 1400 and the English victory at Homildon in 1402 (which is not mentioned in the prophecy).¹²⁶

This presents a relatively plausible hypothesis: the early years of Henry's reign saw the enthusiastic dissemination of prophecy.¹²⁷ A prophetic framework relating the king to the British deliverer is present in a number of eulogies to Henry adopting a Galfridian style, from John Gower's lauding of Henry as the 'pullus aquile' of *Mortuo leone*, following his accession in 1399,¹²⁸ – attributions found also in the writings of a number of chroniclers and poets,¹²⁹ – to Geoffrey Chaucer's hailing of the king as a second Brutus.¹³⁰ Although remarkably little political prophecy appears to have been overtly manipulated by the Lancastrian regime itself,¹³¹ Henry did on one occasion reputedly associate himself with his heroic grandfather, Edward III. According to the *Chronicle of Thomas of Otterburn*, Henry identified himself in 1399 as the boar of commerce, the cipher from the *Prophetiae Merlini* which formed part of the composite Arthurian allusion of the boar of Windsor in the *Six Kings*.¹³² The association of Henry IV with prophecies of a great crusade endured in the minds of contemporaries throughout his reign, and after his death a *post facto* prophecy circulated, later drawn on by Shakespeare, of his death in Jerusalem, identified as a room in the palace of Westminster (a comment perhaps on frustrated crusading expectations).¹³³ Yet despite the prophetic associations surrounding Henry IV throughout his reign, we have no evidence that associates him with Erceldoune material; whilst through the fifteenth century, as texts discussed in Chapters Four and Five suggest, the hero of the Erceldoune tradition was continually associated with the memory of Richard II. This was not an act of historical-political re-inscription, but a retention of the work's original historical referent.

¹²⁶ Brandl, *Thomas of Erceldoune*, pp.30-31; Robbins, 'Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', p.1526.

¹²⁷ For an overview of political prophecies in circulation in the early years of the reign of Henry IV see Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne* (1998), pp.6-9; Fulton, 'Arthurian Prophecy and the Deposition of Richard II'.

¹²⁸ John Gower, *The Minor Latin Works*, ed. and transl. by R.F. Yeager (2005), pp.46-47.

¹²⁹ *The Chronicle of Adam Usk*, ed. and transl. by Chris Given-Wilson (1997), pp.50-53; 'Richard the Redeless', in *Richard the Redeless and Mum and the Soothseger*, ed. by James M. Dean (2000), pp.23-48 (II.1-9; II.145-93).

¹³⁰ Chaucer, p.656 ('The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse').

¹³¹ Michael Bennett, 'Prophecy, Providence and the Revolution of 1399', in *Prophecy, Apocalypse, and the Day of Doom*, pp.1-18 (pp.13-14).

¹³² Eckhardt, *Prophetia Merlini*, p.31.

¹³³ Adam Usk records the prophecy and Henry's death at Westminster, although not the name of the room, *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, pp.242-43. The room is identified as Jerusalem by Holinshed and Shakespeare after him. *Holinshed's Chronicles of England Scotland and Ireland*, 6 vols (1808), III, p.57; Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 4.5, 235-40.

Richard II and Imperial Prophecy

The relationship between Richard II and imperial prophetic paradigms (with which we must associate the career of the bastard) was a facet of the broader European context of Richard's reign during the 1380s and '90s. Married to Anne of Bohemia (d.1394), Richard existed in a close relationship to the Holy Roman Emperors. Michael Bennett has observed a genuine movement to elect Richard as the Holy Roman Emperor in the mid-1390s, as the popularity of his brother-in-law, Emperor Wenzel, waned.¹³⁴ This was an imperial interest which Richard pursued into the final years of his reign. During this period, Richard was a genuine focus for the reconciliation of Christendom, under threat from the Turks.¹³⁵ This was an international perception. The association of Richard with an imperial crusading expectation is perceptible behind the address to the king by Philippe de Mézières, a diplomat and man of letters at the French court, negotiating Richard II's French marriage and peace between the two countries in 1395.¹³⁶ Philippe hailed Richard as king of all Britain, and the potential leader of a crusade to conquer Jerusalem, identified as Richard's ancestral birthright.¹³⁷ As in contemporary English Galfridian prophecy (including the *Romance and Prophecies*), the conquest of Jerusalem (almost certainly as part of a Last World Emperor paradigm) is here an extension of British high kingship. Such constructions must have been known to Philippe.¹³⁸ Evidence of the courtly use of this material is by no means limited to Philippe's letter. In an entry in his chronicle for 1399, Thomas Walsingham complained of the influence of the flattery of pseudo-prophets upon the credulous king, who cast him as a future emperor, setting him amongst the greatest princes of the world.¹³⁹ This is a far cry from the commonly accepted historical narrative that Richard II only came to present a focus of prophetic expectations after his death.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ Bennett, *Richard II and the Revolution of 1399*, pp.10, 94, 125; Michael Bennett, 'Richard II and the Wider Realm', in *Richard II: The Art of Kingship*, ed. by Anthony Goodman and James Gillespie (1999), pp.187-204 (pp.196-97).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Philippe de Mézières, *Letter to Richard II*, ed. and transl. by G. W. Copeland (1975); Bennett, 'Richard II and the Wider Realm', p.197.

¹³⁷ Philippe de Mézières, pp.101-02; transl. pp.28-29.

¹³⁸ Fulton discusses the relationship of this to a Galfridian framework of meaning. 'Arthurian Prophecy and the Deposition of Richard II', p.69.

¹³⁹ *The St Albans Chronicle. Vol II: 1394-1422*, ed. and transl. by John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss (2011), pp.124-25; Bennett, *Richard II and the Revolution of 1399*, p.93; Bennett, 'Richard II and the Wider Realm', p.202.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Simon Walker, 'Remembering Richard: History and Memory in Lancastrian England', in *Political Culture in Later Medieval England*, pp.183-97 (p.189-90). Elsewhere, however, Walker notes a strong imperial vein running through Richard's own conception of kingship. 'Richard II's View on Kingship', in *Political Culture in Later Medieval England*, pp.139-53 (esp. pp.147-48).

Certainly, however, the association of Richard with eschatological expectation persisted past his deposition in 1399.¹⁴¹ The seditious rumours which broke out simultaneously at a number of Franciscan houses in February 1402 concerning the return of Richard and the overthrow of Henry, can be understood as an extension of Richard's association with crusading prophecy. Although Franciscan opposition to Henry IV has conventionally been interpreted as grounded in challenges to the legality of Henry's accession,¹⁴² curious allusions we find in the account of the rebel friars' trials understanding Richard II as an 'amicus', a friend, of the order,¹⁴³ (a status for which there is no beneficiary precedent differentiating Richard from Henry), can potentially be situated in relation to a prophetic vogue centring on the Last World Emperor in which the order displayed a considerable involvement.¹⁴⁴ The Franciscans were an important presence in Jerusalem during this period, and we might wonder if there were some amongst the order in England who shared the crusading expectations with which Richard was invested during the 1390s.¹⁴⁵ Importantly, in the use of the paradigm of this beloved deliverer amongst the English Franciscans, Richard, not Henry, was the imperial hero. The enduring nature of Richard's crusading associations, as the next two chapters will detail, echoes across fifteenth-century anti-Lancastrian political prophecy, beyond the Franciscan milieu.

The Holy Oil

There is significant evidence of Richard's personal engagement with imperial prophecy. Michael Bennett has written of the king's interest in the crusading prophecies associated with the holy oil of St Thomas, an artefact allegedly rediscovered in the Tower of London during this period.¹⁴⁶ The holy oil was (as I have noted in Chapter Two) originally associated with Edward II, in whom Richard appears to have had a particular historical interest.¹⁴⁷ The existence of the holy oil and

¹⁴¹ For discussion of the return rumours see below, Chapter 4, pp.181-82.

¹⁴² D. W. Whitfield, 'Conflicts of Personality and Principle: The Political and Religious Crisis in the English Franciscan Province, 1400-1409', *Franciscan Studies*, 17 (1957), 321-45 (pp.325-36); Peter McNiven, 'Rebellion, Sedition, and the Legend of Richard II's Survival', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 76 (1994), 93-117 (pp.95-96).

¹⁴³ *Eulogium Historiarum sive Temporis*, III, pp.389-94.

¹⁴⁴ The long association of the order with prophecy must be traced back to Joachim of Fiore, for whose work and influence see Reeves, *Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*.

¹⁴⁵ Michele Campopiano, 'Islam, Jews and Eastern Christianity in Late Medieval Pilgrims' Guidebooks: Some Examples from the Franciscan Convent of Mount Sion', *Al-Masaq*, 24 (2012), 75-89.

¹⁴⁶ Bennett, *Richard II and the Revolution of 1399*, pp.140-41; Fulton, 'Arthurian Prophecy and the Deposition of Richard II', p.72; Ullmann, 'Thomas Becket's Miraculous Oil', pp.129-30; McKenna, 'The Coronation Oil of the Yorkist Kings', pp.102-03.

¹⁴⁷ Bennett, 'Richard II and the Wider Realm', p.190. See above, Chapter 2, p.80.

the prophetic narrative associated with it, concerning a crusading king of England who would conquer Europe and the Holy Land in the fashion of a Last World Emperor, was certainly in circulation during Richard's reign.¹⁴⁸ Although the late fourteenth-century renewal of interest in the prophecy was once regarded a facet of Lancastrian propaganda (a number of chroniclers record that Henry IV was anointed with it at his coronation),¹⁴⁹ there is in fact very little evidence of direct Lancastrian engagement with this prophetic theme. Following the reign of Richard II (like the Erceldoune prophecies) the holy oil only became a pronounced feature of the political landscape in the coronations of the Yorkist kings, who presented themselves as Richard's rightful successors.¹⁵⁰ Its most prolific royal use belongs to Richard's ill-advised Irish campaign of 1399, which, Bennett suggests, may well have been inspired by the status of Ireland as a locus of conquest for the Galfridian crusading hero *Sextus*, a position which corresponds tellingly with Richard's possession of the oil.¹⁵¹

These imperial Galfridian associations travelled far and wide, and were almost certainly in place long before 1399. The reception of a holy oil prophecy in the north of England during the 1380s, and its application to Richard, is suggested by one particular detail of the *Romance and Prophecies*. Thomas's first encounter with his fairy mistress, who issues the prophecy of the bastard and his imperial conquests across the British Isles, Europe, and Jerusalem, sees an initial misidentification of the fairy as the Virgin Mary, the authority of the prophetic narrative associated with the holy oil:

He sayd, 'þone es marye moste of myghte,
 þat bare þat childe þat dyede for mee.
 Bot if j speke w^{it}h þone lady bryghte,
 I hope myne herte will bryste *in* three!

(75-78, quotation from Thornton MS)

The prophecies of the fairy are analogous to the prophecies given by the Virgin Mary to another Thomas: both concern a crusading king of England, and his conquests across Europe to the holy land. We might regard Thomas of Erceldoune and his fairy mistress as the secular counterparts

¹⁴⁸ *Eulogium Historiarum*, I, pp.406-07.

¹⁴⁹ McKenna, 'The Coronation Oil of the Yorkist Kings', p.102, n.3.

¹⁵⁰ Bennett, 'Prophecy, Providence and the Revolution of 1399', p.13. The absence of the *Holy Oil* from Lancastrian propaganda is also noted by Sandquist, 'The Holy Oil of St Thomas of Canterbury', pp.339-40.

¹⁵¹ Bennett, 'Richard II and the Wider Realm', p.202.

of Becket and the Virgin. In the later *Prophecies of Rymour, Beid and Marlyng*, the fairy is directly substituted by the Virgin.¹⁵² This was potentially more than a squeamish sanitisation of the prophecy's secular supernatural source: it is based on prominent structural parallels to holy oil narratives, and the cultural function of the Virgin Mary as the divine guarantor of prophecies of English conquest.¹⁵³

The specific application of this paradigm to the conquest of Scotland is preserved in a related sequence of prophecies in circulation during the 1380s: the *Verses of Gildas*.¹⁵⁴ A derivative of *Sextus* material, which was like the holy oil also previously associated with Edward II, this incorporates into its schema the king's defeat of the Scots and Irish, prior to the conquest of the Holy Land. It was almost certainly conceived in response to the Bruce threat of the early part of the century, for this prophecy presents a conscious re-inscription of Scottish prophetic material drawn on by Edward Bruce: Gildas is one of the sources to whom *Regnum scotorum* was conventionally ascribed.¹⁵⁵ Bennett has evidenced the circulation of this material in relation to Anglo-Scottish affairs during the later years of Richard's reign.¹⁵⁶ The *Verses* may well have also been known to the author of the *Romance and Prophecies*. Indeed, it is more than likely that this material saw renewed circulation in the north during Richard's 1385 campaign against Scotland, a memory which, I have suggested, was drawn on by the author of the romance.

The *Romance and Prophecies* must be understood as a Ricardian document, born out of a contemporary association of Richard II with imperial expectations, and a more distinctively northern English prophetic tradition making a claim for English royal intervention on the Anglo-Scottish border.

The Romance and Prophecies and Hotspur

The *Romance and Prophecies* demonstrates a considerable investment in the role of the English king in Anglo-Scottish border affairs, but it is also immensely valuable as a record of the uses of

¹⁵² Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune', p.185.

¹⁵³ A connection between the two prophecies is also noted by Brandl, although he understands it in relation to Lancastrian propagandist uses of the holy oil. *Thomas of Erceldoune*, p.22.

¹⁵⁴ Phillips, 'Edward II and the Prophets', pp.194-95; Bennett, 'Richard II and the Wider Realm', pp.202-03; Fulton, 'Arthurian Prophecy and the Deposition of Richard II', p.72.

¹⁵⁵ *Scotichronicon*, II, pp.58-59. For Edward Bruce's potential use of *Regnum Scotorum* see above, Chapter 2, p.90.

¹⁵⁶ Bennett, 'Richard II and the Wider Realm', pp.202-03.

national prophecy in relation to key regional figures alongside the king of England. It provides the very earliest extant example of a movement studied in depth in Chapter Four: a prophetic interest in the Percy earls of Northumberland.

The Percies are generally understood, by both contemporary chroniclers and modern historians, as the English counterparts of the Scottish marcher family, the earls of Douglas.¹⁵⁷ The feud between the two families dominated border politics during the late 1370s and '80s, and the 1388 Battle of Otterburn, although a national conflict, has been regarded by historians as possessing the character of a feud between these two great magnate families: the campaign came close to an act of private warfare.¹⁵⁸ Broadly speaking, the battle was a Scottish victory, although casualties were high on both sides: the earl of Douglas was slain, and Hotspur was taken prisoner. In Scotland, the battle was understood as having been won by a dead man, Douglas.¹⁵⁹ Although under whose sword Douglas fell remains unknown, it was long understood to be Hotspur. The Battle of Otterburn was recollected as a direct contestation between the two in border ballads, both Scottish and English, into the sixteenth century.¹⁶⁰ All extant witnesses of the *Romances and Prophecies*, with the exception of Thornton (where the page is entirely cut out from the manuscript),¹⁶¹ include as the final recognisable historical event of the text (concluding fyfte two), an allusion to the earl of Douglas's assault on the bishopric of Durham, encounter with Hotspur, and death at Otterburn.¹⁶² In many respects this sequence is an important antecedent of the Otterburn ballads:

[Cotton]

In to [yng]

& bryn & sla day by day...

... To a towre þan

And hald þer in myche ire

... holychyrche is set

[Cambridge]

be twene A wycked way & A wat^{ur},

A parke and A stony way then;

ther shal a cheften mete in fere,

A full dutey þer shal be slayn.

the tod^{ur} cheftan shal be tane,

¹⁵⁷ For a discussion of contemporary and historical perceptions of this parallel, and its limitations, see Michael Brown, *The Black Douglases* (1998), pp.207-10.

¹⁵⁸ Tuck, 'Richard II and the Northern Border Magnates', p.32; Neville, *Violence, Custom, and Law*, pp.65-66.

¹⁵⁹ Brown, *Black Douglases*, p.76.

¹⁶⁰ 'The Battle of Otterbourne', in *English and Scottish Ballads*, ed. by Francis James Child, 8 vols (1857-59), VII, pp.3-25.

¹⁶¹ The implication of this is discussed in Chapter 4, p.190.

¹⁶² Murray, *Romance and Prophecies*, p.lxxvii; Nixon, II, p.72.

The death of a Douglas at Hotspur's hand is a subject of historical legend, from whom Douglas received his mortal wound remains unknown. Rose, *Kings in the North*, p.338.

relegious þai bryn hym *in* a fyre
 þwtwys a wethy & a water
 a well & a haly stane

(471-84)

A pesans of blode hyme shal slee;
 And lede hym a[w]ay in won,
 And closye hym *in* a castell hee.

(477-84)

[Sloane]

A cheuanteyne then shall ryse *with* pride,
 of all scotland shall bere the floure;
 þai shall, *with* pride, to england fre
 easte & weste as lygges þe waye.
 holy kirk be sett beside,
 & religious men *burne* in fyre;
 their shall to a castell glide,
 & shewe þem there *with* mykell ire.
 betwixt a well & a weare,
 a withwell & a slyke stone,
 þer shall ij cheftens mete in fere,
 the on shall doughtles be slayne
 the brusse blud shall *with* him fle,
 & leade him to a worthi towne,
 and close him in a castell lyght

(471-83)

[Lansdowne]

shall into Englonde Ryde,
 And make men haue full sharpe schoure.
 holy chirche to set on syde,
 had religyons to bren on fyre;
 he shall to the new castell Ryde
 And shew hym there *with* grete Ire.
 By twyx A wey of water,
 A well, & A gret stone,
 there cheuanteynes shall mete on fere,
 And that o dowghty ther shall be slayne.
 that other cheuanteyne shall there be tayne,
 And proude blode withe hyme shall fle,
 And lede hyme tulle A worthe Towne,
 And close hym vp in A castell hye.

(469-84)

Notably, the details of this event as found in all extant versions of the *Romance and Prophecies* cloud the issue of the Scottish victory, for although taken captive in a high tower, Hotspur is said to have driven away the Brusse (Bruce's, that is, Scottish) blood: they 'fle'. Even in the moment of Hotspur's captivity, the battle is represented as an English victory, achieved at the hands of a regional champion.

An English victory at Otterburn is also assumed by at least one contemporary chronicler further south. Walsingham, writing at St Albans, records the death of Douglas at the hand of

Hotspur, and declares the battle an English victory.¹⁶³ Walsingham's account is particularly interesting in terms of its presentation of the combat between the two Marcher lords, which accords with that of the *Romance and Prophecies*: 'duos tam preclaros iuvenes manus conserere et pro gloria decertare' ('two illustrious young men joining in battle and fighting for glory').¹⁶⁴

We here see something of the Percy 'romance' which was to prove powerful political capital into the fifteenth century: casting the Percies, and Hotspur in particular, as the champions of the border.¹⁶⁵ However, on the northern border, this hand-to-hand combat carried a very specific resonance. The construction of this encounter is conceptually similar to the process of trial by judicial combat. This same practice informed the prophetic scene of *Als Y Yod*, which pitted Edward III against the Bruce faction in a similar framework.¹⁶⁶

In the *Romance and Prophecies*, the encounter between Douglas and Hotspur, champions of the English and Scottish March respectively, are in a sense symbolic of devolved national power. The prophecy is concerned not as in *Als Y Yod* with a meeting of royal authorities, but with wardens of the March, cast in the same highly nationalist colours as the rest of the text: Douglas's force is identified as 'Brusses blod'. In terms of the binary division established by the text, this makes Hotspur, the champion of the English, that is, the British, a position close to that of the bastard. This Galfridian element, framing a defence of prophetically-sanctioned territorial rights, was to become an important component of Percy and Percy-ite dynastic mythology in the north of England in the decades following the production of the *Romance and Prophecies*.

This treatment of Hotspur affords a glimpse into a literary-political construction remarkably close to the heroic Hotspur of Shakespeare, who secured the envy of princes and kings. Notably, in the Cotton text Hotspur is described as a 'tarslet': a bird of prey, potentially an

¹⁶³ *The St Albans Chronicle, Vol I: 1376-1394*, ed. by John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss (2003), pp.856-57. In contrast, the *Westminster Chronicle* regards Otterburn as a catastrophic failure, attributed to the headstrong Hotspur. *The Westminster Chronicle, 1381-1394*, ed. and transl. by L. C. Hector and Barbara F. Harvey (1982), pp.348-49.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* The fourteenth century also saw a more general vogue orientating judicial combat in relation to political prophecy. Adam Usk records Richard II's receipt of a prophecy concerning the outcome of the contest between Bolingbroke and the earl of Norfolk in 1398, an event of great importance in the longer historical view of this period, prompting the circumstances which directly led to Richard's deposition. *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, pp.50-51.

¹⁶⁵ This is discussed in Chapter 4.

¹⁶⁶ See above, Chapter 2, p.99.

eagle.¹⁶⁷ This brings Hotspur into relation with the eagle or hawk, with which the bastard of the third fyttte has been associated by scholars of the text, a secondary meaning correspondent in politically prophetic terms to the Arthurian deliverer, which we can trace back to the royal eagle's chick of the *Prophecy of the Eagle*.¹⁶⁸ In his defeat of his Scottish antagonist, the 'tarslet' Hotspur paves the path to Scotland for the bastard, who in the next fyttte achieves final conquest. The Cotton variant merely makes explicit what is implicit elsewhere: champion of the north and enemy of the Scots, Hotspur is cast in the mould of the kings of England. In this respect, the *Romance and Prophecies* makes an important contribution to our understanding of the perceptions of the Percies, and maybe even Percy ambitions, within a northern border milieu as early as 1388. It suggests a perception of the Percies as exercising a certain level of regional autonomy. This was particularly pronounced following Gaunt's withdrawal from the border in 1384, and the effective restoration of control of the far north to the northern magnates. This was a region felt to be ungovernable without the Percies.¹⁶⁹

Although in the *Romance and Prophecies* an affiliation to both Richard II and the Percies appears far from incompatible (Northumberland's neutrality, and even mediating role, in the contention between Richard II and the Lords Appellant is well noted),¹⁷⁰ there is something telling about the centrality of the Percies here, and Hotspur's privileged position as a champion of England, which suggests the crystallisation of a regional affinity, defining its loyalties in resoundingly local and localist terms, whilst adopting the nationally-inflected grammar of Galfridian prophecy. The *Romance and Prophecies* marks the very beginning of a movement which by the early fifteenth century saw Erceldoune prophecy drawn on as a component of a factionalist discourse setting the Percies against the first Lancastrian king, Henry IV. Here, the prophesied British deliverers were not the kings of the England but the Percies. To borrow a phrase from Alastair Dunn, the gravity of magnate power shifted northwards during this period,¹⁷¹ and in relation to this political transformation in the north of England, the *Romance and Prophecies* itself came to acquire a new, decidedly factionalist meaning: a magnification of the interest shown in Hotspur in the original text. This movement forms the discussion of Chapter Four.

¹⁶⁷ This is consistent with the symbolic system of much of the prophecy, which is concerned with Anglo-Scottish relations given through bird imagery. Three 'tarsletes' (glossed as lords in the Cotton MS) also appear to unsettle the Scots in 463-64. This may well be the Percies (Northumberland, Worcester, and Hotspur).

¹⁶⁸ Brandl, *Thomas of Erceldoune*, p.38; Nixon, II, pp.44, 77-78.

¹⁶⁹ Neville, *Violence, Custom, and Law*, p.68.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.42; Alexander Rose, *Kings in the North: The House of Percy in British History* (2002), p.336.

¹⁷¹ Dunn, *Politics of Magnate Power*, p.48.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to orientate the early English Erceldoune tradition in the broader context of the northern English political prophetic traditions associated with Edward III, and fantasies of royal intervention of the northern English border. This is a practice which was extended into the reign of Richard II, in many respects a king cast (from this perspective) in the image of his grandfather. However, by the 1380s, and the production of the *Romance and Prophecies*, this material was not simply orientated against the Scots, but against factions within England, here the Lords Appellant. This represents the very beginning of a process by which the Arthurian hero came to express intra-national opposition. This is a precedent which, we shall see, was enthusiastically drawn on in the century following the deposition of Richard II by a family who feature as champions of the northern border in the *Romance*: the Percies.

Chapter 4

Re-drawing the Map of Insular Power: *Cock in the North* as Percy-ite Prophecy

The representation of Richard II as the returning British deliverer found in the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune* continued to circulate in Northumberland past Richard's deposition in 1399, and in the early years of the fifteenth century came to function as a statement of opposition to the Lancastrian regime, entering wider English, and later Welsh, circulation. The changing political uses of the Erceldoune tradition which accompanied this geographical movement form the subject of the final two chapters of this thesis.

The primary text with which this chapter is concerned is *Cock in the North*, a prophecy oppositional to the Lancastrian regime, which was composed and first circulated in the north of England in the early years of the fifteenth century.¹ A derivative of the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, the prophecy also incorporates material from the *Six Kings* and the Scottish A-text of *When Rome is Removyd*, influential texts amongst English communities on the Anglo-Scottish border. Its utility was long-lived. As well as later application to Richard of York during the 1450s, and Edward IV after him,² it was invoked as a mode of English factional prophecy oppositional to Elizabeth I,³ and in 1603 was incorporated as part of the *Whole Prophecie of Scotland*.⁴ Although long considered to be a mid-fifteenth-century Yorkist invention, evidence of Percy and Percy-ite applications of prophecy during the anti-Lancastrian revolt of the early fifteenth century, suggests that *Cock in the North* was a far earlier production, composed in the broader milieu of the Percy earls of Northumberland, preserving an important statement of antipathy towards the Lancastrian regime.⁵

¹ For printed versions of the text see Alois Brandl, ed., *Cock in the North: Poetische Weissagung auf Percy Hotspur (gest. 1403)* (1909); Robbins, *Historical Poems*, pp.15-17, 309-12.

² This application is discussed in Chapter 5.

³ A late derivative of *Cock in the North* is found in the Latin prophecy which featured in the trial of the duke of Norfolk in 1571. This prophecy is discussed by Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp.106-07, who, however, does not observe this connection.

⁴ See above, Chapter 3, pp.130-31.

⁵ For the relationship between the north and anti-Lancastrian politics of this period see Neville, *Violence, Custom, and Law*, pp.96-124; R. L. Storey, 'The North of England', in *Fifteenth-century England, 1399-1509*, ed. by S. B. Chrimes, C. D. Ross, and Ralph Griffiths (1997), pp.129-44 (pp.134-37); Peter McNiven, 'The Scottish Policy of the Percies and the Strategy of the Rebellion of 1403', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 62 (1989), 212-27; Andy King, "'They have the Hertes of the People by North': Northumberland, the Percies and Henry IV, 1399-1408", in *Henry IV: The Establishment of the Regime*, pp.139-59; Mark Arvanigian, 'The "Lancastrianization" of the North in the Reign of Henry IV, 1399-1413', in *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth-century Europe*, ed. by D. L. Biggs, S. D. Michalove, and A. Compton Reeves (2004), pp.9-38; J. M. W. Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies', *History*, 44 (1959), 212-27; E. F.

This Percy-ite connection has been observed in the only full-length study of the prophecy, undertaken by Alois Brandl in 1909.⁶ Although Brandl's research has been little commented upon by subsequent English-language scholars of the prophecy, it remains an important watershed in the study of political prophecy. Brandl dated the prophecy to 1403, locating it in the broader context of Percy propaganda preceding the Battle of Shrewsbury, the violent culmination of the 1403 Percy rebellion. This chapter offers a revision to this position. Although we must associate the prophecy with a particular mode of Percy-ite anti-Lancastrianism which was first employed in 1403, the prophecy itself is a product of the political scene of 1405, specifically, the alliance between the earl of Northumberland and the Welsh rebel Owain Glyn Dŵr.

As a vehicle for Percy partisan prophecy, the Erceldoune tradition was transformed from prophecies concerned with Anglo-Scottish conflict, forecasting an English king's conquest of Scotland, to prophecies invested in the decline of the Lancastrian kingship. Percy-ite uses of Erceldoune prophecy present the earliest identification of the Arthurian hero of the Anglo-Scottish border with an aristocratic figure other than the king of England, drawn on in opposition to the English crown. This unprecedented innovation is indebted to the importance of the Arthurian hero in the construction of jingoistic national identifications in the north of England, born out of generations of Anglo-Scottish border conflict. During the civil strife of the early years of the fifteenth century, this locus of authority came to be associated with the Percies. This must be understood as the full realisation of a perceived devolution of royal authority on the northern border, already hinted at in the treatment of the Battle of Otterburn in the *Romance and Prophecies*.⁷ In the Percy-ite uses of political prophecy we find the incipient terms of the fledgling nation. To apply the terms of Saskia Sassen once more, *Cock in the North* reads as an assertion of territory, authority, and rights, vehemently defended not against the Scots, but the Lancastrian monarchy.

Cock in the North is the earliest English prophecy to overtly employ a staple of Scottish Galfridian prophecy, the pan-Celtic union, against an English king as an English factionalist mode of corporate address. This Percy-ite refashioning of Scottish material was facilitated not by events on the Anglo-Scottish border, but on the Welsh. The 1405 Tripartite Indenture between the earl of Northumberland and the Welsh rebel Owain Glyn Dŵr, which saw the anti-

Jacob, *Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485* (1961), pp.44-54; Bertie Wilkinson, *Constitutional History of England in the Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485* (1964), pp.4-5.

⁶ See above, n.1.

⁷ See above, Chapter 3, pp.154-58.

Lancastrian rebellion in England aligned with the rebellion in Wales, is an important moment in the history of political prophecy.⁸ As this chapter will detail, the wording of the Indenture alludes to a specifically northern English field of prophetic interest, drawn on by the earl of Northumberland in relation to the alliance's geo-political designs.

Cock in the North memorialises the Indenture, drawing on the affiliation between the Welsh cause and the Percy, to authorise the territorial rights of the Percies as analogous to the Welsh. In the prophecy the Percies appear as agents for insular restoration allied with the Welsh against the Saxons, substituting the role of the Scots in prophecies of pan-Celtic union in circulation in the north of England. For followers of the Percies, the usurping Saxons were not the English but the Lancastrians, encroaching on territorial rights understood in terms defined by Galfridian history and prophecy. The authorising use of a Welsh alliance here presents yet another facet of the legacy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's British book, and the centrality of elements perceived as Welsh (and therefore prophetically authentic) in insular prophetic culture during the later Middle Ages. To return to Bhabha's terminology, the *Cock in the North* is dependent on the anterior (although at a vast historical remove) Welsh resonances of Galfridian prophecy, and more directly, Scottish strategies accessible to this northern border milieu.

The use of a Galfridian meta-narrative in the construction of anti-Lancastrian discourse is a tactic long-noted in studies of Yorkist political prophecy, but its debt to Percy-ite strategy has yet to be considered by scholars of the genre.⁹ In the early years of the fifteenth century, the Percies, the first line of defence against the Scots in northern England, came to be figured in political prophecy as members of the same pan-Celtic alliance with which so much border-prophecy of the fourteenth century was concerned. Generations of paranoid perception in the prophetic production and consumption of the northern English border provided material for a new type of oppositional statement. In its uses of political prophecy, the Percy-ite milieu in the north of England came to occupy the position of an independent state at war with the Lancastrian monarchy.

⁸ Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, p.57; R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (1995), pp.166-69; Glanmor Williams, *Owain Glyn Dŵr* (1993), pp.39-40. A copy of the Indenture survives only in the so-called *Giles Chronicle*, BL, Sloane MS 1776; printed in *Thomas Matthews's Welsh Records in Paris: A Study in Selected Welsh Medieval Records*, ed. by Dylan Rees and J. Gwynfor Jones (2010), pp.108-10, transl. pp.116-17. For discussion of the chronicle see C. L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (1913), pp.24-28; M. V. Clarke, *Fourteenth-century Studies* (1937), pp.78-89; M. V. Clarke and V. H. Galbraith, 'The Deposition of Richard II', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 14 (1930), 125-81 (pp.149-55). Although doubt has been cast on the historicity of the Indenture (cf. Smallwood, 'Prophecy of the Six Kings', pp.591-92), contemporary political prophecy, such as the *Cock in the North*, suggests its prominent place in Percy-ite propaganda.

⁹ See below, Chapter 5, n.18.

The Percies

In order to understand the proto-nationalist strategies at work in Percy-ite prophecy, we must first understand the extent and shape of Percy influence in the north of England. Much has been written about the development of the family's power base in Yorkshire and Northumberland, and their prominent role in the English defence against Scotland.¹⁰ As wardens of the Anglo-Scottish March during the late fourteenth and into the fifteenth centuries the Percies were in control of a standing army at a remove from the direct influence of the crown, fostering their own network of loyalties. A famous anecdote survives from the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. Riding north to escape the revolt, John of Gaunt sought sanctuary at the Percy stronghold of Alnwick Castle, where Northumberland's messengers told Gaunt that his request was refused at the decree of the earl, 'a principall and sovereigne of all the heads of Northumberland'.¹¹ This was a perception in the north which became all the more pronounced during the early years of the fifteenth century.

Cock in the North belongs to a period of a growing, and highly visible, Percy affinity. In January 1404 the earl of Northumberland issued livery to the men of Northumberland. Even after the earl's (short-lived) surrender to the Lancastrian regime in February 1404, this body of Percy retainers and allies in the north-east remained the strong arm of a dominant faction, beyond the direct control of the king.¹² This was a situation conceptually similar to the Marcher lordships of the Welsh border: a level of territorial independence governed by local customs and largely beyond the intervention of the English crown, a *de facto* state of petty kingship.¹³ Yet the Percies also understood themselves as political voices who belonged at the very centre of government. By 1403 they came to cast themselves as kingmakers, a decisive force in the realm, capable of un-making Henry IV, whose successful contestation of Richard II's throne they had aided only four years previously. This about-turn demanded the creation of a political propaganda machine capable of rivalling the Lancastrian re-writing of history in 1399. In his *Chronicle*, John Hardyng incorporates a letter from the Percies to Henry IV during the 1403 revolution:

¹⁰ J. M. W. Bean, *The Estates of the Percy Family, 1416-1537* (1958), pp.3-11; Chris Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages* (1987), pp.132-35; Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, pp.201-02; Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates'; Rose, *Kings of the North*; Reid, 'The Office of the Warden of the March'; Storey, 'The Wardens and the Marches of England towards Scotland, 1377-1489'; Neville, 'Scotland, the Percies and the Law in 1400'.

¹¹ *Anonimale Chronicle, 1333-81*, ed. by V. H. Galbraith (1970), pp.152-53; cited in Rose, *Kings in the North*, p.330.

¹² Dunn, *Politics of Magnate Power*, p.106.

¹³ A similar point is made by Arvanigian, 'The "Lancastrianization" of the North in the Reign of Henry IV, 1399-1413', p.14.

... we send mortal *diffidatio* to you and your accomplices and allies, as traitors and destroyers to the *respublica* of the realm and invaders [of the right] of the true and direct heir of England and France [Richard II], and as oppressors and trespassers; and we intend to prove this with our own hands this day, with the help of all-powerful God.¹⁴

Although Hardyng is now recognised as a prolific forger of documents, the notion of the Percies as guardians of the ‘respublica’ is a position echoed (and dismissed as an invented excuse for rebellion) in Walsingham’s *Chronicle* account of 1403.¹⁵ This material was surely known to Hardyng through his employment by the family. We find in Hardyng’s account a strong statement about the value of English territory, reflective of a chauvinism endemic to northern English political prophecy. This is a mentality to which the Percies and their broader milieu were heir. Political prophecy not only reflected rebellion, it is indicative of a mindset from which rebellion was born.

This sense of an independent regional power base, set apart from regno-centric England, which could be levied against the English crown, was in part a direct product of the family’s negotiations with Scotland during the late fourteenth century. The Percies’ interest in maintaining their position on the northern border, and attempted expansion into Scotland, has been recognised as one of the motivating factors in the political decisions of both the earl of Northumberland and his son Hotspur through the rebellions of the early fifteenth century: first the Lancastrian, and later the anti-Lancastrian. Peter McNiven has suggested that the Percies’ desire for complete independence from the English crown in pursuit of ambitions in Scotland was one of the factors behind the attempted coup of 1403.¹⁶ Certainly, in the political behaviours, and accompanying prophetic casting and self-casting, of the family, a nationalist language, and national strategies of address, were re-channelled in line with a strong sense of regional lordship and localised interest. In *Cock in the North*, affairs of the northern border occupy the same space as opposition to the English crown. The rebellion became a matter of Percy territorial rights as much as in any war across the border.

¹⁴ *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, ed. by Henry Ellis (1812), pp.352-53.

¹⁵ Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c.1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (1982), p.275; *St Albans Chronicle: II*, pp.358-61.

¹⁶ McNiven, ‘The Scottish Policy of the Percies’, pp.502-30.

Percy Mythology

Although undoubtedly a year of calamity for the Percies, 1403 also marked the beginnings of a concentrated propaganda war, which saw the crystallisation of a Percy mythology which endured long after the Battle of Shrewsbury. It was not until after the break with the Lancastrian regime, and its authorising narratives, in 1403, that distinctively Percy-ite versions of this history began to emerge, functioning in direct opposition to the Lancastrian version of the events of 1399. This was a history itself as highly revisionist as the Lancastrian *Record and Process*. One of the most important aspects of this was the Percies' reconstructed, and indeed greatly belated, sense of Ricardian loyalism, formulated as an accusation of perjury against Henry IV, whose interests the Percies had supported in 1399 – they claimed – in his right as the duke of Lancaster, not as a claimant to the throne.¹⁷ They never intended, this revision went, Richard II's deposition.

This period saw the development of what we can best regard as a Percy 'romance',¹⁸ in circulation in the north of England, drawing on the figure of the rightful king Richard. Although the term 'romance' has been used in relation to the dynastic image of the Percies in the period surrounding 1403, it has not been noted in previous scholarship that the Percy-ite Ricardian myth was in many respects an Arthurianising movement. The assertions of Hotspur's status as Richard's 'true knight', acting in 'defence of his princys realme' against Lancastrian usurpation, is a staple of later Percy chronicle treatments of the early fifteenth-century rebellion.¹⁹ This formulation rests heavily on the conventions of medieval romance, and the deeds of the knights of King Arthur. We must associate this with the central place of Arthurian territorial aggrandisement in the prophetic traditions of northern England, engaged with the concept of Arthurian prowess and a vast insular empire divided between sub-kings rooted in the Arthurian kingdom of *Historia*, IX, 306-55. Indeed, Percy-ite use of this structure suggests some notion of Percy sub-kingship, a position which I shall return to across the materials surveyed in this chapter. Percy-ite use of this paradigm finds its earliest articulation in political prophecies associated with the family, the production of which is in many respects comparable to better

¹⁷ Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies'; James Sherborne, 'Perjury and the Lancastrian Revolution of 1399', *Welsh History Review*, 14 (1988-89), 217-41.

¹⁸ Dunn, *Politics of Magnate Power*, p.76. For the Lancastrian narrative of 1399 see 'Records and Process', in *Chronicles of the Revolution*, ed. by Chris Given-Wilson (1993), pp.168-89; *St Albans Chronicle: II*, pp.168-219.

¹⁹ A. S. G. Edwards, 'Recordings of a Dynasty: Verse Chronicles of the House of Percy', in *Recording Medieval Lives: Proceedings of the 2005 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Julia Boffey and Virginia Davis (2009), pp.74-84 (esp. p.76); G. Tscherpel, 'The Political Function of History: The Past and Future of Noble Families', in *Family and Dynasty in Late Medieval England*, ed. by R. Eales and S. Tyas (2003), 87-104 (p.101).

noted later acts of literary production amongst members of the broader Percy affinity, and those under Percy patronage.²⁰

It has been suggested by J. M. W. Bean that this retrospective Ricardian loyalism must be associated with the Percies' opportunistic espousal of the young earl of March's claim to the throne in the early 1400s, a second 'effort at kingmaking'.²¹ Whilst the Percies' opportunism in regard to the earl of March's claim must be recognised, there are elements to the Percy-ite Ricardian narrative which establish a distinctive mode of dynastic casting in which the Mortimer claim has no clear place. The Percies were by this period coming to understand their northern stronghold increasingly in terms of total autonomy from the English king. Similarly, profession of Richard's right was an authorising strategy, and an empty promise made in the safe assurance that by 1403 such a return was not a genuine possibility. The use of political prophecy by the Percy faction, and the Percies themselves, during the early fifteenth century aids in the reconstruction of an anti-Lancastrian political discourse grounded in a distinctive sense of the regional autonomy of a petty kingdom. This, over and above any genuine belief in the Mortimer heir or Ricardian return, formed the central political ideology of the Percy faction.

Percy ambition and separatism was formalised in the territorial provisions for a Percy-administered northern English state in the Tripartite Indenture of February 1405, which united the earl of Northumberland with Owain Glyn Dŵr, and Sir Edmund Mortimer (uncle to the Mortimer heir to Richard II), carving England and Wales into three independent lordships held loosely under a Mortimer crown of London. A unified Wales under Owain was to be extended into England, bordered by the Trent and the Mersey; with Percy domains in the north of England expanded into the west Midlands and as far as Norfolk; and the remaining territories in the south brought under the purview of Sir Edmund Mortimer, presumably acting as regent for the young Mortimer heir.²² In this agreement, the historical territorial interests of the Mortimer heir were largely sidelined in favour of the creation of two large, effectively independent lordships in Wales and in the north of England.

Cock in the North stands in the debt of two years of anti-Lancastrian Percy and Percy-ite propaganda, entering circulation just as an independent Percy-ite north looked to be a genuine political reality.

²⁰ Edwards, 'Recordings of a Dynasty', esp. pp. 76, 79-80; Tscherpel, 'Political Function of History', pp.98-103.

²¹ Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies', p.226; Wilkinson, *Constitutional History*, pp.2-4.

²² See above, n.8.

Synopsis of the Text

The symbolic grammar of *Cock in the North* formulates a statement of opposition to the Lancastrian regime, beginning with an overview of contemporary events c.1403, and constructing a field of prophetic expectation pertinent to the political scene c.1405. Beginning with the death of Hotspur, figured as the cock (the meaning of which is discussed below) and later the lion (the arms of the earls of Northumberland),²³ in rebellion against the Lancastrian regime at the Battle of Shrewsbury in July 1403, the text prophesies the rise of the moon in the north-west. The moon is an important Percy symbol, appearing on the family's arms,²⁴ and its specific situation here suggests a reference to the earl of Northumberland's seal from the beginning of the fifteenth century, which depicts a moon rising from a cloud: in the prophecy the moon rises from a 'clowde of blake as ys bill of a crowe'.²⁵ The use of the Percy moon as a prophetic cipher was noted by contemporary chroniclers: Adam Usk refers to it in a prophecy associated with the death of Hotspur at the Battle of Shrewsbury.²⁶ He may well have had a version of *Cock in the North* in mind.

This is followed by a description of an alliance between the lion (Northumberland), and a dragon (Owain Glyn Dŵr). The latter cipher is suggestive of a continued English perception of the relationship of the *Omen of the Dragons* to Welsh affairs. This occurs prior to the return of a dead man (Richard II), his siege of London, identified as 'Troy vntrew', and the establishment of the lion, alongside his queen, the lioness, as ruler. The allusion to Northumberland's Welsh alliance has been noted by Robbins, although the fuller implications of this identification for the prophecy's dating and political provenance, have largely gone unnoticed by subsequent critics.²⁷ The association with Richard II, and the implications of this for our understanding of the Percyite strategy at work in the prophecy, has attracted no prior scholarly attention.

The prophecy is an important representative of a long-lived anti-Lancastrian political mythology foregrounding the rights of the dead King Richard. It is for this reason that the prophecy saw significant re-use by Yorkist partisans later in the century. The earliest witness of the text is found in BL, Cotton Roll, II. 23, a collection of trial materials associated with Jack

²³ S. M. Collins, 'The Blue Lion of Percy', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th series, 20 (1946), 113-18; W. H. D. Longstaffe, 'The Old Heraldry of the Percies', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, NS 4 (1860), 157-228 (pp.166-67). Longstaffe's article remains the most comprehensive account of Percy symbolism to date.

²⁴ Longstaffe, p.173.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.174.

²⁶ *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, pp.170-71.

²⁷ Robbins, *Historical Poems*, p.310.

Cade's Revolt of 1450, containing a number of prophecies suggestive of an interest in the royal claim of the duke of York.²⁸ It is from this witness that the text is quoted throughout this chapter (with the exception of a number of additional passages, unique to CUL, Kk. I. v). However, *Cock in the North* was not a text originally concerned with the dukes of York but the Percy earls of Northumberland, and it is steeped in Percy-ite political mythology which takes its cue from the somewhat cynical early 1403 assertion of 'a true king deposed'.²⁹

Manuscript Witnesses

The major obstacle in the study of the Erceldoune tradition of the early fifteenth century is that the seditious content which makes prophecy texts of the early 1400s so significant for historical study, also ensured their suppression. No copies of any Erceldoune text, including *Cock in the North*, survive prior to the mid-fifteenth century. It is presumably for this reason, tainted by association, that no copy of the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune* (one of the key source texts for *Cock in the North*) pre-dates the mid-fifteenth century. Despite the late date of these survivals, through the political references and regional distributions of the mid-fifteenth century copies of *Cock in the North*, it is possible to reconstruct the primary meaning of the prophecy, and the conditions of its early use and transmission. Extant witnesses from this period are detailed in Appendix 3.

Cock in the North saw broad geographical circulation across England and Wales during the fifteenth century. Alongside its appropriation as a Yorkist prophecy (with broad geo-political appeal) in the mid-century, local networks of Percy loyalty explain a large measure of the regional circulation of the prophecy, both in Percy strongholds in the north of England, and on the Anglo-Welsh border, where the family fostered interests in the early fifteenth century, in the service of, and rebellion against, Henry IV, and through the 1405 alliance with Owain Glyn Dŵr.³⁰ The family were also, in the early years of the century, in possession of two-thirds of the Mortimer estates of the young earl of March (Hotspur's nephew) through the earl's minority.³¹ The northern Welsh March in particular was certainly considered a stronghold by the Percies in

²⁸ See below, Chapter 5, pp.228-29.

²⁹ Hardyng, pp.352-53.

³⁰ R. A. Griffiths, *The Principality of Wales in the Later Middle Ages: The Structure and Personnel of Government, I. South Wales, 1277-1536* (1972), pp.122, 125, 126; Dunn, *Politics of Magnate Power*, pp.98-99; Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies', p.221; Ralph Griffiths, 'Wales and the Marches', in *Fifteenth-Century England*, pp.145-72 (pp.147-48).

³¹ Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies', p.219; McNiven, 'The Scottish Policy of the Percies', p.499.

the early fifteenth century: evidence survives from this period of plans for a Percy *coup d'état* in north Wales, with support sought from Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Tudors of Anglesey.³² It is almost certainly through Percy influence in the region that *Cock in the North* initially saw circulation in Wales. Welsh uses of the prophecy are further addressed in Chapter Five, but it is worth noting here that *Cock in the North* preserves an important moment in insular literature, heralding the beginning of an Anglo-Welsh political discourse, re-shaping Galfridian notions of Britishness in line with English factionalist agendas which made a genuine provision for Welsh independence.

The first manuscript relevant to the consideration of a Percy association with the text is BL, MS Cotton Vespasian E. vii (c.1461-80). Bearing the Percy coat of arms on fol. 70r, the manuscript was owned by, or compiled for, one of the Percies.³³ It belongs to the period when the Percies were aligned with the Yorkist cause and it reads as a compilation of Percy-ite and Yorkist prophecies. The manuscript incorporates Latin prophecies staging the arrival of a British deliverer, common to Yorkist prophecy collections: the angel's prophecy to Cadualdrus in *Historia*, XI; a number of *Sextus* prophecies; and, most importantly for my purposes, a Latin version of *Cock in the North*. The prophecy is identified at its conclusion as 'prophetia Merling'. This Merlinian identification aligns the prophecy with the northern English Galfridian tradition of prophecies ascribed to Merlin, such as *Als Y Yod* and the *Six Kings*, engaged with the question of English intervention in Scotland. This field of northern interest is strongly apparent in the manuscript which also includes prophecies concerned with Scottish affairs, *Regnum scotorum* and *Ecce dies veniunt*, alongside other prophetic material pertaining to the English conquest of Berwick.³⁴ Although a compilation belonging to the age of Yorkist royal ascendancy, this manuscript strongly reflects the historical territorial interests of the Percies.

Another witness of *Cock in the North* associated with a region of the country with Percy interests, is the copy inserted into BL, Harley MS 1717, a thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman

³² Ralph Griffiths, 'The Glyn Dŵr Rebellion through the Eyes of an Englishman', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 22 (1967), 151-68 (pp.156, 168); Peter McNiven, 'The Men of Chester and the Rebellion of 1403', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 1980 (for the year 1979), 1-28 (pp.6-7); J. E. Messham, 'The County of Flint and the Rebellion of Owen Glyndwr in the records of the earldom of Chester', *Flintshire Historical Publications*, 23 (1967-68), 1-34 (pp.9-10).

³³ Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, pp.320-24; Planta, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library*, p.480. The manuscript is also discussed briefly in A. S. G. Edwards, 'Books Owned by Medieval Members of the Percy Family', *Tributes to Kathleen L. Scott, English Medieval Manuscripts*, ed. by Marlene Villalobis Hennessy (2009), pp.73-82 (p.81); Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.261-62; Lerner, *Powers of Prophecy*, pp.101-03; Curley, *Edition of the Prophecies of John of Bridlington*, pp.387-88; Brandl, *Cock in the North*, p.1164; Alison Allan, *Political Propaganda Employed by the House of York in England in the Mid-Fifteenth Century, 1450-1471* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Swansea University, 1981), pp.215-27.

³⁴ fol. 95v, prophecy beginning 'Villa super Twedam'.

chronicle.³⁵ This contains a mid-fifteenth-century copy of the prophecy, with the contents essentially as in Cotton Roll, II. 23 but in a northern dialect, located by the *Linguistic Atlas* in Lancashire.³⁶ The manuscript has been associated with the collegiate church of St John of Beverley, Yorkshire.³⁷ Beverley was a site of distinctive Percy influence: the great Percy tomb is found at Beverley Minster Church.³⁸ Prophecies associated with the Percy family endured in circulation in Beverley well into the sixteenth century.³⁹ Indeed, the heroic cult of the Percies died late in Yorkshire as a whole: the prophecy famously invoked by the Yorkshire vicar John Dobson against Henry VIII in the aftermath of the Pilgrimage of Grace invokes the ascent of the Percy moon.⁴⁰ We might think of no more appropriate place for the circulation of *Cock in the North* than here.

However, the most significant extant northern witness of *Cock in the North* in terms of its alignment with continuous northern English prophetic traditions, is found in a mid-fifteenth-century hand in CUL, Kk. I. v, which continues for some hundred or so lines after the dead man's successes in Jerusalem, to prophesy protracted Anglo-Scottish conflict integrated in a quasi-apocalyptic schema analogous to the earlier Erceldoune prophecies.⁴¹ Although Kk. I. v has long been regarded as a Scottish manuscript, and therefore, in the minds of some scholars, *Cock in the North* a Scottish prophecy with it,⁴² this variant is closely aligned with the northern English Erceldoune tradition forecasting an English victory in Scotland after a time of great suffering. Alongside Sandyford (an allusion found in all extant versions of *Cock in the North*) this witness also details projected future battles between Seton and the Sea, also lifted from the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*:

þar sall profesy passe þat thomas of telley
 Mony a comly knyghte sall be cast vnder feete
 þat sall dulefull destany drive to þe nyghte
 Mony wyff and maydon in mornynge sall be broght

³⁵ Fols 249v-250r.

Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, p. 312; H. Wanley *et al*, *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 4 vols (1808-12), II, no. 1717; Cyril Ernest Wright, *Fontes Harleiani* (1972), pp. 72-73, 227, 361.

³⁶ *LALME*, I, p.110.

³⁷ Inscribed 'sancā Beverlaci' on fol. 252r.

³⁸ Winnifred I. Haward, *Yorkshire and the Wars of the Roses* (1970), p.5.

³⁹ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p.475.

⁴⁰ *LP*, 12 (2), p.1212 (i); Jansen, *Political Prophecy*, p.1; A. G. Dickens, 'The Tudor-Percy Emblem in Royal MS 18. D. ii', *Archaeological Journal*, 112 (1956 for 1955), 95-99 (p.98). Dobson appears to have been in possession of a book of prophecy, circulating locally.

⁴¹ The prophecy is printed by Lumby, *Bernardus de Cura Rei Familiaris*, pp.18-22. I quote here from my own transcription.

⁴² *Ibid*.

þar sall mete on morne wyghte mone lyghte
 Be twix Seton and þe see sorow sall be wrought
 (fol. 25r)

It also contains a number of other influences from northern English prophetic culture. The prophecy is ascribed to ‘Assledon’ (Erceldoune), whose status we must not forget as a prophet of the Anglo-Scottish wars. In line with this, the protracted account of border conflict following the return of the dead man includes a depiction of a hero (a hunter) from the south. This is an allusion very feasibly derived from the ‘blessed brether’ (also from the south), another cipher for the English royal boar in *Als Y Yod* (203):

þan sall a huntter come fra the southe
 Wyght many rechis on raw rewleyd full ryght
 And he sall fayr on his fute on the watter of forrth
 þan iii fyfe he sall fytht and the fylde wyne
 And the cheftanis sall dye on þe twin halffis
 When þe man and þe mone is most in his mycht
 þen sall dunberton turne vp þat is doune
 And þe maunte of Aran bath at þat tame
 þe lede wyth lukyne haue þat lede sall he los
 and mony on full doughty sall dye for þat dede
 (fol. 27r)

In line with the symbolic vocabulary of the early part of the prophecy, common to all witnesses, the involvement of the man and the moon suggests the alliance of this Arthurian hero with the Percy earls of Northumberland, ensuring the destruction of Dumbarton. This is incorporated in the context of borrowings from *Als Y Yod*, and other elements in common with the *Six Kings*. The death of the chieftains of the ‘other half’, corresponds strongly with *Als Y Yod*, where ‘twenti souzand’ die ‘tother day on this hald Twede’ (189-90), an allusion to Halidon Hill, although really transferrable to any battle of the Anglo-Scottish wars. The hunter’s winning of three fiefs presumably recalls the three insular crowns of Arthur, as re-worked in the *Six Kings* and *Als Y Yod*, although the three battles implied here may well be intended as allusions to Seton on the Sea, Gladismoor, and Sandyford, the three genuinely futurist battles for Scotland as they appear in the third fyfte of the *Romance and Prophecies*. These allusions, taken in concert, suggest a

battle against the Scots fought by the Percies and an Arthurian hero, and a military victory which establishes the English high kingship of the British Isles.

The identification of this Arthurian hero is suggested by another inter-textual allusion in the prophecy. The above sequence is preceded by an allusion to contention between the English leopard and the French *fleur de lys*: ‘and the lybberte wyth the flurdowlis sall fayr þer vpon’. This suggests another northern border influence: the prophecy of French aid to the Scots found in the A-text of *When Rome is Remoyd* (also extant in Kk. I. v). The influence of this prophecy is also felt in the account of the dissension of the Scottish lords in the prophecy, which follows:

Bot for to gette of his gudes he myght thole hime gone
 þen þai sall call a counsell foo pese of þat kyth
 To mak luf among lords bot þat sall nocht lest
 þar salbe Baranys and bathelres þat wyll nocht obey
 Rar wyll nocht kepe þar crye nor come to þar call
 þen sall men be merkyt for þar mysdede

(fol. 27r)

This contention concludes in a winter marvel: ‘& þat ilka wynttyr a ferly sall fall/ Mony of the lords of þat londe þar lyffis sall loss’. This is a re-working of the resistance of the Scottish lords found in *When Rome is Remoyd* (A), who are figured as flowers which wither between the height of summer and the ‘sad winter’:

Betweyne the cheyff of the somer and the sad winter,
 For the heycht of the heyte happyne sall wer;
 And everyche lorde shall austernly werk.
 Then shall Nazareth noy well awhile;
 And the Lilly so lele wytht lovelyche flouris
 For harmes of the hardé heyte sall hillyne his ledis,
 Syne speyde hime at sped, and spawne in the wynter.
 All the Flowris in the Fyrth sall folow hime one.

(15-22)

This prophecy borrows its central allusion from *Prophetiae Merlini*, 134-35, where a wind from the north rips leaves from three branches growing from a tree above the tower of London, a figure of threefold splitting in the vein of the ‘streams of Winchester’ (147-69). Such points of Galfridian correspondence facilitated cross-border borrowings. However, this precise Scottish borrowing suggests a very specific historical allusion, with contemporary political application. The Franco-Scottish alliance recalls the 1385 campaign of Richard II, which, I have observed in Chapter Three, provided the essential impetus for the career of the original Erceldoune bastard.⁴³

As well as suggestive of a continuing Percy-ite acquaintance with traditions associated with the *Romance and Prophecies* (further discussed below), the addition of this sequence to the *Cock in the North* foregrounds an important element associated not simply with Percy-ite perceptions but Percy self-casting. The Percies appear here, as in the account of the lion (which appears in all extant copies of *Cock in the North*), as faithful knights of the dead King Richard, here casting a bloody swathe through Scotland.

What is so remarkable about *Cock in the North*, across the extant witnesses but in particular in the Kk. I. v variant, is how Percy rebellion against Henry IV was cast within the same landscape as the wars with Scotland. Notably, this variant is the only extant one of which I am aware that omits all reference to London. In all other extant witnesses, we read of the dead man’s taking of ‘Troy untrew’. The Kk. I. v variant simply observes, ‘Then all the vntrew tremyll that day’. This prophecy was interested above all in affairs of the north. As a Percy issue, opposition to the Lancastrian regime was understood as a subject of regional interest, and a paradigmatic example of territorial defence, employed in the construction of a regional honour group which understood itself as quintessentially national. From such a perspective, the Lancastrian enemy was no different from the Scottish, and opposition was defined from a position endorsed by the English king: not Henry IV, but Richard II.

Some Previous Misconceptions

The identification of the northern English prophetic grammar at work in *Cock in the North* challenges a number of previous conceptions (I argue misconceptions) concerning the genesis and transmission of the prophecy. The first problematic prior critical assumption is the

⁴³ See above, Chapter 3, pp.151-54.

attribution of a so-called Celtic provenance; the second, is a related notion of the prophecy's origin in an oral culture of anti-hegemonic political protest, as a popular prophecy.

Like the *Romance and Prophecies*, *Cock in the North* is commonly identified as representative of material engaging with a figure of Arthur *redivivus* as a distinctively Celtic symbol, that is, rooted in the nationalist political mythologies of Wales and Scotland rather than England.⁴⁴ This argument, as with the *Romance and Prophecies*, takes its impetus from an old association of the extant English Erceldoune prophecies as adapted from a Scottish discourse, drawing on archaic (and by this period, heavily anachronistic) associations with the British Old North.⁴⁵ Although *Cock in the North* was incorporated into Welsh prophecy collections in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, and reputedly Scottish in the early seventeenth (the latter earning it the title of the First Scottish Prophecy),⁴⁶ its earliest referents align it with English factionalist interests and prophecy models.

Based on the bastard of the *Romance and Prophecies*, the Arthurian hero of *Cock in the North* is a literary descendent of the boar of Windsor, a fully Anglicised figure, derived from the *Prophetiae Merlini* and part of an English prophetic tradition with considerable utility in the north of England. Like the bastard, the dead man pursues an imperial trajectory: he unifies the British Isles (winning the same battles as the bastard, including Sandyford), builds a European empire, and conquers Jerusalem, where he dies, and is buried in the Vale of Jehosaphat. In all extant versions of the prophecy the dead man is at this point identified by the Arthurian cipher associated with Edward III in the *Six Kings* and *Als Y Yod*, the boar:

In Surrey shall be shewid a wonderfull syght
 In the cite of Babilon to bryng hem on bere
 xv dayes jorney from Jerusalem
 The holy crossse shall be
 þe said bore shall wyne ye beme
 At sandyford that degre

⁴⁴ For analysis of Arthur *redivivus* as a Celtic trope see Coote and Thornton, 'Merlin, Erceldoune, Nixon', p.128.

⁴⁵ See above, Chapter 3, pp.142-43.

⁴⁶ The title given to the prophecy in *DIMEV*, 6434, which presumably refers to its incorporation in *The Whole Prophesie of Scotland*. For discussion of the Welsh dissemination of the prophecy see Chapter 5.

The association between the figure of the Ricardian bastard and the boar of Windsor, implicit in the *Romance and Prophecies*, is made overt in the character of the dead man.

The dead man of *Cock in the North* must be understood as a post mortem refashioning of the Ricardian deliverer of English northern border prophecy of the late 1380s. Orientated within a long-lived tradition of northern English political prophecy, exhibiting a considerable investment in the person of the king and his role in Anglo-Scottish border politics, *Cock in the North* is not only a prophecy oppositional to Henry IV, but one related to a northern strand of historical pro-Ricardian opposition to an illegitimate regime (in the *Romance and Prophecies* that of the Lords Appellant). This is material which was not fundamentally Celtic, but northern English and Ricardian loyalist.

However, there is one element suggestive of Scottish influence in the conception of the heroic dead man, not in his quintessentially Arthurian characteristics but on the semantic level of the phrase itself. The choice of the epithet is distinctive. The hero of *Cock in the North* might just as well have been termed the bastard, the boar, or – as is common in the later Erceldoune tradition – the Ricardian ass. It may well have been inflected by the field of heroic resonance the phrase came to accrue following the Battle of Otterburn in 1388, where, the Scots held, the battle was won by a dead man, the earl of Douglas, who died in the fray.⁴⁷ This turn of phrase survives in a late witness in the Scottish Otterburn ballad included in the *Complaynt of Scotland* in 1548, which records Douglas's curious dream on the eve of the ballad:

But I have dream'd a dreary dream
Beyond the Isle of Sky;
I saw a dead man win a fight,
And I think that man was I.⁴⁸

This concept was certainly in political circulation earlier, and we might posit, literary also. If we understand the genesis of *Cock in the North* in a Percy-ite milieu, then a borrowing of the phrase, and its heroic resonance, from a Scottish source, is a suggestive possibility. It rests not on an element of Scottish prophetic 'Celticity', but a near contemporary component of a Scottish nationalist discourse, subjected to Anglicising re-inscription, of the type I have identified in analogous border borrowings.

⁴⁷ See above, Chapter 3, p.155.

⁴⁸ 'Battle of Otterbourne', in *English and Scottish Ballads*, ed. by Child, p.22.

So much for the work's reputedly Celtic claims. The second question is that of its popular status. The early fifteenth century saw the earliest pieces of anti-prophecy government legislation: the acts of 1401 and 1406. The first is a testimony to the perceived uses of anti-Lancastrian political prophecy in Wales during the rebellion of Owain Glyn Dŵr; and the second, the circulation of anti-Lancastrian political prophecy within England itself.⁴⁹ Although prophecy was understood in the 1406 act as a form of heresy, anti-Lancastrian prophecy of this period had very little to do with religious dissent, although such texts certainly saw some ecclesiastical circulation.⁵⁰ From the point of view of the Lancastrian administration in the early fifteenth century, prophecy was not dangerous because it was popular, but because it was associated with a language of hegemonic power, drawn on by oppositional elements not from among the broader populace, but from within the affinities of magnate factions such as the Percies. Importantly, the Percy-ite prophecy movement (c.1405) which this chapter traces pre-dates the English anti-prophecy legislation by just one year. This may well be no coincidence.

An early fifteenth-century understanding of the dangers of political prophecy as utilised by political elites is in evidence in a complaint poem of the west Midlands, *Mum and the Soothsegger*. The author wrote of the contemporary circulation of 'mervailles that Merlyn dide devyse' (1724), and described the consultation of political prophecy: 'Thus thay muse on the mase on mone and on sterres / Til heedes been hewe of and hoppe on the grene' (1731-32).⁵¹ As Caroline Eckhardt has noted, in his concern with treasonable political prophecy, the author draws on two core Percy ciphers, the moon and the stars (both found in *Cock in the North*).⁵² This suggests how from certain perspectives in the early fifteenth century, the terms of political prophecy were closely related to treasonous activity, 'til heedes been hewe of'. Decapitation was not simply a traitor's death in this period, but the execution of a high-born traitor.⁵³ Prophecy was associated with aristocratic treason. Furthermore, if the poet did have *Cock in the North* specifically in mind here, it suggests just how closely this prophecy was seen to reflect or draw on the Percies' own strategies and interests.

⁴⁹ Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, p.105. For the 1406's acts association of prophecy with heresy see Walker, 'Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest', p.59.

⁵⁰ Peter McNiven, *Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV* (1987), pp.95-102; Whitfield, 'Conflicts of Personality and Principle', p.333.

⁵¹ 'Mum and the Soothsegger', in *Richard the Redeless and Mum and the Soothsegger*, ed. by James M. Dean (2000), pp.23-48. The reference to Merlin is discussed by John Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (1971), p.32; Fulton, 'Arthurian Prophecy and the Deposition of Richard II', p.74.

⁵² Caroline Eckhardt, 'Another Historical Allusion in *Mum and the Soothsegger*', *Notes and Queries*, 225 (1980), 495-97.

⁵³ W. R. J. Barron, 'The Penalties for Treason in Medieval Life and Literature', *Journal of Medieval History*, 7 (1981), 187-202 (p.199).

A question which goes hand-in-hand, as with the *Romance and Prophecies*, with the analysis of the work as a ‘popular’ prophecy is its position in oral culture.⁵⁴ Although the prophecy may well have seen some level of oral circulation, it clearly entered transmission as a component of manuscript culture, and was originally composed as a piece of literary propaganda. During the mid-fifteenth century, the prophecy saw a renewed association with literary Arthuriana. In the conclusion of its unique coda, the Kk. I. v version shows the influence of the *Prose Merlin*, which first entered circulation during the 1450s.⁵⁵ One of the symptoms of the decline of the age in the prophecy is given as the imprisonment of Merlin by his lover, Nimiane, who he has previously instructed in magical arts:

and *marwelus merlyn* is wasted away
 Byght a wyked woman woo myght sho bee
 Scho has closed him in a crage of cornales coste
 (fol. 27r)

In the romance this event signals the disappearance of the guiding hand, and prophecy, of Merlin from the Arthurian kingdom and the text, and to the author of the Kk. I. v variant clearly presented a fitting end to a prophetic narrative understood in national terms. Crucially, this allusion suggests the text’s circulation within a literate and literary-minded milieu, engaging with and making new additions to the text. The prophecy was received not simply as Galfridian but Arthurian, and decidedly literary, understood on occasion (as we find also in the *Romance and Prophecies*) in relation to romance.

The Influence of the Prophecies of John of Bridlington

It is commonly noted that there was a high level of clerical involvement in the dissemination of seditious material through this period in both England and Wales, and there is nothing to suggest that seditious prophecy produced and circulating in the Percy-ite milieu was any exception.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.165, 199, 200.

⁵⁵ See Henry B. Wheatley, ed., *Merlin: A Prose Romance (about 1450-1460 AD)*, 4 vols (1865-99), III, pp.681, 693. The popularity of the text in relation to prophecy is discussed by Eckhardt, *The Prophetia Merlini*, p.8; Cooper, *Romance in Time*, p.191.

⁵⁶ Clerical involvement is discussed by Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, pp.27-29; Simon Walker, ‘The Yorkshire Risings of 1405: Texts and Contexts’, in *Political Culture in Later Medieval England*, pp.223-45 (p.175). Franciscan involvement in particular is well noted: L. D. Duls, *Richard II in the Early Chronicles* (1975), pp.192-93; McNiven, *Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV*, pp.95-96, 99; McNiven, ‘Rebellion, Sedition, and the Legend of Richard II’s Survival’, *Bulletin of*

Cock in the North is also extant in Latin variants, as that found in Cotton Vespasian E. vii; and incorporates allusions from Latin prophecies circulating in a clerical milieu (and particularly influential in northern England), such as the *Prophecies of John of Bridlington*.

A hugely significant moment in the history of English political prophecy, *Cock in the North* is the earliest extant prophecy to employ a royal Galfridian language of Britishness in relation to a non-royal referent, not cast simply in a supporting role (as Hotspur in fyfte three of the *Romance and Prophecies*) but as the primary subject of the text. This process of transference is enacted through the uses of the *Prophecies of John of Bridlington* found in the opening lines of the prophecy.

Bridlington is an (originally anonymous) series of prophecies from the 1360s, on occasion associated with ‘Robert the scribe’ of Bridlington Priory in north Yorkshire, and later ascribed to John Thwenge, the sainted John of Bridlington. The prophecies detail events of the reign of Edward III with some limited futurist material, and are in a number of manuscripts accompanied by a commentary, now ascribed to John Ergome, a fourteenth-century canon of Bridlington associated with the powerful Bohun family.⁵⁷ Both the prophecy and the commentary are concerned with contemporary losses in France and the threat posed by Scotland, alongside tacit support for Edward III’s financial involvement in a new crusade.⁵⁸ Staunchly nationalist in its perceptions, it is an important example of early fourteenth-century English chauvinism, with a particular utility in the northern counties. It saw broad re-use during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century in application to contemporary political events: Walsingham applied the prophecy to the capture of Archbishop Scrope in 1405.⁵⁹ Henry IV showed a particular interest in John of Bridlington, encouraging the movement for John’s canonization.⁶⁰ This may well have

the John Rylands Library, 93-117 (pp.95-96); Ralph Griffiths, ‘Some Secret Supports of Glyn Dŵr?’, *Bulletin of Institute of Historical Research*, 37 (1964), 77-100 (pp.79, 86); Messham, ‘The County of Flint and the Rebellion of Owen Glyndwr in the records of the earldom of Chester’, p.26; Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp.450-51. For the most famous contemporary account of Franciscan engagement with Ricardian return prophecy see *Eulogium Historiarum sive Temporis*, III, p.389-94.

⁵⁷ Curley, *Prophecy of John of Bridlington*; Sister Helen M. Peck, *The Prophecy of St John of Bridlington* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 1930); Paul Meryaert, ‘John Ergome and the *Vaticinium Roberti Bridlington*’, *Speculum*, 61 (1966); Michael J. Curley, ‘The Cloak of Anonymity and the *Prophecy of John of Bridlington*’, *Modern Philology*, 77 (1980), 361-69; A. G. Rigg, ‘John of Bridlington’s *Prophecy*: A New Look’, *Speculum*, 63 (1988), 596-613; Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp.51-58; Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.118-19, 121-28.

⁵⁸ Peck, pp.44-49. For a discussion of 1360-77 as the years of Edward III’s decline see Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, pp.276-300.

⁵⁹ *St Albans Chronicle: II*, pp.448-49.

⁶⁰ Michael J. Curley, ‘John of Bridlington (c.1320–1379)’, *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14856>> [accessed 20 February 2013]

had prophetic associations, and certainly contemporary pro-Lancastrian applications of *Bridlington* existed: one relating to Henry IV's succession is preserved in the *Chronicle of Adam Usk*.⁶¹

Importantly, the prophecies were not just Lancastrian cultural capital, but Percy also. During the fifteenth century, circulating still at Bridlington (we must remember, a site with Percy interests), *Bridlington* came to be associated with the Percies. A number of fifteenth-century commentaries gloss the prophecy's interest in Scottish affairs in relation to Percy prowess on the northern English border.⁶²

The military activities of the cock in the north (Hotspur) in the Percy prophecy is based on a prophecy of Edward of Woodstock, the Black Prince, in *Bridlington*, which prophesies that this English prince will conquer France: 'Tempore brumali gallus nido boreali/ Pullos unabit, et se volitare parabit' ('During winter time the cock in the north will gather chicks to nest, and prepare them to fly').⁶³ In *Bridlington* this figure is a significant re-inscription of the cock cipher conventionally applied to the French kings: like the prophecy's internal commentator, we must understand the chicks as the army of the Black Prince; and their flight an invasion of France. Indeed, the word cock, *gallum*, is a play on French, *gallus*: elsewhere the prophecy identifies the Black Prince as the son of a French mother ('gallus de matre creatus'),⁶⁴ preparing to reclaim his French rights.

The northern geographical locus of this military force (constructed in overtly nationalist terms) was of great utility to Percy propagandists in the opening figure of the *Cock in the North* (from which the text takes its modern title):⁶⁵

When the cocke in the North hath bilde his nest
 And busketh his bridds and beddnys hem to fle
 þen shall fortune his ffrend the gat vp cast
 And right shal haue his fre entre

⁶¹ *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, pp.50-53; discussed by Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, p.12.

⁶² Eckhardt, *Prophetia Merlini*, p.28; Michael Curley, 'Fifteenth-century Glosses on *The Prophecy of John of Bridlington: A Text, Its Meaning, and Its Purpose*', *Medieval Studies*, 46 (1984), 321-39 (p.27). This material also later came to be drawn on by Yorkist partisans, for which see Curley, *Prophecy of John of Bridlington*, pp.332-33.

⁶³ Wright, *Political Poems and Songs*, I, pp.204-05.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.192; Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.124.

⁶⁵ Correspondence noted also by Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, p.57; Robbins, 'Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', p.1523.

The heroic cock, defending his territorial rights against a hostile foe, is here not the Black Prince but Henry Hotspur. These northern interests are constructed in *Cock in the North* in line with a national, and originally anti-French, model.

By the early fifteenth century, the cipher of the royal cock marshalling his army had come to accrue a wealth of associated historical meanings alongside its earlier application to the Black Prince. Although previously unremarked upon by scholars, this cipher was re-applied to Richard II by the close of the fourteenth century. This association is overtly fostered in an account of prophecies applied to Richard at his nativity, recorded in the Ricardian portion of the *Dieulacres Chronicle* (Gray's Inn Library, MS 9),⁶⁶ written in the Ricardian heartland, Cheshire. The chronicler draws on a prophecy of 'Bridlynton' concerning Richard, reputedly in circulation at the time of his birth. We read of Richard, like the Black Prince, as 'Gallum de bruto... genitum' ('cock of Brutus's line'), and also as a bull, 'Taurus cornutus' ('horned bull') of 'Triplex natura' ('triple nature'), epithets applied to Edward III, with variations associated with the Black Prince also, in *Bridlington*.⁶⁷ The same prophecies are recorded in circulation and application to Richard II by members of his inner circle, by Walsingham in 1399, understood as imperial crusading prophecies.⁶⁸ This portion of the *Dieulacres Chronicle* belongs to the 1380s and '90s, which also birthed the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*.⁶⁹ As it came to be applied in *Cock in the North*, the cock was a cipher associated not simply with the Black Prince, but with the deposed King Richard himself, and his imperial reputation. The transference of this cipher in *Cock in the North* was not then simply from the Black Prince to Hotspur, but from Richard also.

Cock in the North continues the same process of symbolic transference between Richard II and Hotspur noted in the previous chapter, in the third fyfte of the *Romance and Prophecies*.⁷⁰ In the years following his death at Shrewsbury, Hotspur was increasingly inserted within an essentially royal paradigm: the heroic deliverer of the north, the long prophesied Briton. His symbolic value in this sense was very similar to that of Richard II in the early fifteenth century: not a man but a metonym, a short hand for specific political expectations.

⁶⁶ For discussion of the chronicle and its component parts see Clarke and Galbraith, 'The Deposition of Richard II', pp.126-31; Alfred Horwood, *Catalogue of the Ancient Manuscripts Belonging to the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn* (1869), pp.7-9. The Lancastrian portion (Chronicle B) is printed by Clarke and Galbraith, pp.164-81.

⁶⁷ Gray's Inn Library, MS 9, fol. 142v. Wright, *Political Poems and Songs*, I, pp.192, 203; Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.124.

⁶⁸ *St Albans Chronicle: II*, pp.124-25.

⁶⁹ This portion of the chronicle spans 1337-1400. It was written during the latter years of Richard's reign. Clarke and Galbraith, 'The Deposition of Richard II', p.128.

⁷⁰ See above, Chapter 3, pp.157-58.

The Uses of Richard II

Central to the position of *Cock in the North* as oppositional material, was its reapplication of a hegemonic discourse previously associated exclusively with English kings, in order to construct a competing authority in essence royal and yet also Percy. At the centre of this strategy was the figure of the deposed Richard II.

Much has been written about the rhetorical strategies of the various rebel factions opposed to the Lancastrian regime in the early years of the fifteenth century. In particular, historians have noted the prevalence of rumours of Richard's survival, employed as a mode of oppositional discourse.⁷¹ So powerful were these rumours, that in February 1400, the public display of the king's body, in the form of a funeral procession to Westminster was deemed necessary, although the king was buried at Langley.⁷² As Simon Walker notes, these rumours were 'nourished in the fertile ground of prophetic speculation'.⁷³ One of the aims of this chapter is to offer a new reading of *Cock in the North*, as one of the texts which formed this fertile ground, and potentially, provided some of the seeds from which the return rumours grew.

The return rumours have been regarded by previous scholars as circulating on the popular level as distinct from contemporary hegemonic tactics asserting the legitimacy of the Mortimer heir, the young of earl of March, descended from Edward III's second son Lionel of Antwerp, as an alternative claimant to Henry IV.⁷⁴ In this critical context, the Ricardian return has been understood as a feature of the political life of the lower ranks of English society, manifest as a popular belief in Richard as a so-called 'sleeping hero'.⁷⁵ However, the division between these two discursive frameworks, and the milieux in which they circulated, was by no means so pronounced in the political prophecy of this period. *Cock in the North* invokes Richard's return as a piece of functional political symbolism manipulated by the clerical arm of a political elite.⁷⁶ The dead man represents a re-visiting of the imperial paradigm applied to Richard II during his lifetime, just as it had been to Edward III and Edward I before him. This had a very

⁷¹ McNiven, 'Rebellion, Sedition, and the Legend of Richard II's Survival'; Walker, 'Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest'; Duls, pp.190-98.

⁷² Ibid.; Michael Evans, *The Death of Kings* (2007), p.169.

⁷³ Walker, 'Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest', p.43.

⁷⁴ McNiven, 'Rebellion, Sedition, and the Legend of Richard II's Survival', pp.109-10. The relationship of the genealogy to political prophecy is further discussed in Chapter 5.

⁷⁵ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p.496; Evans, *Death of Kings*, p.169.

⁷⁶ Walker notes the broad appeal of rumours of Richard's return and their manipulation by elites, see 'Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest', esp. pp.43, 53-54. However, the extent of Percy and Percy-ite use remain beyond the scope of Walker's investigation.

specific English, Galfridian, and hegemonic framework of meaning, with particular utility in the political and national identifications of northern England. In *Cock in the North*, Richard's return is not the stuff of quasi-religious popular beliefs, but a statement of political affiliation to an anti-Lancastrian faction.

Hotspur and the Prophecy of the Bastard

The high political uses of the figure of the returning Richard, and associated (importantly, pre-deposition) prophecies, is nowhere more evident than in the re-use of material from the *Romance and Prophecies* by Hotspur himself on the eve of the Battle of Shrewsbury.

The Lancastrian chronicler of the second part of the *Dieulacres Chronicle*, writing up to 1403, records Hotspur's manipulation of a prophecy of Richard's return in Cheshire as part of a propaganda campaign to muster troops for the Percy cause in July 1403.⁷⁷ Hotspur allegedly maintained that Richard would return at the head of a great army, marshalled by the earl of Northumberland, in the Delamere forest by the 'Sondyweye'. The same tactic was also used, the chronicler records, to coerce the army towards Prees in Shropshire, prior to its ill-fated arrival at Shrewsbury. Hotspur was almost certainly employing material in the Erceldoune tradition. The notion of the exiled king's return through a forest comes tellingly close to the Ricardian return of the bastard in the *Romance and Prophecies*, as extant in the Cambridge and Sloane manuscripts.⁷⁸ We can potentially understand the choice of the first site of Richard's reputed appearance, Sondyweye, as indebted to Sandyford, the site of the bastard's final victorious battle, associated during the fifteenth century with English battles invested with great national expectations, such as the Battle of Bosworth.⁷⁹ Sandyford was later incorporated as a reference in *Cock in the North*, as part of a broader movement aligning the dead man with the bastard. The evidence in the *Dieulacres Chronicle* suggests this association was in circulation amongst a Percy-ite milieu as early as 1403, and was known to Hotspur himself.

Although the chronicle account is wholeheartedly hostile to Hotspur and his cause, there is reason to believe that he, or at least his affiliates (the chronicler writes that he appeared with a

⁷⁷ Clarke and Galbraith, 'The Deposition of Richard', pp.177-78. This is discussed by Walker, 'Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest', p.38; Duls, p.196. Its relationship to the Erceldoune tradition has not hitherto been noted.

⁷⁸ See above, Chapter 3, p.140.

⁷⁹ Tim Thornton, 'The Battle of Sandeford: Henry Tudor's Understanding of the Meaning of Bosworth Field', *Historical Research*, 78 (2005), 436-42.

small retinue from ‘partes Lancastrie’), were manipulating local prophetic expectations in line with a familiar northern English language of Ricardian political prophecy. This material is just too specific for the chronicler to have made up. Hotspur made use of the family propagandist line as it was employed during the years 1403-08: the defence of king Richard’s right against the Lancastrian usurpation. Walsingham’s *Chronicle* records the circulation of Percy bills claiming Richard’s survival in 1403, and a similar rumour to that found in the *Dieulacres Chronicle*, here that Richard would appear to the rebels at Chester Castle;⁸⁰ and Capgrave’s *Chronicle* notes that the same was raised as a battle cry by Hotspur at the Battle of Shrewsbury.⁸¹ We see here our earliest evidence of the family’s cultivated interest in political prophecy as a mode of dynastic propaganda, associated with Richard, and with prophecy as one component of a Ricardian loyalist discourse.

The utility of Hotspur’s prophetic claims in Cheshire is understandable given Richard’s favours towards, and dependence upon, the men of the palatinate during his reign.⁸² We would expect the sway of Ricardian prophecy in this region to be particularly strong. A number of participants in the Cheshire rising of 1400 were amongst Richard’s retinue in Ireland in 1399, a situation in which Richard appears to have demonstrated a considerable engagement with the imperial theme of English political prophecy (found also in the *Romance and Prophecies*).⁸³ In July 1403, Percy application of Richard’s heroic return would have presented an element of a familiar political discourse. The *Dieulacres* chronicler records that crowds flocked to Hotspur in the expectation of seeing King Richard. Although he records their disillusionment (perhaps as much a comment on the continued absence of the army of Northumberland, which also failed to materialise), if we can go on Capgrave’s evidence, Richard’s name clearly still acted as an effective rallying cry in the thick of battle at Shrewsbury. Indeed, prophecies of Richard’s return to the Delamere forest, associated with ciphers derived from the prophetic propaganda of the Percy rebellion, were circulating in Cheshire well into the sixteenth century.⁸⁴

The account of Hotspur’s propagandist uses of prophecy in the *Dieulacres Chronicle* provides valuable evidence concerning not only Percy strategy, but the local uses of Galfridian

⁸⁰ *St Albans Chronicle: II*, pp.362-63; Duls, p.195.

⁸¹ John Capgrave, *The Chronicle of England*, ed. by Francis Charles Hingeston (1858), p.281, printed in Mary Salmon, *A Source-Book of Welsh History* (1927), pp.215-17 (p.216).

⁸² R. R. Davies, ‘Richard II and the Palatinate of Chester’, in *The Reign of Richard II*, ed. by F. R. H. Du Boulay and Caroline M. Barron (1971), pp.256-79; Bennett, ‘Richard II and the Wider Realm’, pp.188, 192-93, 197-98.

⁸³ McNiven, ‘The Men of Cheshire and the Rebellion of 1403’, pp. 4, 10, 12, 13, 18.

⁸⁴ Recorded in Bodleian Lat. Misc. c. 66, a commonplace book of a Cheshire gentleman, compiled during the 1520s. Ralph A. Griffiths, ‘After Glyn Dŵr: An Age of Reconciliation?’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 117 (2002), 139-64 (p.157).

prophecy with which they cohered. I am not interested here in the vicissitudes of the Ricardian return rumour in the region (well documented by other scholars),⁸⁵ but the dissemination and re-inscription of pre-existing prophetic texts which became associated with the returning king. In his account of the disappointed hopes of the Cheshire crowds, the chronicler notes that Richard did not return, and yet it is still generally held ‘sed adhuc: renovabuntur castra Veneriis’ (‘and yet: the camp of Venus will be renewed’).⁸⁶ This unit is given in the style of prophetic citation common to medieval chronicles: a unit of prophecy is rendered partially because it is sufficiently well known to a general audience who are expected to complete the phrase, and supply the application, for themselves. The marginal gloss ‘Merlini’, which was inserted by a later hand next to this comment, provides one such reader response.⁸⁷ It was undoubtedly the correct response. ‘Renovabuntur castra Veneriis’ suggests a variation upon *Prophetiae*, 119-26, concerning the goat of the camp of Venus. Quite how this rather pejorative prophecy came to be associated with Richard’s return almost certainly lies in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth-century re-use of *Prophetiae*, 119-26. Applied in support of Edward II’s deposition in 1327 (first found in the *Six Kings*), this material most probably saw similar use in the years following 1399. Particularly as it was reworked in the *Six Kings*, this material was an expression of antipathy, which we can associate with the smear campaign against Richard which followed the deposition.⁸⁸ However, the *Dieulacres Chronicle* suggests this prophecy was turned to a eulogistic meaning, drawn on by pro-Ricardian factions in and around Chester during the years following the deposition. The same tag line, ‘Renouabitur castra veneris’, appears in the same later hand as the *Merlini* gloss on fol. 142v, alongside a number of prophecies related to Richard II’s nativity contained in the pro-Ricardian first chronicle of the manuscript (discussed above).⁸⁹ In the years following the deposition, this phrase became a catch-all term of Ricardian *imperium*.

It is precisely this type of prophetic expectation, in circulation in Chester, which the Percies were manipulating. This is a movement which the Dieulacres chronicler observes in his own uses of ‘Renouabitur castra veneris’. After noting the circulation of this prophecy, he records that on the final leg of their journey to Shrewsbury, Hotspur and his Cheshire army approached the border of Shropshire, full of expectation (Hotspur promised a second appearance of Richard in Pres) on the eve of ‘die Veneris’, a day of Venus.⁹⁰ The Ricardian right is here explicitly

⁸⁵ See above, n.71.

⁸⁶ Gray’s Inn, MS 9, fol. 145v.

⁸⁷ This pro-Ricardian later hand is noted by Clarke and Galbraith, ‘The Deposition of Richard II’, p.129.

⁸⁸ Saul, *Richard II*, pp.435-38.

⁸⁹ See above, p.180.

⁹⁰ Clarke and Galbraith, ‘The Deposition of Richard II’, p.178.

associated with Hotspur's activity, as an unexpected fulfilment of rebel prophecy: the camp of Venus is renewed by the rebels' ill-fated arrival at Shrewsbury. The day of Venus, that is, the day of Richard, comes and goes, ending with Hotspur's defeat. The Merlinian prophecy (understood to be analogous to the Erceldoune one) is resolved as a denial of Richard's right, even and especially as it was manipulated by the Percies. The Dieulacres chronicler articulates a very important perception about the Percies: not simply their use of an essentially royal prophetic mythology, but their insinuation within it.

'Troy Vntrew'

The long-lived narrative of Percy loyalty, Ricardian right, and Lancastrian perjury is the ideological movement at the foundation of *Cock in the North*, epitomised in the arrival of the dead man and his enshrining of the rights of the lion. The prophecy stages the faithful service of the lion to the dead man, rewarded by some manner of territorial grant (the extent of which remains obscure) following the dead man's return. This occurs in relation to the description of London in Trojan terms, drawing strongly on Geoffrey of Monmouth's British foundation narrative. Coloured by Lancastrian treachery, this 'Troy is 'vntrew', a place of disloyalty: 'Than shall troy Vntrew tremble þat dayes / ffor drede of a dede man when þay here hym speke'. This antipathy towards London is commonly accepted as evidence of a Scottish origin for the prophecy.⁹¹ However, it is a relatively common tactic in English political literature of the late fourteenth century: we find a similar construction in Gower's indignant, highly apocalyptic, lament against the city in *Vox Clamantis*.⁹² It is also well-noted that the identification Troy appears in contemporary English literary productions concerned with a classical history of treachery, relating to Aeneas's supposed betrayal of his homeland. We find this invocation most famously in the opening of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which tells of the fall of Troy for Aeneas's treason:

Sithen the sege and the assault was sesed at Troye,
The borgh brittened and brent to brondes and askes,
The tulk that the trammes of tresoun ther wrought

⁹¹ Cf. Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp.75-76; Lumby, *Bernardus de Cura Rei Familiaris*, p.ix (who understands *Cock in the North* as a 'medley' of prophecies).

⁹² John Gower, 'Vox Clamantis', in *The Major Latin Works*, ed. and transl. by Eric W. Stockton (1962), p.69 (I.13).

Was tried for his tricherie

(1-4)⁹³

However, although a highly literary motif, the invocation to Troy found in *Cock in the North* is grounded in a specific political use. The appearance of the dead king and his testimony frames an accusation against the Lancastrian regime in irrevocable terms: it shakes London. It was to Westminster that Richard's body was conveyed in a very public procession in February 1400, and *Cock in the North* potentially presents a significant re-visiting, and re-encoding, of this arrival in the city: here the dead man walks.⁹⁴ The implication is clear: the arrival of the dead man testifies to Henry Bolingbroke's perjury. What follows is not the restoration of the dead Richard (who disappears to the holy land to fulfil his destiny as a Last World Emperor), but the brightening of the moon, and the enshrining of the rights of the lion (both Percy symbols):

The sonne and the mone shall shyne full bright
 That many a day full derk hath ben
 And kepe þer cowrses by dayes and by nyght
 Wt myrthes mo than any man can mene
 þe lion and þe lionasse shall regne in pese.

This scene draws together pivotal aspects of post-1403 Percy propaganda: the Lancastrian perjury; Richard's rightful claim; and the return of the Percy dynasty in the wake of Shrewsbury. This British restoration narrative is concerned not with the return of Richard II, but of the Percies themselves. The fall of 1403 has been redeemed. Prophecy here not only legitimises revolution, in order to do so it must first rewrite history.

Fundamental to our understanding of *Cock in the North*, and its relationship to the broader rhetoric of the Percy rebellion, is the uses and re-inscriptions of royal prophetic tropes. The re-use of the British myth of exile and return – the usurpation of the true British line by the Saxons, and the British return – stands at the centre of this. A direct personal seizure of the crown by the Percies may well have operated as a genuine expectation within the Percy milieu during the early years of the fifteenth century. Walsingham records that at the Battle of Shrewsbury, Hotspur's troops shouted out 'Henry Percy, King',⁹⁵ and prophetic rumours of a

⁹³ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by J. J. Anderson (1996), see also notes, p.301.

⁹⁴ Evans, *Death of Kings*, p.169.

⁹⁵ *St Albans Chronicle: II*, pp.370-71. Discussed in Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies', p.226. See also Clarke and Galbraith, 'The Deposition of Richard II', pp.135, 179.

Percy coronation associated with the Battle of Shrewsbury were in circulation throughout England.⁹⁶ The chronicler of the Lancastrian portion of the *Dieulacres Chronicle* suggests that Northumberland intended to crown Hotspur or his son, sidelining the young Mortimer heir and manipulating the Mortimer right to the throne through Hotspur's wife, Elizabeth Mortimer.⁹⁷ An authorising association of the Percy cause with the Mortimer line may well have been invoked in the place of the Percy lioness in *Cock in the North* (as Chapter Five discusses, the lion was a Mortimer cipher as well as a Percy one). Yet this royal interest, if we understand it as governed by the typical concerns of English border prophecy, may have a more localised meaning: an investment in a specifically northern kingdom.

The Lion's Rule

Cock in the North must be aligned with a particular post-Shrewsbury tradition of political prophecy. Prophecies and portents of Hotspur's death at Shrewsbury, recorded by a number of contemporary chroniclers including Adam Usk and Walsingham, are well-noted.⁹⁸ We must not under-estimate the political importance of Hotspur's death, an event with national importance, amongst the Percy affinity in the north of England. Shrewsbury functioned as a historical site of regional trauma, and redemption of this trauma is one of the primary interests of *Cock in the North*: the realisation of the Percy right under an imagined hero, the lion, who if not Hotspur, was very much like him. So persistent was the association of Hotspur with the total historical scene of the early fifteenth-century rebellion, that in his rewriting of this history, Shakespeare placed the signing of the Tripartite Indenture on the eve of the Battle of Shrewsbury, pre-dating it by two years.⁹⁹

In *Cock in the North* the fall of Hotspur is placed within a time-frame indicative of a profound political wish fulfilment. The allusion to his death reads in no absolute terms: 'The lion shall lache an hurt and not perished be/ But he shall broyde to be best yat hym þe woo wrought'. The lion is at once Hotspur and a cipher for the family (through its arms), who, like the dead man enacts a return. In the prophecy an image of Hotspurian heroism is held to be representative of the fortunes of the dynasty as a whole. The structural similarity in the function

⁹⁶ Walker, 'Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest', p.33.

⁹⁷ Clarke and Galbraith, 'The Deposition of Richard II', pp.135, 179; Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies', p.226.

⁹⁸ In addition to n.26, see *St Albans Chronicle: II*, pp.366-67. These are also discussed by Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, pp.18-19.

⁹⁹ See above, Introduction, p.1.

of Hotspur and the dead man rests on some level of functional commonality in anti-Lancastrian political discourse. Like Richard, rumours of Hotspur's survival were in circulation – his reputed escape from Shrewsbury was maintained by a London chronicler; and like Richard, chroniclers record that Hotspur's body was subject to public display (prior to post mortem quartering).¹⁰⁰ These rumours must be understood as a literalisation of a political framework of meaning, concerned not with physical resurrections, but the ascendancy of the fortunes of an English dynasty, and a broader political faction. Like the dead man, the Percy lion is also associated with Arthurian prowess, a particularly potent comparison in view of the Arthurian traditions of the northern border: 'Then shall þe lion loust the boldest and þe best / yat in brytayne was born syne arthers day'. In many respects, this material reads as a later, more firmly politicised, extension of Hotspur's place as the herald of the Ricardian bastard in *Romance and Prophecies*; yet in *Cock in the North*, the dead man is in many respects the herald of the Percy lion, whose reign follows his return rather than vice versa.

This functional use of the lion, as the champion of a northern kingdom, must be understood in light of the circulation of the Scottish A-text of *When Rome is Removyd* on the Anglo-Scottish border from the 1380s onwards.¹⁰¹ This text was influential not simply on the Kk. I. v variant of *Cock in the North*, but the broader structure of the prophecy across all extant witnesses. The lion appears there similarly as a figure of regal prowess, who, like the Percy lion of *Cock in the North*, after a temporary downturn in his fortunes, regains his territory following an alliance with heroes of Welsh political prophecy. We read that Berwick 'Sall wytht the Lyoune be leffe ande longe for-ever' (71). This continues the same process of the integration, and re-inscription, of Scottish prophecy models in northern England noted in the previous two chapters. Its use by Percy affiliates corresponds to this longer historical pattern of regional transmission. What is remarkable here is not the source itself, but the substitution that is effected here. The Scottish lion is reworked as an Anglo-centric political symbol, stating the autonomy not of Scotland from English rule, but the Percies from Lancastrian. It is precisely this act of re-inscription, resting on a fundamentally Scottish anterior, which accounts for the later doubleness of this prophecy, and the function and perception of *Cock in the North* as a Scottish text into the early modern period.

Within a Percy-ite milieu on the northern border, the transference of these terms, including the pan-Celtic alliance, saw obvious utility in the period surrounding the Anglo-Welsh

¹⁰⁰ Rose, *Kings of the North*, p.359.

¹⁰¹ See above, Chapter 3, pp.148-49.

alliance of 1405. In this act of substitution, the Percies appear not as rebels declaring war on the English crown, but representatives of a territory with a right to exist as an independent state. *Cock in the North* is indicative of a movement for regional independence within England during this period (the effective intention of the Tripartite Indenture). The lion's land is traditionally the northern border, and in many respects, *Cock in the North* is yet another prophecy concerned with the future of the Anglo-Scottish border, brought to bear on a broader English political sphere of concerns.

English Pan-Celticism and the Six Kings

Although British restoration prophecy remained recognisable to an English audience as a discourse long-associated with English kings (an important facet of the Percy-ite re-use of this material), in the early 1400s it could be used for the first time as a cipher for an alternative government, and indeed, an alternative *mode* of government. During this period, this possibility was nowhere more apparent than in the Tripartite Indenture. This alliance represents one of the most important moments in the history of insular prophetic literature. It brought rebellion in England into direct relation with rebellion in Wales, and reinvigorated the British grammar of English political prophecy, bringing new meanings to bear on old texts.

This is the earliest period in which the pan-Celtic union, prophesying the threefold division of the British Isles, appears as part of an oppositional discourse utilised by an English faction against the crown. Its oppositional use in the early fifteenth century rests on a cultivated association with the (anti-Lancastrian) expectations placed on the union between the northern English Percies, the Welsh rebel Owain Glyn Dŵr, and the Mortimer family, with their sizeable influence in Ireland and on the Welsh border. This union opened up new strategic possibilities in the uses of political prophecy in England: a genuine British honour-group (that is, in part Welsh) opposed to the Lancastrian regime. Although we cannot necessarily go so far as McNiven in understanding 'clerical participation in a network of Celtic nationalism' during this period,¹⁰² anti-Lancastrian invocations of pan-Celticity were a feature of contemporary English political discourse. This had particular utility in the north of England, where as well as the Scottish A-text of *When Rome is Remoyd*, the *Six Kings* remained in enduring circulation.

¹⁰² McNiven, 'Rebellion, Sedition, and the Legend of Richard II's Survival', p.103.

All questions regarding the uses of the *Six Kings* in this period stand very much in the shadow of centuries of opinion regarding the final sequence of the *Six Kings* as *the* prophetic statement from which the principles of the Tripartite Indenture were formed, associated with the allegedly prophetic beliefs of Owain Glyn Dŵr.¹⁰³ This argument is based on a misdating of the earliest versions of the *Six Kings* by almost a century, and as Helen Fulton has noted, rests on a historiographical tradition marginalising Welsh political claims as a credulous faith in prophecy, quick to see English prophetic references in association with Welsh demands for independence.¹⁰⁴ I must re-iterate that the *Six Kings* has no Welsh source, and like *Cock in the North* is not material we can understand as in any sense originally Celtic, but rather English and Galfridian.¹⁰⁵ It had far more sway amongst partisans of the Percies than of Owain Glyn Dŵr.

It is widely noted that the *English Couplet Version of the Six Kings*, preserved in the early fifteenth-century BL, Cotton MS Galba E. ix, was used as a codification of opposition to Lancastrian rule;¹⁰⁶ and was by the mid-fifteenth century reworked in the *Revised English Couplet Version*, which appears in Yorkist manuscript collections.¹⁰⁷ Although (given its formal closeness to the *English Prose Translation*), it is generally accepted that we cannot assume the *English Couplet Version* was necessarily composed as an anti-Lancastrian document,¹⁰⁸ we are relatively safe in assuming that by the period of Cotton Galba E. ix it had come to be used as such. Preserved in a northern collection (the manuscript was compiled in Yorkshire), the Cotton Galba E. ix text was most feasibly incorporated by a scribe invested in the Tripartite Indenture, that is, within a Percy-ite milieu.¹⁰⁹ This version of the *Six Kings* was certainly circulating among a readership with a vested interest in the Percy rebellion. It appears to have been known to the Percy-ite author of *Cock in the North*, who borrowed heavily from the account of the pan-Celtic alliance found there:

Both þe dragon and þe wolf with mekill might

¹⁰³ This is a feature of both English and Welsh historiography alike, cf. Davies, *Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr*, pp.168-69; Longstaffe, p.173; Robbins, 'Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', p.1519; Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, pp.16-18. For discussion of this see Fulton, 'Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Uses of Prophecy'.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ For the hypothesis of a Celtic source for the *Six Kings*, see Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.118.

¹⁰⁶ The prophecy is printed in *The Poems of Laurence Minot*, ed. by Joseph Hall (1897), pp.97-105. For a catalogue of the contents of Cotton Galba E. ix see Hall, pp.vii-viii. Its prophetic context is detailed in Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.258. For critical contention regarding date of the various hands of the manuscript see Smallwood, p.581; Robbins, 'Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', p.1715. For the Yorkist use of this variant see Alison Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda: Pedigree, Prophecy and the 'British history'', in the Reign of Edward IV', in *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England*, ed. by Charles Ross (1979), pp.171-92 (pp.184-85).

¹⁰⁷ The *Revised Couplet Version* is discussed in Chapter 5, p.217.

¹⁰⁸ Smallwood, pp.571-72.

¹⁰⁹ Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry*, p.118.

Sail raise þaire tales samem on hight.
 Out of Yreland þan sail cum a liown,
 And hald with þe wolf and with þe dragown:
 Than sall all Ingland quakeand be
 Als leues that hinges on the espe tre.
 Þan sall þe moldwerp be sore adred,
 With am thre shal he be so strayghtly stead.

(235-42)

We find a reworking of this material in *Cock in the North*, firstly in the alliance between the dragon and the lion:

Then shall þe lion loust the boldest and þe best
 yat in brytayne was born syne arthers day
 And a dredeful dragon shall drawe hym from his denne
 The helpe the lion with all his myght

and secondly, in the account of the dead man's march on London, which follows the lion's capture, and precedes his successful recovery of his territory:

...Than shall troy Untrew tremble þat dayes
 ffor drede of a dede man when þay here hym speke.

These allusions must be understood in relation to the relevant sequence from the *English Couplet Version* (235-42) as a whole. The union between the lion and the dragon in *Cock in the North* is a contraction of the threefold alliance, found in all extant fourteenth and early fifteenth-century variants of the *Six Kings*. In the reworking of this familiar paradigm in *Cock in the North*, the animal-ciphers are re-arranged in a configuration more amenable to the historical scene of c.1405 from a Percy-ite point of view, staging an alliance between a northern (Percy) lion and a Welsh dragon (Owain Glyn Dŵr). As well as co-opting the lion as a Percy rather than potential Mortimer cipher, this modification of material from the *Six Kings* makes an important political statement: the absence of the Irish contingent suggests the omission of the Mortimer earls of March and Ulster, now generally considered secondary players in the Tripartite Indenture.¹¹⁰ (Indeed, as Peter McNiven notes, there is little evidence from the early fifteenth century that the

¹¹⁰ Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, p.57.

Percies had any genuine commitment to the Mortimer cause for ‘its own sake’.¹¹¹ Percy, and Percy-ite, interest was firmly focused northwards.) The culmination of this alliance in *Cock in the North* is the arrival of the dead man (Richard II), whose prophesied attack on London is modelled on the assault on England by the lion, wolf, and dragon in the *English Couplet Version*. This particular correspondence suggests the direct reworking of material from the *English Couplet Version* rather than any earlier variant of the *Six Kings* (it is first found here), and further implies that the author of *Cock in the North* understood the suppression of London as a paradigmatic scene of Saxon, in the terms of the prophecy Lancastrian, decline.

The antagonist of the final sequence of the *Six Kings*, the mole, also makes an appearance in *Cock in the North*, in the broader context of a host antipathetic to the lion:

The moll and the mermayden mevith in mynd
Criste that is our creature hath cursid hem by mouthe.

As with the use of the alliance between the lion and the dragon, the characteristic cursedness of this figure presupposes (on the part of the author) a basic acquaintance with the *Six Kings* among the prophecy’s intended readership. This status of the ‘moldwerp’ is elaborated upon in the *English Couplet Version*:

Sepin sal a moldwerp be þemer in land,
Weried with Goddes mowth mai þe warand,
A swith grete wretche þe moldwarp sal be;
In euerilka need fast sal he fle.

...

On him sall light, who so right redes.
Be vengeance of God for ald euill dedes.

(213-20)

This figure had a particular contemporary resonance during the early years of the fifteenth century. The association of Henry IV with the mole or moldwarp (/moldwerp) is a prevalent feature of prophetic opposition to the king during the early 1400s. Ultimately, this all follows from a long understanding of the *Six Kings* as a historical English king list, which in 1399 came to

¹¹¹ McNiven, ‘Rebellion, Sedition, and the Legend of Richard II’s Survival’, p.116. The opportunist nature of the Percy’s use of the Mortimer claim is also conjectured by Bean, ‘Henry IV and the Percies’, p.219.

assume new relevance.¹¹² Richard II, historically the fifth king after John, happened to meet the same fate as the fifth king of the sequence, the deposed ass, and so naturally the *Six Kings* enjoyed a new vogue during this period. In the post-1399 uses of the *Six Kings*, the mole, the final king, whose reign follows the ass, could only be Henry IV.

During the early years of the fifteenth century, the identification of Henry as the mole or moldwarp appears to have been relatively widespread, operating across different social and geographical milieu, and by no means limited to the north of England. The much-cited testimony of a prisoner in the gaol at Bury St Edmunds during the early years of the fifteenth century identified him as the last king, under the sway of a devil, who ‘shulde vndon the Roialme and brynge bataille to euery mannes dore and brynge the roialme in swych plyghte that ther shal neuer ben kynge more in Ingelond after hym’.¹¹³ The prisoner was almost certainly alluding to the final sequence of the *Six Kings*, understood as articulating (as the prophecy had throughout the fourteenth century), the perception of a profound threat to the continued existence of England. Alongside the Percy-ite and Welsh rebellions, the early fifteenth century was also a period of Scottish challenges, and certainly was a historical moment when we might expect such anxieties to be at their most pervasive.

However, alongside this pessimistic meaning, the identification of Henry as the mole also had a highly factionalist dimension. This meaning is fundamental to the application of the cipher in relation to the broader pan-Celtic paradigm found in *Cock in the North*. It proved to be an opportune identification for adherents of the Percies: the despised mole was the king in whose reign a revolution in the shape of English national and regional authority was to occur. Within the broader Percy-ite milieu, to identify Henry IV as the mole was to state the supremacy of the Percies in the north, imbuing them with a power to be exercised above and beyond contemporary royal authority. In this respect the pan-Celtic alliance and scene of insular splitting in the final sequence of the *Six Kings* came to express a desirable division: the birth of a tripartite England (and Wales), consistent with the political agenda espoused by the Percies during this period. In the months surrounding the Tripartite Indenture, the conclusion of the *English Couplet Version* almost certainly assumed a new pertinence:

Dan sall all *Ingland* on wonder wise,

¹¹² See above, Chapter 2, p.74.

¹¹³ TNA, KB 29/48 rot.9d. Discussed by Walker, who however, does not note a connection to the *Six Kings*. ‘Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest’, p.155.

Be euyñ partid in thre parties;
 Waters and woddes, felde and towne
 Bytwene þe dragon and þe lyoune.

(271-74)

In 1405 the division of England between the dragon and the lion may well have seemed a neat appraisal of Percy policy. Certainly, it must have fed the confidence of the author of *Cock in the North*, who prophesied the coming reign of the lion.

Percy Prophecy and the Tripartite Indenture

The prophetic interest of the earl of Northumberland himself is suggested by the very specific wording of the Tripartite Indenture, if we approach it with a mind to northern English political prophecy. It is now generally accepted that the Indenture was a movement led principally by Northumberland,¹¹⁴ and with the broader background of the investigation undertaken in this chapter in mind, I suggest that the prophetic wording of the document was born from a Percy interest in prophecy, rather than a Welsh:

Item si disponente Deo apparent praefatis Dominis ex processu temporis, quod ipsi sunt eadem personae de quibus Propheta loquitur, inter quos regimen Britanniae Majoris dividi debeat et partiri, tunc ipsi laborabunt et quilibet ipsorum laborabit juxta posse, quod id ad effectum efficaciter perducatur.

(Again, if according to God's arrangements, by the process of time, it should appear to the said lords, that they are the same persons of whom the Prophet speaks, between whom the government of Greater Britain ought to be divided and shared, then they shall labour, and each of them shall labour to his utmost, that this may more effectually be brought to effect.)¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, p.57.

¹¹⁵ *Thomas Matthews's Welsh Records in Paris*, pp.108-09, transl. p.116.

This document has long been regarded as representative of an engagement, led by Owain Glyn Dŵr, with ‘the consciously archaic language of Welsh prophecy’.¹¹⁶ Whilst there is a possible Welsh prophetic element in one detail of the Indenture, the identification of the Welsh border in line with the ash tree of Kynvar, a national boundary marker in a version of the *Cyfoesi*, as Fulton suggests, there is no reason to assume that this was not simply a ‘geographical fact’.¹¹⁷ Importantly, in its Merlinian reference, the Indenture engages in a frame of prophetic meaning which was not predominately Welsh, but rather northern English.

The document’s reference to the prophet in relation to a threefold territorial division corresponds to a long prophetic tradition with particular currency in northern England, articulating claims for the English overlordship of Scotland. This is a movement rooted in the imperialism of the ages of Edward I and Edward III, encapsulated in the vision of the *Six Kings*, not in the pan-Celtic alliance, but the boar of Windsor who ‘shal bere iii crones; and he shal put on lande in his tyme’, a figure with particular pertinence amongst the communities of the northern border, particularly as it related to Scotland.¹¹⁸ The Indenture re-works this notion of the strength of tripartite unification, substituting the northern kingdom of Scotland with the northern English territory of the Percies (notably, the Indenture set no limits on the cultivation of Percy interests across the Scottish border). A model of English overlordship is here reworked as a loose coalition of British states presented as a *type* of insular unification, and realisation of a long-lived historical right, grounded in the prophecies of Merlin. In the mode of Arthurian political prophecies from the northern border, Percy-ite territorial aggregation is here presented as an act of restoration. This authorising use of Merlin is fundamentally northern English, functioning in relation to contemporary northern border interests in line with a historical prophetic grammar.

Nowhere do we find a more striking statement of Percy petty kingship than in this document. Quite how the Percy north and the newly enlarged Wales would be related to the southern Mortimer crown remains unclear. The inclusion of any provision for the Mortimer heir may have been a mere formality. The Indenture makes no mention of the great Marcher properties of the Mortimers, and must be understood as principally a territorial agreement between Owain Glyn Dŵr and Northumberland.¹¹⁹ Certainly, the Mortimer right is downplayed in the treaty, an omission (I have noted) reflected also in the absence of any Mortimer presence

¹¹⁶ Dunn, *Politics of Magnate Power*, p.106. This assessment is based on Davies, *Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr*, pp.167-70.

¹¹⁷ Williams, *Owain Glyndŵr*, p.40; Fulton, ‘Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Uses of Prophecy’, p.115, n.37.

¹¹⁸ This quotation is from the *English Prose Version*.

¹¹⁹ Williams, *Owain Glyndŵr*, p.39-40.

in the coalition between the lion and the dragon in *Cock in the North*. However, as *Cock in the North* circulated beyond the Percy-ite milieu in the mid-fifteenth century, this absence saw significant rectification, and the earl of March came to be understood in some quarters as a new referent for the victorious lion of the prophecy. This movement, rooted in the Mortimer heartlands of the Welsh March, is discussed in Chapter Five. However, throughout this period, the *Cock in the North* also remained for some an exclusively Percy-ite prophecy. This is a perception strongly suggested by some distinctive details of the Thornton version of the *Romance and Prophecies*.

Percy Prophecy in 1453

There is clear evidence that by the mid-fifteenth century, a Percy revisionist history associating the Percies with allegiance to Richard II, was circulating within a literary milieu interested in historical romance. This is an aspect, long un-remarked, of the earliest extant witness of the *Romance and Prophecies*, Lincoln Cathedral, MS 91, the so-called Thornton manuscript. This has implications for the dating of the inclusion of the text in the manuscript which is currently estimated at c.1440-50: this would place its composition some time after October 1453, and locate it within the broader Percy affinity.

Percy associations with some of the contents of the manuscript have been observed by previous scholars, albeit tangentially. In a footnote, Michael Johnston has remarked that the opening of the manuscript's *Alliterative Morte Darthur* reads as the beginning of the Percy motto: 'En espyraunce may...' (the motto is 'esperaunce ma comforte'). The remainder of the sentence is torn out.¹²⁰ The Percy motto achieved a *post facto* association with the Battle of Shrewsbury (we find it in Hall and Holinshed, and consequently Shakespeare), and we might wonder if such a resonance was understood as early as the 1450s.¹²¹ The excision of the motto would then be the excision of a highly factionalist form of address, with a seditious history. A policy of the excision of Percy-references is apparent across the manuscript: notably, the folio containing the reference to Hotspur's prowess at Otterburn is cut out from the *Romance and Prophecies*. Similarly, we see the excision of a sequence following a unique heraldic interpolation in the *Romance and Prophecies*. It is

¹²⁰ Michael Johnston, 'A New Document Relating to the Life of Robert Thornton', *The Library*, 8 (2007), 304-13 (p.309, n.28).

¹²¹ Longstaffe, p.177.

this, and its implications for the historical-political situation of Thornton, his manuscript, and the text, with which I am here concerned.

The Thornton version includes an additional prophecy inserted into fytte three, which is found in no other extant copies of the *Romance and the Prophecies*. It precedes the absence of two folios from the manuscript:

Ther sall a lorde come to *that* werre,
 þat sall be full of grete renow[ne];
 And in his Banere sall he bere,
 Triste it wele, a rede lyone.
 Thar sall *another* come to þat wer[e],
 þat sall fyghte full fayre in
 And in his nabere sall he ber[e]
 A Schippe *witb* an ankyre of golde.
 ʒitt sall an oþer come to þat were,
 þat es noghte knawen^e by northe n[e] southe;
 And in his Banere sall he bere
 A wolfe *witb* a nakede childe *in* his mo[uthe] .
 ʒitt sall þe ferthe lorde come to þat w[erre]
 þat sall grete Maystries *after* ma[ke];
 And in his B[anere sa]ll he b[er]e
 The bere...

Brandl understood this sequence as the paying of a compliment to various northern magnates through the use of their heraldic badges or arms, as a prophecy of English prowess in battle against the king of Scotland, one possibility he conjectures for the lion.¹²² Taylor similarly held the sequence to refer to a number of English lords engaged in a war against Scotland.¹²³ It is only once the prophecy is orientated within a Percy-ite context, that the meaning of these ciphers can be fully recognised.

The sequence reads as an allusion to the Percy-Neville rivalry of the early 1450s. A dispute between two great magnate families of the Anglo-Scottish border, the antipathy between

¹²² Brandl, *Thomas of Erveloune*, p.140.

¹²³ Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, p.64.

the Percies and the Nevilles must be traced back to the disputes over the offices of the wardens of the western and eastern March towards the end of the reign of Richard II.¹²⁴ This long-lived northern factionalism has been understood by at least one historian as a pre-cursor of, and precondition for, the Wars of the Roses.¹²⁵ The prophecy alludes to the violent rivalry of Thomas Percy, Lord Egremont, third son of the earl of Northumberland, and his brothers, with the sons of Richard Neville, earl of Salisbury, in the period following Richard of York's appointment as protector of the realm in 1453.¹²⁶ This was an antipathy into which the broader affinities of both families were drawn, and it is in such a milieu that we must root this interpolation.

The lion must be recognised as a Percy cipher, in line with *Cock in the North*, to which this variant of the *Romance and Prophecies* stands in an inter-textual relationship (as I shall demonstrate presently). The bear whose appearance concludes the sequence is almost certainly a reference to the heraldic badge of the Neville earl of Warwick (the bear and ragged staff), an important figure in northern English politics during this period.¹²⁷ Following the death of the first Neville earl of Westmorland in 1425, the most important landholder and rival to Percy power in the north of England was his son, Richard Neville (who became earl of Salisbury in 1429), who inherited the greater part of his father's northern power base (with the exception of the earldom itself). Warden of the eastern March, he was joined in this office by his son, the earl of Warwick, in 1453, another Richard Neville. During the 1450s, Salisbury and Warwick were the heads of a large and powerful Neville affinity in the north of England, antipathetic to the Percies.¹²⁸ It is this contestation which the ciphers of the Thornton interpolation encodes: the great 'were' it figures, previously understood by scholars as an Anglo-Scottish dispute, is in fact an account of dynastic strife in Yorkshire.¹²⁹

The interpolation most feasibly follows the renewal of hostilities between the two families in August 1453, following the so-called Battle of Heworth. It was almost certainly composed after the October of that year, when Warwick became personally involved in the

¹²⁴ See above, Chapter 3, p.147.

¹²⁵ Tuck, 'The Emergence of a Northern Nobility', p.17.

¹²⁶ For historical context see R. L. Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster* (1967), pp. 124-49; and Ralph A. Griffiths, 'Local Rivalries and National Politics: The Percies, The Nevilles, and the Duke of Exeter, 1452-1455', *Speculum*, 48 (1968), 589-632; Peter Booth, 'Men Behaving Badly? The West March towards Scotland and the Percy-Neville Feud', in *The Fifteenth Century III: Authority and Subversion*, ed. by Linda Clark (2003), pp.95-116; Rose, *Kings in the North*, pp.400-13.

¹²⁷ S. T. Aveling, ed., *Heraldry, Ancient and Modern: Including Boutell's Heraldry by Charles Boutell* (1890), p.310.

¹²⁸ Storey, 'Local Rivalries and National Politics', pp.591-93.

¹²⁹ Thornton's politics are discussed by Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.184-85. However, Coote associates Thornton with the Nevilles, and takes the manuscript to have been compiled during the 1440s. She produces no textual evidence in support of this.

conflict.¹³⁰ It was during this period that, following the return of Henry VI's mental incapacity, York became Protector of the Realm, and was understood by contemporaries as harbouring certain royal ambitions. The Nevilles sought York's support, as a major northern landowner and relative by marriage, in their dispute against the Percies, and in turn supported his broader political ambitions.¹³¹ This is alluded to in the interpolation: the child with the wolf in his mouth is a variation on a badge of York's Mortimer ancestors, the wolf,¹³² and by virtue of this inclusion, the Thornton interpolation shows a strong awareness of the relationship between local and national politics. The addition of the child to the badge explicitly recalls the origins of the Mortimer claim in the early years of the fifteenth century: the political value of the child proclaimed then as heir to the throne, Edmund Mortimer, fifth earl of March (d.1425). As I discuss in the final chapter of this thesis, the royal Mortimer claim of the early fifteenth century remained central in political prophetic traditions of the mid-fifteenth century. The 'wolf and child' cipher recurs in a number of sixteenth-century prophecies with fifteenth-century cores, reworking material from the third fytte of the *Romance and Prophecies*, and including the animal standards of the Thornton interpolation.¹³³ The variant found in BL, Harley MS 559, appears alongside a text manipulated in opposition to Henry IV, the *Revised Couplet Version of the Six Kings*.¹³⁴ It draws the wolf cipher, along with the Neville bear, into a scene of early fifteenth-century anti-Lancastrianism:

Owte of þe weste shall come 8 persones, which shall bringe mare then
inowe. theye shall bringe with them a bull with a beard, a bere with a
chayne, with them shall come a nutcroppes, a shepe with anker gilt, a
graye wolfe with a childe in his mowthe, a redd lyon rampinge, a
dreadfull dragon...¹³⁵

This reworking of the Thornton sequence unmistakably incorporates a clear reminiscence of the *Six Kings* as it was understood in its later mid fifteenth-century reception history, in relation to the Tripartite Indenture (discussed further in Chapter Five). Within this context, the wolf is unmistakably a Mortimer cipher, almost certainly supported by the Neville bear (the bear with a

¹³⁰ Storey, 'Local Rivalries and National Politics', pp.597-98, 604-05.

¹³¹ Storey, 'Local Rivalries and National Politics', p.605. For the long relationship between York and the Nevilles see R. A. Griffiths, *Reign of Henry VI* (2004), pp.667,721; Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, pp.464-65.

¹³² Aveling, p.306. This badge was later adopted by Edward IV. Brandl identifies this as the cipher of one 'Harbarte', but his understanding of the resonance of this application is unclear. *Thomas of Ervelldoune*, p.140.

¹³³ BL, Harley MS 559, and Bodleian, Ashmole MS 1886, printed in Brandl, *Thomas of Ervelldoune*, pp.124-25, 127-30.

¹³⁴ Smallwood, p.572; Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, pp.326-27. For discussion of the *Revised Couplet Version*, see below, Chapter 5, pp.222-23.

¹³⁵ Brandl, *Thomas of Ervelldoune*, p.124.

chain being a partial rendering of the bear chained to the staff). This is an allusion not to early the 1400s, but the political context of the 1450s. Notably, when Shakespeare came to stage this historical alliance in *2 Henry VI*, he had Warwick swear his intentions by ‘old Nevil’s crest, the rampant bear chain’d to the ragged staff’.¹³⁶

We do not know what becomes of the Percy lion in this encounter in the Thornton interpolation. The page is torn precisely on fol. 153r, immediately following the appearances of the heraldic figures, and the text is completed only by the prayer for the souls of all Englishmen which marks the Thornton variant’s unique coda.¹³⁷ Given the prophecy’s use of the lion cipher, this element of the Thornton text represents a potential deviation from other extant variants, a continuation of its heraldic interpolation in relation to Percy interests. The dead man of *Cock in the North* is a figure derived from the bastard of the *Romance and Prophecies*, and it is feasible that the lion was incorporated in some relationship to him. In the excised section, the bastard may well have raised the lion to rule, as we find in *Cock in the North*.

Certainly, pains were taken to remove material related to the Percies from the Thornton witness, whilst leaving the body of the rest of the prophecies, and their origin tale, in tact. The excising hand may have been Thornton himself: he chose not to excise the entire work, simply its seditious elements. Indeed, there is a little-commented upon possible political association of Thornton’s social circle with the Percy-Neville rivalry, born out in the researches of George Keiser. Keiser has noted Thornton’s dismissal from his position as tax collector in the North Riding of Yorkshire between the commissions of June 1453 and May 1454.¹³⁸ The fine rolls record that this discharge was a result of the discovery of certain ‘sinister information’ concerning the commissioners. Keiser tentatively suggests that a suspicion or anticipation of involvement by Robert Thornton in Percy disturbances in the north-east lay behind this discharge. This is not to say that Thornton was necessarily a member of the broader Percy affinity, but that he moved in circles with some connection to the family; and potentially, between June 1453 and May 1454 was caught in the crossfire between the Percies and the proto-Yorkist regime. Percy material was plausibly excised from the manuscript during the recriminations which followed.

¹³⁶ Shakespeare, *2 Henry VI*, 5.1, 202-03.

¹³⁷ *The Thornton Manuscript* (Lincoln Cathedral MS 91), facsimile ed. by D. S. Brewer and A. E. B. Owen (1975).

¹³⁸ George R. Keiser, ‘Lincoln Cathedral MS 91: Life and Milieu of the Scribe’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 32 (1979), 158-79 (p.163).

This point of contact potentially points to the means by which Thornton may have acquired this particular version of the text. He appears as a tax collector in public records alongside persons with connections to the Percies and other members of the northern gentry (such as William Gascoigne, and Brian Stapleton, MPs).¹³⁹ It was through his acquaintance with such families that Thornton collected much of his literary material.¹⁴⁰ It is possible that the *Romance and Prophecies* came to him through such a source.

During the mid-fifteenth century, the *Romance and Prophecies* still circulated as a highly political text, by this period associated with a long-lived tradition of Percy-ite prophecy. If we can posit an inter-textual connection to *Cock in the North* in the Thornton variant, although a dynastic vision of the future in Yorkshire in c.1453, we must understand it as grounded in a Percy-ite re-writing of history c.1405, in which a recreated memory of Percy loyalty to Richard II, and a right to northern supremacy, remained central.

Conclusion

This chapter has charted the uses of a highly nationalist mode of prophecy in line with a distinctively factionalist agenda. Percy-ite prophecy is heavily indebted to northern English prophetic traditions, expressing antipathy towards Scotland. In the early 1400s, this antipathy was turned against the Lancastrian regime, and in 1453, the proto-Yorkist. In the development of this prophetic mode, we see the instrumental role of the rise of the northern aristocracy in the construction of a distinctive regional identity, and the porous boundary between prophetic strategies of regional and national address.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p.168.

¹⁴⁰ George R. Keiser, 'More Light on the Life and Milieu of Robert Thornton', *Studies in Bibliography*, 36 (1983), 111-19 (pp.114-15).

Chapter 5

The Long Memory of 1405:

The Mid-Fifteenth-Century Development of Proto-Yorkist Political Prophecy, from the Welsh Border to London

The key to understanding the continued political utility of the Erceldoune tradition throughout the fifteenth century lies in the destabilisation of our regard for the political issues, questions, and expectations of this period as exclusively Anglo-centric. Such a re-assessment is a primary objective of this study. This final chapter explores the application of Erceldoune prophecy as a component of proto-Yorkist discourse in the mid-fifteenth century, associated with Richard of York, in the generation preceding the first Yorkist king, Edward IV. The political re-inscription of this material from Percy-ite meanings to proto-Yorkist is here orientated in relation to the uses of English prophetic material by political communities in the Welsh March. In the March, Erceldoune prophecies were employed as an extension of the Arthurian and prophetic materials associated with York's ancestors, the Mortimer earls of March, a family at the very centre of English politics. Alongside Welsh genealogical claims, the Mortimer line stood in an important historical relationship to the early fifteenth-century rebellion of the Percies and Owain Glyn Dŵr, a significant moment in the historical struggle for Welsh independence.

Following an overview of the development of Arthurian and prophetic material as components of a partisan political discourse in Wales and the March, associated with the earls of March, this chapter considers English language prophecies drawn from the Erceldoune tradition in NLW, Peniarth MS 26 (c.1456), compiled in or around Oswestry on the northern Welsh March, and espousing a proto-Yorkist agenda.¹ Peniarth 26 contains prophetic material in common with BL, Cotton Roll, II. 23 (c.1451),² a collection of rebel verses, demands, and prophecies associated with Jack Cade's Revolt, a movement often regarded as proto-Yorkist.³ An investigation of the (previously un-noted) correspondences between these two manuscripts suggests that the prevalent prophetic component of proto-Yorkist political discourse, as it took

¹ Daniel Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (2002), p.61.

² Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, pp.324-25.

³ I. M. V. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (1991); Helena M. Lyle, *The Rebellion of Jack Cade, 1450* (1950); R. A. Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI* (1998), pp.684-86; John Watts, 'Politics and Polemics in the 1450s', in *The Politics of Fifteenth-century England: John Vale's Book*, ed. by Margaret Lucille Kekewich *et al* (1995), pp.3-42.

root in London during the 1450s, was heavily indebted to the protean nature of strategic political and cultural identifications on the Welsh March.⁴ Cross-border clerical networks are well attested in this period, and the presence of shared literary material between the two regions is undeniable.⁵ Although the precise direction of transmission in this particular case remains conjectural, the origins of the prophetic movement associated with the earls of March, represented in both collections, was certainly grounded in a perception of the Anglo-Welsh genealogy of the earls as the stuff of Galfridian history and prophecy. This first developed on the Welsh March. Here we find the earliest seeds of a prevalent model of political prophecy, which was by the mid-1450s associated with the house of York throughout England and Wales, drawing on the authorisingly British (that is, Welsh) ancestry of the earls of March.

In proto-Yorkist and Yorkist applications of Erceldoune prophecy, connotations of Welshness came to possess an authorising function, harnessed in line with an anti-Lancastrian discourse interested in a division between the Saxon Lancastrians and the British Yorkists. This partisan movement presents an important re-inscription of the meta-narrative of Welsh political prophecy, with immense implications for the development of the Erceldoune tradition. By the mid-fifteenth century, the Percy-ite Erceldoune prophecy *Cock in the North*, re-inscribed on the Welsh border in relation to the earls of March, was even being attributed by some collectors of prophecy in England to a Welsh source. The unique variant of *Cock in the North* found in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 249/277, a collection of Yorkist prophetic and historical material compiled c.1464 by John Herryson (a fellow of the college) is illuminating in this respect.⁶ Herryson, who autographs the prophecy, ascribes its source (alongside the conventional authorities) to ‘þe cowper off westwalys’.⁷ This chapter charts the historical process by which the Erceldoune tradition came to rest not simply on an authorising Scottish element, but a Welsh one also.

⁴ The political uses of these strategies by proto-Yorkist factions amongst the rebels in 1450 have gone hitherto un-noted. In his attempt to reconstruct the rebel discourse of 1450, Alexander L. Kaufman does not include evidence from Cotton Roll, II. 23, and so makes no comment of prophecy, a matter absent from the chronicle accounts of the revolt. *The Historical Literature of the Jack Cade Rebellion* (2009).

⁵ Ralph Griffiths, ‘Public and Private Bureaucracies in England and Wales in the Fifteenth Century’, in *King and Country: England and Wales in the Fifteenth Century* (1991) pp.137-59.

⁶ J. J. Smith, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge* (1849), pp.132-33; Crick, *Historia Regum Britanniae IV*, p.45-49; Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.242-43.

⁷ Gonville and Caius College, MS 249/277, fol. 288r.

Anglo-Welsh Literature and National (Re)identifications

The investigations of this chapter depend on a recognition of the relationship between English prophecies and Welsh political expectations during the fifteenth century, a direction of literary influence much overlooked in contemporary scholarship. There are two important exceptions here: Glyn Roberts's 1963 article 'Wales and England: Antipathy and Sympathy, 1282-1485', an assessment of the role of collaboration and resistance in Welsh attitudes towards English domination from Edward I's conquest of Wales to the Tudor accession, as manifest in Welsh literature of the period; and Helen Fulton's 2008 revision of Roberts's position.⁸ Fulton suggests the difficulties inherent in the binary oppositions 'English' and 'Welsh' during this period, understanding such identifications as 'social and discursive constructs that interpellate individuals, not pre-existing categories into which individuals might be fitted'.⁹ This concept is at one with my own analysis of the role of cultural and political collaboration and the presence of multiple allegiances amongst the mixed milieux of the Welsh border (as I have also observed on the northern). The protean nature of strategies of national address is nowhere more apparent than in the late medieval English language prophecies of Wales and the March.

The fifteenth century saw levels of Welsh engagement with English political prophecies analogous to the enthusiastic reception of the *Prophetiae Merlini* and *Prophecy of the Eagle* during the thirteenth century, discussed in Chapter One. During this period *Prophetiae*, 110-14 saw continued use in the articulation of ambitions for Welsh independence in addresses to other nations. It was most famously invoked in Owain Glyn Dŵr's letters to the king of Scotland and princes of Ireland, although additional examples can be found in Peniarth 26 (discussed below).¹⁰ Variations on this theme, both *Cock in the North* and the *Six Kings* have important fifteenth-century Welsh reception histories. *Cock in the North* was translated into Welsh, and included as an English language prophecy item alongside traditional (and highly nationalist) Welsh prophecies in mid-fifteenth-century Welsh manuscripts, including Peniarth MS 26.¹¹ Such was the extent of

⁸ Glyn Roberts, 'Wales and England: Antipathy and Sympathy, 1282-1485', *Welsh History Review*, 1 (1960-63), 375-96; Fulton, 'Class and Nation: Defining the English in Late-Medieval Welsh Poetry'. For a consideration based on late fourteenth-century material see David Johnston, 'Iolo Goch and the English: Welsh Poetry and Politics in the Fourteenth Century', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 12 (1986), 73-98. This implications of Johnston's findings for my own study are discussed further below.

⁹ Fulton, 'Class and Nation', p.195.

¹⁰ *Thomas Matthews' Welsh Records in Paris*, pp.103-04, transl. pp.111-12.

¹¹ Cf. English versions, NLW, MS Peniarth 50, p.1; Peniarth 26, p.39; Welsh translations, Peniarth 50, p.99. Contents catalogued by John Gwenogvryn Evans, *Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language*, 3 vols (1898-1910), I, part 2, pp.389-99 (pp.389-94); pp.351-54 (p.352). For comment on Welsh translations of *Cock in the North* see Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, p.209 (who, however, misidentifies the Welsh and English translations). A fifteenth-century Welsh translation of the prophecy is printed by Haferkorn, *When Rome is Removed into England*, pp.144-46.

this text's appropriation, that the dead man assumed an independent life as a Welsh prophetic cipher, *Gŵr marw*.¹² The *Six Kings* was also translated into Welsh during the fifteenth century, and reworked in line with pre-existing Welsh prophetic motifs.¹³

Much of the English prophecy material translated or reworked in Wales and the March during the fifteenth century contains Arthurian elements (with which we must align the boar of Windsor of the *Six Kings* and the dead man of *Cock in the North*). Arthuriana was a significant nodal point in the Welsh re-use of English political prophecies during this period. The mid-fifteenth century also saw a Welsh translation of a prophecy of the holy oil, entitled *Darogan yr Olew Bendigaid*, presented as a heavily Arthurianised version of an English Last World Emperor prophecy (another important theme in cross border circulation during this period).¹⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth's imperial Arthur had a significant impact on Welsh historical and prophetic traditions, governing Welsh borrowings from, and re-inscriptions of, English prophecies throughout the later Middle Ages. The level of appropriation of English Arthurian prophecies into Welsh manuscript culture during this period is so pronounced, that the presence of the Arthurian return myth in Wales, so long associated by scholars with Welsh prophetic culture, may well even be a product of this period. Certainly, Arthurian prophecy in Wales came into its own in the fifteenth century.

Many of these Arthurian prophecies came to articulate overt affiliations to the Lancastrian or proto-Yorkist and later Yorkist cause. This must be orientated in line with a gradual shift in strategic identifications amongst some parties in Wales and the March during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The circulation of English prophetic material in Wales during this period, as supplementary to older and non-Galfridian Welsh traditions, is representative of a widespread Welsh perception of the possibilities for national self-determination presented by highly pragmatic engagements with English politics and political figures.¹⁵ This movement is even in evidence in one of the greatest nationalist rebellions of the later Middle Ages, reflected in Owain Glyn Dŵr's policy in regard to the Percies, and – judging from the letters written by Sir Edmund Mortimer to his tenants in December 1402, starting the Welsh rebel's support for the Mortimer

¹² Wallis Evans, 'Prophetic Poetry', p.266.

¹³ Fulton, *Welsh Prophecy and English Politics*, pp.21-35; Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, pp.198-99 (a derivation based on the career of the boar of Windsor), pp.201-02 (Welsh translation understood here as a version used by Owain Glyn Dŵr 'and his friends'. For a counterargument see Fulton, 'Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Uses of Prophecy').

¹⁴ Ceridwen Lloyd Morgan, 'Prophecy and Welsh Nationhood in the Fifteenth Century', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1985, 9-26.

¹⁵ Glanmor Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation: Wales, c.1415-1642* (1987), pp.6-10; Williams, 'Prophecy, Poetry, and Politics in Medieval and Tudor Wales', p.72; Griffiths, 'After Glyn Dŵr: An Age of Reconciliation?', pp.159-62; Fulton, 'Class and Nation: Defining the English in Late-Medieval Welsh Poetry', pp.202-04.

cause – the Mortimer heir also.¹⁶ This particular historical alliance is an interest reflected in a number of the English language prophecies of Peniarth 26.

Although it is often proposed that Anglo-Welsh political affiliations and identifications reached their apex in the political prophecies surrounding the accession of Henry Tudor in 1485 (often understood as a watershed in the history of Anglo-Welsh political relations),¹⁷ this is a process rooted much earlier in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in the dynastic propaganda of the earls of March and its long regional reception history. Indeed, the research of this chapter suggests that some of the prophetic material we associate with the Tudors, was in fact earlier applied to the earls of March.

From Percy-ite to Proto-Yorkist Meanings

The partisan uses of the Erceldoune tradition in application to the earls of March must be aligned with the much commented upon later Yorkist use of Galfridian history and prophecy during the Wars of the Roses.¹⁸ However, it remains hitherto unobserved that elements of Yorkist prophecy present direct re-workings of formerly Percy-ite materials.

The sizeable point of overlap between Yorkist and Percy-ite prophetic strategies is clearly evidenced in the Yorkist-Percy prophecy collection BL, Cotton Vespasian E. vii, discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁹ Compiled during the early 1470s, the manuscript memorialises a historical alliance between the two camps. However, the foundations of this prophetic commonality preceded this alliance by some decades. The re-inscription of Percy-ite propaganda as Yorkist was in many respects an inevitable product of a shared historical anti-Lancastrianism, a movement with which we can also align works like Hardyng's *Chronicle*, a text interested in the Lancastrian usurpation and the Percy rebellion from a Percy-ite, and later Yorkist, perspective.²⁰

¹⁶ Sir Edmund Mortimer states Owain's support for the right of Richard, and if he were dead, Edmund, earl of March. Henry Ellis, *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, 4 vols (1827, 2nd series), I, p.24; printed and transl. by Salmon, *A Source Book of Welsh History*, pp.206-07.

¹⁷ Cf. David Rees, *The Son of Prophecy: Henry Tudor's Road to Bosworth* (1985), p.5; G. R. Elton, 'King Henry VII', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1985), 131-45.

¹⁸ Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda: Pedigree, Prophecy and the 'British history' in the Reign of Edward IV', pp.175-77; Sydney Anglo, 'The British History in Early Tudor Propaganda', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 44 (1961), 17-48; Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.218; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p.494.

¹⁹ See above, Chapter 4, p.169.

²⁰ For the movement of Hardyng's affiliations from a Percy-ite to a Yorkist milieu, and the resultant uses of his text, see Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, pp.274-87; C. L. Kingsford, 'The First Version of Hardyng's *Chronicle*', *English Historical Review*, 27 (1912), 462-82. For later Lancastrian uses of the *Chronicle* see A. S. G. Edwards, 'The

However, it is highly possible that there was also a large measure of geographical influence at work in this process, in which the protean national identifications of Anglo-Welsh communities of the Welsh March had a fundamental role to play.

The Percies' influence on the Welsh March in the early years of the fifteenth century was centred in the north, around Chester (where, we have seen, Percy-ite prophecy remained in long-lived circulation).²¹ Notably, Peniarth 26, one of the most impressive Erceldoune collections of the Welsh border, was compiled on the northern March. Percy-ite prophecy was useful in this region because it drew on the scene of c.1405, a historical Anglo-Welsh alliance which incorporated Welsh ambitions for independence under Owain Glyn Dŵr. Given the Percy presence in this region, Erceldoune prophecies are likely to have been in circulation from the early years of the fifteenth century. In the political application of this material on the border extant from the mid-fifteenth century, we find the inclusion of a figure excluded from the earliest Percy-ite meanings of *Cock in the North*: the Mortimer heir, and his claim as raised by Sir Edmund Mortimer. Here, the lion of *Cock in the North* came to assume a new, Mortimer, referent, and the foregrounding of Mortimer activity in the scene of c.1405 came to function as a core element of proto-Yorkist and Yorkist propaganda, in circulation across England and Wales.

The Mortimer ancestors of the earls of March remained an important political memory on the Welsh border during the 1450s. The Mortimer line proper died with Edmund Mortimer, the fifth earl of March, in 1425, and his heir, inheriting the expansive domains of the earldoms of March and Ulster, was Richard of York, son of Anne Mortimer and Richard earl of Cambridge.²² York went by the surname Plantagenet, a conscious fostering of his genealogical associations not with the earls of March, but with the Plantagenet kings through his royal ancestor Lionel of Clarence, the second son of Edward III.²³ Following the death of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester in 1447, and before the birth of a son to Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou in 1453, Richard of York was widely regarded as the singular candidate for the heir presumptive.²⁴ It has been suggested that as early as the 1440s an awareness of the genuine possibility of his royal accession

Manuscripts and Texts of the Second Version of John Hardyng's *Chronicle*, in *England in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Daniel Williams (1987), pp.75-84.

²¹ See above, Chapter 4, n.84.

²² Anne Crawford, *The Yorkists: The History of a Dynasty* (2007), p.xix; Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, p.464; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp.667-68.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.499; J. R. Lander, *Conflict and Stability in Fifteenth-century England* (1977, 3rd edn), p.70; Thomas B. Pugh, *Henry V and the Southampton Plot of 1415* (1988), pp.71-77.

²⁴ Griffiths, *Reign of Henry VI*, p.676.

motivated much of York's political behaviour.²⁵ Certainly, he was understood in royal terms by his followers on the March.

Although York's cultivated English royal association is important for our understanding of the political prophecies applied to him during the 1450s (and later his son, Edward IV), we must recognise it as one component in a long and rich tradition of royal propaganda integrated within a powerful dynastic mythology, conceived on the Welsh border, resting not simply on the royal English, but also the royal Welsh, genealogy of the Mortimer line.

A Focus for Welsh Expectations

The application of political prophecies to Richard of York in the mid-fifteenth century (both on the March and throughout England), must be read in relation to the prophetic strategies associated with, and employed by, the Mortimer earls of March before him, and their long political life.

Almost a century before Henry Tudor came to function as an Anglo-Welsh political figure, indicative of Welsh national expectations, writing in the mid-1390s Iolo Goch (a poet who was effectively Owain Glyn Dŵr's household bard) composed a panegyric to Roger Mortimer (1374-98), the fourth earl of March. Iolo invested him with great political expectations associated with the kingdom of Gwynedd, a locus long associated with hopes for Welsh independence:²⁶

Darogan yw mai'n draig ni
 A lunia'r gwaith eleni:
 O ben y llew glew ei gledd
 Coronir câr i Wynedd

²⁵ J. M. W. Bean, 'The Financial Position of Richard, Duke of York', in *War and Government in the Middle Ages*, ed. by John Gillingham and J. C. Holt (1984), pp.182-98 (p.198); Crawford, *The Yorkists*, pp.3-4.

²⁶ Johnston, 'Iolo Goch and the English', pp.87-89; see also Wallis Evans, pp.278-97; Roberts, 'Wales and England', p.389. For the place of Gwynedd in the history of English occupation and Welsh hopes for independence see J. Beverley Smith, 'Welsh Society and Native Power Before Conquest', in *Edward I and Wales*, ed. by Trevor Herbert and Gareth Elwyn Jones (1988), pp.11-40.

(It is prophesied that it will be our dragon who will make the action this year: from the head of the lion with the valiant sword, one akin to Gwynedd will be crowned.)²⁷

Produced in the 1390s, the panegyric must be placed in the broader context of rumours naming Roger Mortimer as Richard II's heir.²⁸ Alistair Dunn has conjectured that this was a period when the young earl was coming to be perceived by the king as something of a threat.²⁹ That Roger might prove not only a successor, but a corrective, to the rule of Richard II was clearly in the minds of some amongst the Mortimer milieu during this period. Adam Usk wrote of the popular hopes associated with Roger, that he might deliver England from Richard's tyranny.³⁰ These hopes were associated explicitly by the chronicler with the earl's British claims. Eulogising upon Roger's untimely death, Adam outlined his Welsh descent through Gwladus Ddu, an illegitimate daughter of King John descended also from the Welsh royal line of Gwynedd, who married Ralph Mortimer of Wigmore in c.1229. This was an incredibly important genealogical connection for the Mortimers, painted in Galfridian colours.³¹ Adam Usk traced this genealogy further back through Cadwaladr (let us remember, a mythic-historical prince of Gwynedd),³² to Brutus, and ultimately Adam.³³ After 1229, the Mortimers stood as direct heirs to the first and last mythic rulers of pre-Saxon Britain, and the last royal line of pre-1285 Wales.

This genealogy was a founding component of later Yorkist political prophecy. A brief example of the influence of this framework will suffice here. Bodleian, MS 623, a Yorkist collection of Latin prophetic and astrological material, provides an excellent example of the place of Galfridian prophecy, and elements therein derived from Welsh, in Yorkist political prophecy. A number of prophetic ciphers for the first Yorkist king, Edward IV, are laid out in a diagram on fol. 71r.³⁴

²⁷ Johnston, 'Iolo Goch and the English', p.88.

²⁸ For an overview of chronicles recording the rumour and expressing related expectations, see Pugh, pp.73-75.

²⁹ Alistair Dunn, 'Richard II and the Mortimer Inheritance', in *Fourteenth-Century England II*, ed. by Chris Given-Wilson (2002), pp.159-70.

³⁰ *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, pp.38-39. Under the patronage of the Mortimer earls of March, the *Chronicle of Adam Usk* has been considered a Mortimer chronicle by Chris Given-Wilson, 'Chronicles of the Mortimer Family, c.1250-1450', in *Family and Dynasty in Late Medieval England*, pp.67-86 (pp.69, 82-83).

³¹ Hopkinson, 'The Mortimers of Wigmore, 1214-1282', p.31; Perfect, 'The Mortimers of Wigmore', p.12.

³² See above, Chapter 1, p.35.

³³ *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, pp.40-43.

³⁴ Discussed by Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda', p.180. Allan notes similar material is found in Bodleian, Ashmolean Roll 26.

aper; assinus; sextus hibernie; angelus domini; nuncius celi; leopardus;
 leo; sol; taurus; alba rosa; ffalco; tertius; Brutus; ruben draco;
 Cadwalladrus.... aquila; filius hoi; unicornus; sallus.

The English royal descent of the Yorkist king is emphasised through the use of royal Galfridian ciphers: *aper* (the Edwardian boar), and *assinus* (which saw a decidedly more positive post mortem application to Richard II in the mid-fifteenth century, discussed below), alongside the English arms, the leopard. But we also see a foregrounding of British (that is, Welsh) ciphers: Brutus, the red dragon, and ‘Cadwalladrus’. These are lifted directly from the highly Galfridianised Mortimer genealogy. These figure as the conventional enemies of the Lancastrian kings, identified on fol. 71v through a number of antipathetic prophetic ciphers: the lynx (the Galfridian cipher applied to John), the white dragon of the Saxons, and the moldwarp (the latter two clear allusions to the Lancastrian usurpation). The model of British restoration and Saxon expulsion acquired a new onus during this period. The Welsh qualifications of the Mortimer line allowed the insertion of the Yorkist kings into a Galfridian framework of meaning, re-energised by a genuinely British claim. This was an identificatory mechanism rooted in an Anglo-Welsh political prophetic tradition, clearly articulated in Iolo Goch’s panegyric: a combining of English and Welsh royal claims.

For Iolo Goch the Mortimer right to the English throne was also a vision of the ascendancy of the kingdom of Gwynedd, through its surviving heirs. Iolo forecast Roger Mortimer as an actor in an insular history perceived as at once English and Welsh. Although this supposed Mortimer prophecy may well have been manufactured by Iolo (the lion symbol alludes to the white lion on the arms of the earls of March),³⁵ it also potentially rests on prior Welsh material associated with the kings of Gwynedd.³⁶ The four lions on the arms of Gwynedd carried powerful Welsh nationalist associations throughout the later Middle Ages. They were adopted by Owain Glyn Dŵr during the early 1400s.³⁷ The lion was employed as a heroic epithet for Llywelyn ap Iorwerth (Llywelyn the Great) in earlier Welsh political prophecy. In the *Cyfoesi Myrddin a Gwenddydd*, we read of the prince of Gwynedd, *de facto* ruler of all Wales, and enemy of King John, as ‘brenhin llew’ (‘a lion of a king’) (col. 580, 15; stanza 61).³⁸ Iolo Goch invested an Anglo-Welsh figure with deeply rooted Welsh expectations. The representative value of the lion was long-lived in the prophecies of the northern Welsh March for precisely this reason.

³⁵ John F. Cussans, *Handbook of Heraldry* (1882), p.137.

³⁶ C. Wilfrid Scott-Giles, *The Romance of Heraldry* (1951, rpt; 1929), p.74.

³⁷ Williams, *Renewal and Restoration*, p.4; Scott-Giles, p.74.

³⁸ For the broader context of this passage in the prophecy see above, Chapter 1, p.56.

It is notable that we find this expectation in the work of a poet closely associated with the *uchelwyr*, the post-1285 landed Welsh gentry, many of whom were descended remotely from the Welsh royal lines, and in the pay of the English crown. This is an important social group for the history of the interaction between Welsh prophetic traditions and English political interests during the later Middle Ages. These men served the English kings in administrative affairs in Wales and the border, and on the battlefields of France,³⁹ but they were also important patrons of Welsh literature. It was these Welshmen to whom the poets looked for patronage following the decline of the royal houses of Wales; and like the *uchelwyr*, the poets also on occasion courted English favour.⁴⁰ Iolo Goch composed panegyrics for Edward III, drawing on the depiction of the boar of Windsor of the *Six Kings* and Laurence Minot's French war poetry.⁴¹ Although it is often conjectured that the court poetry associated with the *uchelwyr* stood a world apart from political prophecy,⁴² amongst this milieu prophecy was a highly functional mode of address in application to English or Anglo-Welsh referents. The level of administrative, social, and cultural engagement with English political figures and English literature in fifteenth-century Wales must not be under-estimated. This was an influence which ran both ways, and this period provides some of the richest instances of cross-border literary interaction of the later Middle Ages. During the mid-fifteenth century, Welsh nationalism could seek English or (tenuously) Anglo-Welsh referents; and English political actors, Welsh endorsement.

Mortimer Mythology

Like the Percies, the Mortimer earls of March were the focus of great expectations (both English and Welsh) in their regional heartland, and as with the Percy-ite political prophetic traditions of northern England, this material was not only drawn from prophetic forms in regional circulation, but the family's own strategies of dynastic self-casting.

A power base over two hundred years in the making, and beyond the direct reach of the English crown, the Mortimer earls of March were as petty kings on the Welsh border.⁴³ On

³⁹ H. T. Evans, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses* (1915; 1995 revd edn), pp.27-40; Alan Carr, 'Wales and the Hundred Years' War', *Welsh History Review*, 4 (1968), 21-46; R. R. Davies, 'Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Marcher Squierarchy', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1968), 150-69. As Davies notes, for the most part of his career, Owain Glyn Dŵr was such a man

⁴⁰ Roberts, 'Wales and England', p.388.

⁴¹ Johnston, 'Iolo Goch and the English', pp.81-85.

⁴² Rees, p.12.

⁴³ Hopkinson, 'Mortimers of Wigmore, 1214-1282'; Hopkinson, 'Mortimers of Wigmore, 1282-1330'.

occasion their dynastic self-casting came very close to royal pretensions. Much of the propaganda surrounding the family included a cultivated association with ‘the quasi-fictional heroes of [Arthurian] romance’.⁴⁴ The round table and Arthurian pageantry of an earlier Roger Mortimer, the first Baron Mortimer, at Kenilworth in 1279 has been well noted; and, it has even been claimed, inspired the round table of Edward I at Nefyn in 1285.⁴⁵ We find similar use of a round table by another Roger Mortimer, the first earl of March, at Bedford in 1328, at the height of his hubris as *de facto* ruler of England and Wales.⁴⁶ Certainly, by the time of the first earl, Arthurian material had come to function as a statement of royal pretension. In the later association of Erceldoune prophecies with this family, these texts did not simply articulate political-territorial claims but distinctively Arthurian ones: by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a decidedly royal property. This is precisely the same process (which we might associate with the historical ‘overmighty subject’), I have noted in relation to the Percies.

Mortimer use of Arthurian strategies stands indebted to the long-lived utility of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s writings for the Cambro-Norman, and later Anglo-Welsh, aristocracy of the March. We must regard Mortimer application of Galfridian material as in many respects similar to Geraldine engagement with political prophecy and Galfridian myth in the late twelfth century (detailed in Chapter One). Galfridian strategies allowed the construction and articulation of the authorising (British) credentials of Welshness, whilst remaining firmly English and centralist.

The Anglo-Welsh genealogy of the Mortimers is explicitly associated with Galfridian narratives of conquest in a number of so-called Mortimer chronicles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries studied by Chris Given-Wilson. One of the most important representatives of this movement is Chicago University, MS 224, compiled in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, although also incorporating much earlier material.⁴⁷ Alongside a copy of the thirteenth-century *Chronicle of Wigmore Abbey*, the manuscript includes a pseudo-*Brut* chronicle, which gives the British foundation narrative lifted from the *Historia*, appended by a genealogy of the kings of Gwynedd to Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, followed by a note on Gwladus Ddu’s marriage to Ralph Mortimer.⁴⁸ A few folios later, the manuscript gives a genealogy of the family of Edward III, tracing the descent of the Mortimer line through Lionel of Clarence to Roger VII, fourth earl

⁴⁴ Given-Wilson, ‘Chronicles of the Mortimer Family’, p.73.

⁴⁵ Hopkinson, ‘Mortimers of Wigmore, 1214-1282’, p.40; Given-Wilson, ‘Chronicles of the Mortimer Family’, p.73; Mary E. Giffin, ‘Cadwalader, Arthur, and Brutus in the Wigmore Manuscript’, *Speculum*, 16 (1941), 109-20 (p.112).

⁴⁶ Hopkinson, ‘Mortimers of Wigmore, 1282-1330’, p.320.

⁴⁷ Given-Wilson, ‘Chronicles of the Mortimer Family’, pp.69-77; Giffin, ‘Cadwalader, Arthur, and Brutus in the Wigmore Manuscript’.

⁴⁸ Given-Wilson, ‘Chronicles of the Mortimer Family’, p.70; Giffin, ‘Cadwalader, Arthur, and Brutus’, p.111.

and subject of Iolo Goch's panegyric.⁴⁹ Chicago 224 encapsulates very clearly the fundamental terms of Mortimer self-casting which remained remarkably consistent through to the Yorkist kings: Welsh ancestry drawing on the full force of Galfridian British history and the Trojan origin myth, and descent from the kings of England.⁵⁰ These elements framed a distinctive statement of territorial right and power not only on the Welsh border (although a number of these strategies crystallised in this environment), but to the English crown. The Mortimer earls of March could draw both on the divinely sanctioned territorial right of their British and Welsh ancestors, and the legalistic claim of their English ones. This presented a powerful combination.

BL, Cotton Nero MS A. iv

The interest in the royal claims of the Anglo-Welsh earls of March in the Chicago MS coheres with the Galfridian interests of BL, Cotton Nero MS A. iv, a manuscript which (although previously identified as a London production) includes material from, and interested in, the Welsh March.⁵¹ A collation of texts from the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and (internal evidence suggests) early fifteenth centuries, the manuscript includes the thirteenth-century Ludlow Annal, chronicling the deeds of the Mortimer earls of March.⁵² It also contains two prophecies which were historically powerful in the framing of British identifications amongst the Marcher aristocracy: the *Prophecy of the Eagle* (fols 63r-65r), containing *Sicut rubeum* and *Mortuo leone*, ascribed as we find in the Welsh *Brut* to the eagle of Shaftsbury, and the *Prophetiae Merlini* (fol. 65r-76v), both accompanied by Latin commentaries.⁵³ The *Prophetiae* clearly possessed a particular appeal to the compiler: the lower margin is decorated with illustrations of key scenes, including the red dragon of the British and the white of the Saxons, accompanying the *Omen* (fol. 65r); an armed knight on a horse, annotated 'rex cadwallo', illustrating a gloss on *Prophetiae*, 55-56, relating to Caduallo's prowess against the Saxons and his burial outside the gates of London (fol. 67r); and Cadualadrus's crossing of the sea (fol. 67v), a similar image to the Cadualadrus

⁴⁹ Given-Wilson, 'Chronicles of the Mortimer Family', p.71.

⁵⁰ Hopkinson, 'The Mortimers of Wigmore, 1214-1282', p.31.

⁵¹ Given its inclusion of a London chronicle alongside this material, it could also have been compiled in London. Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.259. Certainly, however, the compiler had a politically-minded interest in the earls of March.

⁵² This manuscript was dated to the early fourteenth century by Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, pp.297-98, and post-1338 by Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.259. More recently, the compilation of the manuscript's variant elements has been dated to some time following 1399, according with my thesis above. Given-Wilson, 'Chronicles of the Mortimer Family', p.79.

⁵³ The early centuries of this Galfridian reception history is discussed in Chapter 1.

illumination noted in Cotton Julius A. v.⁵⁴ We might align this interest in the Britons, and the mythic-historical line of Gwynedd in particular, with the broader Galfridian and Welsh associations fostered by, and in relation to, the earls of March, and their British genealogy.

The relationship between Galfridian prophecy and political affiliations to the Mortimer earls is made in overt, and highly contemporary terms, in the sequence which follows, in which the illustrations function as a distinctively political gloss upon the text. The closing folios of the *Prophetiae* are for the most part without Latin commentary, but they are accompanied by a series of pictures clearly intended to be read in sequence, fols 73r-75v (printed as Appendix 4). In this series, the illustrator had the *Six Kings*, and its relationship to *Prophetiae*, 119-30, in mind, and extended this to later allusions in the text, including the ass. A goat breathing fire (fol. 73r) is identified as ‘Edwardus’, presumably Edward II, identifying the ‘hircus venerii castri’ of *Prophetiae*, 119-26 with the goat of the *Six Kings* who breathes famine across the land (presumably the meaning of the ball of fire here). This is followed by a boar (fol. 73v), annotated as ‘rex veniet post edwardus’, a pictorial gloss on the boar of commerce of *Prophetiae*, 128-30, conflated with the boar of Windsor of the *Six Kings*: Edward III (who, as the annotation suggests, follows another Edward, Edward II). Next to the boar is an ass, figuring the ass of *Prophetiae*, 209, the annotation of which is partially obscured but can be re-constructed through the visible letters as ‘rex ricardus’. This sequence is fundamentally consistent with fifteenth-century uses of the *Six Kings*, in the years following the deposition of Richard II.

This is followed overleaf by a picture of a king (‘rex’), with an owl, holding a sword against a red dragon, annotated ‘comes’ (fol. 74r). The sequence concludes on fol. 75v with ‘rex’, this time a boar, fighting ‘comes’, again the red dragon; and a naked figure (with some similarity to a homunculus), annotated ‘rex’ decapitating a kneeling figure. The relationship of the images on fols 74-75 to the *Prophetiae* is unclear, but in sequence the illustrations suggest a clear political application in their own right. The red dragon, marked ‘comes’, must be placed within the broader context of contemporary Mortimer genealogy, as the heirs to Cadwaladr.⁵⁵ The image of fol. 74r has strong claims as a perception of Richard II’s antipathy towards Roger Mortimer: the king’s sword is outstretched to the red dragon who is himself un-armed. It may well reflect the expectations placed on Roger as a corrective to the so-called tyranny of Richard, recalled by Adam Usk as pervasive amongst the Mortimer milieu. The illustration almost certainly also

⁵⁴ See above, Chapter 2, p.96.

⁵⁵ This was long-lived: Allison Allan notes the use of the red dragon to signify the family’s Welsh line (identified as British) in genealogies of the Yorkist king. Allan, ‘Yorkist Propaganda’, pp.187-88. See also Anglo, pp.22-24, 43, 44.

encodes memories of Mortimer antipathy towards another deposed king, Edward II, under the first earl of March, an earlier Roger Mortimer, suggested by the presence of the owl to the left of the king in the image. The Despensers, hated advisers to Edward II (and particular subjects of Mortimer antipathy), appear as owls in the *Revised Prose Version* and *English Prose Translation* of the *Six Kings*, the source text for the pictorial glosses here.⁵⁶ Indeed, the owl is the structuring element of this illustrative gloss (for *Prophetiae*, 222-23).

The sequence of illustrations does not simply memorialise the deposition of Richard II, it also suggests the beginning of antipathy towards the Lancastrian regime, for fol. 74v sees the introduction of a new king, a boar, glossed ‘sucedet aper totnes’ (the boar of *Prophetiae*, 237-38), also brought into conflict with the red dragon, again marked ‘comes’ (possibly derived from the allusion to fighting dragons in *Prophetiae*, 246-47). Certainly, Henry IV is known to have associated himself on at least one occasion with the boar cipher in the years following the deposition.⁵⁷ The meaning of the final picture of the sequence, the scene of decapitation associated with a king, remains obscure, but the mode of execution suggests a treason charge, which was a fundamental component of the anti-Lancastrian argument against the legitimacy of Henry IV’s kingship.⁵⁸ The naked figure may also suggest the young earl of March, Edmund Mortimer, whose right to the English throne was propounded by Sir Edmund Mortimer and the Mortimer faction. This has no obvious basis in any allusion of the *Prophetiae*, but rather must be read in relation to the illustrative sequence which precedes it, and the identification of its ciphers with contemporary uses of the *Six Kings*.

The entire sequence of illustrations must be aligned with the uses of the *Six Kings* by anti-Lancastrian factions in the early years of the century, probably roughly contemporary with Sir Edmund Mortimer’s defection in 1402. Cotton Nero A. iv suggests that for parties interested, and invested, in the Mortimer line in the early years of the fifteenth century, prophecy was a component of a highly partisan political grammar. The *Prophetiae* continued to be a text approached with a mind to political meanings. The uses of Galfridian material in historical Mortimer propaganda, and its regional derivatives, are precisely the background which made Percy-ite material such as *Cock in the North* (a reworked British foundation myth, identifying the Lancastrians as the usurping Saxons) applicable to the earls of March.

⁵⁶ *Brut*, I, p.73. For a discussion of antipathy between Roger Mortimer, later first earl of March, and the Despensers, see Pugh, p.68.

⁵⁷ See above, Chapter 3, p.150

⁵⁸ See above, Chapter 4, p.165.

The British claim of the Mortimer line assumed a new relevance during, and in the years following, Jack Cade's Revolt of 1450, when a number of the rebels proclaimed their support for Richard, duke of York, amongst other things, through the use of political prophecy.⁵⁹ The revolt saw the airing of the Mortimer claim to the throne for the first time in thirty-five years, and importantly, on a broadly speaking popular level. The ill-fated Southampton Plot of 1415, led by York's father, the earl of Cambridge, with the objective of placing Edmund Mortimer (the same earl of March around whom, whilst still a child, the conspiracies of the early 1400s were centred) on the throne, was a largely aristocratic movement.⁶⁰ However, in the broader Mortimer milieu of the Welsh March great expectations for the line, rooted in their English and Welsh ancestry, continued to circulate into the 1450s, amongst individuals who understood themselves to be members (in some sense) of a regional affinity. Here this prophetic discourse crystallised in a form which proved to be translatable throughout England. In the history of the popularisation of prophecy (in which the Revolt of Jack Cade is a key moment), prophetic innovation on the March is a vital piece of the puzzle.

A fundamental part of this process on the March is encapsulated in Peniarth 26, an important document in the history of the development of proto-Yorkist prophecy during the 1450s, associating Richard of York with the figure of the British deliverer.

5.1 NLW, Peniarth 26

Peniarth 26 was compiled in c.1456,⁶¹ in or close to Oswestry, an Arundel lordship on the northern Welsh March.⁶² This was a region with a historical Mortimer influence. During the first earl of March's virtual rule of England, 1327-30, Oswestry formed part of his western powerbase.⁶³ In the later part of the century, the FitzAlans and their holdings on the northern March came to be associated with their neighbour, Roger Mortimer, the fourth earl, we have

⁵⁹ See above, n.3.

⁶⁰ Pugh, pp.81-85.

⁶¹ Date appears on Peniarth 26, p.83.

⁶² See above, n.1.

⁶³ Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales*, p.281; Reeves, *The Marcher Lords*, p.39; Michael Burtscher, *Fitzalans, Earls of Arundel and Surrey, Lords of the Welsh Marches (1267-1415)* (2008), pp.120-21. Wilkinson conjectures that this historical opposition to an English king may have informed York's behaviour in relation to Henry VI. *Constitutional History*, p.22.

seen, a focus of regional expectation. During the fourth earl's minority, the vast Mortimer inheritance was administrated by Arundel.⁶⁴ The name Mortimer still carried currency in the region into the mid-fifteenth century, associated also – by virtue of the involvement of Sir Edmund Mortimer, and with him the right of the Mortimer heir – with the rebellion of the early fifteenth century, presenting a potential alternative to the Lancastrian regime.

The manuscript includes English partisan prophecies associated with the earls of March alongside Welsh prophecies of a more traditional nature, ascribed to Taliesin and Myrddin.⁶⁵ A number of the English language productions of Peniarth 26 are Cambricised, incorporating Welsh spellings of proper names like Cadwaladr. The English language contents of the manuscript show an internally consistent dialect, and are very likely to have been incorporated by the same scribe.⁶⁶ Certainly, the English language prophecies make use of a very specific and consistent political prophetic grammar. They provide a glimpse into a prophetic mode developing and transmitted in English on the northern Welsh March during the 1450s.

The manuscript suggests a considerable regional interest in Owain Glyn Dŵr. This is not surprising: the rebel's birth and childhood on the Welsh March, and his early service of the FitzAlan earls of Arundel is well noted.⁶⁷ The Welsh of Oswestry lent him considerable support in his early insurrections in 1400,⁶⁸ and Peniarth 26 suggests Owain's legacy was very much still in mind in the region. It is one of the few witnesses to record a date for his death (1415), which appears amongst a collection of notes on pp.97-98 (which also preserves a record of the Battle of Shrewsbury and the death of Hotspur).⁶⁹ In his study of the manuscript's historical materials relating to Owain Glyn Dŵr, J. R. S. Phillips has suggested that some of this material belongs to the revolt of the early part of the century.⁷⁰ There is some evidence for the circulation of Welsh prophecy in the region during the rebellion. Amongst the rebels listed in the records of the General and First Court of Oswestry, appearing alongside Owain and his sons, is one 'Craghe Ffynnant eorum propheta'.⁷¹ In such a person, we potentially see one like Hopcyn ap Tomas, 'master of *brud*', whose name is found elsewhere during this period alongside Owain: a collector

⁶⁴ Dunn, 'Richard II and the Mortimer Inheritance', p.161; Davies, *Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr*, p.38.

⁶⁵ Evans, *Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language*, I, part 2, pp.389-99.

⁶⁶ *LALME*, I, p.59.

⁶⁷ Davies, *Owain Glyn Dŵr*, p.39.

⁶⁸ Graham C. G. Thomas, 'Oswestry, 1400: Glyn Dŵr's Supporters on Trial', *Studia Celtica*, 40 (2006), 117-26.

⁶⁹ J. R. S. Phillips, 'When Did Owain Glyn Dŵr Die?', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 4 (1970), 59-77 (pp.67-68). The note is transcribed on p.75.

⁷⁰ Phillips, 'When did Owain Glyn Dŵr Die?', p.68.

⁷¹ Thomas, 'Oswestry, 1400: Glyn Dŵr's Supporters on Trial', p.120.

of Welsh historical and prophetic materials, interested in Owain and the broader question of Welsh independence.⁷²

The English political prophecies of the collection also draw on elements which plausibly entered circulation in the northern Welsh March during the early 1400s, derived from Percyite propaganda, including *Cock in the North*, incorporated in the manuscript on pp.39-41, in a border dialect but otherwise essentially consistent with the Cotton Roll, II. 23 text. However, the specific combinations and treatment of this material as found in the manuscript cannot be dated any earlier than the 1450s: they correspond to a very clear mid-fifteenth-century agenda, which must be associated not with the hopes placed in the child heir of Roger Mortimer during the early 1400s, but Richard of York during the 1450s. Material was added to the manuscript as late as 1461: a note of the accession of Edward IV, the first Yorkist king.⁷³ Edward IV is tellingly identified in the note not as the duke of York but as ‘Comes de Marcia’ (the identification of the red dragon of Cotton Nero A. iv). Although we cannot be one hundred per cent certain that the prophecies the manuscript holds in common with Cotton Roll, II. 23 came from the March to London rather than vice versa, given the highly regional interests of this material, a border provenance is a strong hypothesis.

S Mysed

The Peniarth 26 prophecy *S Mysed* provides a particularly illuminating example of the localised re-use of English prophetic materials.⁷⁴ Through its relationship to *Cock in the North* the prophecy has generally been orientated within the Erceldoune tradition,⁷⁵ and it provides an important marker of its development on the Welsh March.

The elusive ‘S’ of its opening lines suggests a sibylline method (the ‘S’ may well be an allusion to a sibylline source), and through its inclusion of the Ricardian deliverer, the prophecy must be aligned with crusading material, ultimately indebted (through a long historical process) to the *Tiburtine Sibyl*. This is in part representative of the broad interest in sibylline material in

⁷² For an appraisal of the arguments surrounding Hopcyn ap Tomas and Crach Ffynnant see Fulton, ‘Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Uses of Prophecy’, pp.116-17.

⁷³ Transcribed by Phillips, ‘When did Owain Glyn Dwr Die?’, p.74.

⁷⁴ *DIMEV*, 4522. The Peniarth 26 witness is un-noted.

⁷⁵ Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.198.

Wales into the later Middle Ages,⁷⁶ but certainly this invocation also rests on the metonymic relationship of the imperial Ricardian hero to Welsh nationalist ambitions of the early 1400s, as they resurfaced during the 1450s. The text reads as a combining and re-inflection of English prophecies (including northern Percy-ite strands) in local circulation, associated with anti-Lancastrianism.

The prophecy is printed in full, from its two earliest extant witnesses, Peniarth 26 and Cotton Roll II. 23, in Appendix 5. The prophecy is undoubtedly a product of the 1450s: its opening lines allude to a number of heraldic identifications, including the bear and ragged staff of the earl of Warwick (albeit in a confused configuration).⁷⁷ However, as extant in Peniarth 26 the text was not borrowed wholesale from a contemporary English source, but reads as an articulation of specifically Welsh expectations associated with the earl of March, as the Mortimer heir, through the combining and re-inscription of a number of English prophetic texts. A seventeenth-century witness of the prophecy is also extant in NLW, Peniarth MS 94, a collection compiled by a Welsh recusant, incorporating English language prophecies.⁷⁸ The primary circulation of the prophecy, with the exception of its reworking in the Cotton Roll (discussed below), appears to have been in Wales and the March.

As extant in Peniarth 26, the prophecy describes the exile of a lion, and a coming time of suffering; the arrival of a dead man, who brings justice to the Britons, exiles the Saxons, and conquers the holy land; the reign of an ass, who is deposed by a moldwarp, who renews insular suffering; and an alliance of a dragon, lion and wolf, who exile the moldwarp, restore order, and facilitate the return of the ass, who reclaims his right and then departs for Brittany.

The prophecy draws on a wealth of contemporary anti-Lancastrian English prophecies, historically associated with the early fifteenth-century Percy revolt. The various sources for the prophecy are set out in Appendix 6.1. These include a number of elements highly suggestive of a proto-Yorkist agenda: the foregrounding of the lion cipher; Richard's return; a threefold alliance; and the division of the British Isles into three constituent territories. The common thread to all these borrowings is the re-use of Percy-ite propaganda, or its source prophecies, but here the lion assumes a new meaning, not as a cipher for the Percies, but the earl of March.

⁷⁶ Marged Haycock, 'Sy abl fodd, Sibli fain: Sibyl in Medieval Wales', in *Heroic Poets and Poetic Heroes in Celtic Tradition*, pp.115-30.

⁷⁷ See above, Chapter 4, p.198.

⁷⁸ Marx, *Index of Middle English Prose*, p.36.

The structure of the first half of the prophecy stands indebted to *Cock in the North*, and another text with a Percy-ite connection and a lion cipher at its centre: the A-text of *When Rome is Remoyd*. In his treatment of the lion cipher [1], the author-compiler must have had both texts in mind. Like *Cock in the North*, the A-text details the loss of the lion's territory (Scotland, to the leopard, the English king), and its restoration: the seizure of Berwick which concludes the prophecy. The reference to the loss of the lion's territory in 'Albys land' in *S Mysed*, contains a trace of this original Scottish meaning of the sequence as it is found in the A-text, an allusion to Brutus's son and first king of Scotland in *Historia*, I, Albanactus (the Albyn in question), although in *S Mysed* this cipher may well have been understood as a reference to Albion, the first name for the entire island of Britain noted by Geoffrey in the *Historia*. The allusion to the alliance between the lily and the lion in 49 [6] functions as a similar marker of a residual Scottish dimension to this material. However, in *S Mysed* the allusion to the lion of Albion is suggestive not of Scottish kingship but a high kingship of the British Isles under a Mortimer king.

The A-text of *When Rome is Remoyd* saw considerable circulation in Wales during the later Middle Ages, and into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not simply by virtue of the lion cipher, but its use of the pan-Celtic alliance of *Prophetiae*, 110-14.⁷⁹ Carried over into *S Mysed* [2], this material came to assume a changed meaning in this new geo-political context:

Wen cadwaladrs name calls the cursed may dred
 And albony wth armony endles vp all
 Then roryng & redeth be *in* the ryche tounes
 to the Saxon seed woo be for euer

(29-32)

Cadwaladr's name is given in its Welsh form, not a latinate or Anglicised version. This is less a re-inscription than a renewal of the anterior meanings of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Welsh source. Indeed, there is an economic element to the use of this material here which corresponds closely to the formulation of *Armes Prydein*. The older Welsh prophecy is interested in an economic inequality between the Saxons and the Welsh, which in the restoration fantasy sees the Saxon tax gatherers chased back to Winchester.⁸⁰ A similar inequality is in mind in this prophecy: the destruction of the 'ryche touns' of the Saxons (the English) reads as a clear reflection of the

⁷⁹ For an overview of the circulation of the A-text see *DIMEV*, 6398, and additionally, NLW, Llanstephan MS 119, fol. 84v, a sixteenth-century witness.

⁸⁰ See above, Chapter 1, p.37.

harsh Penal Laws instituted in the early fifteenth century in the aftermath of the revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr. These statutes drew a sharp line between Welsh and English populations of the Marches and Wales, associating economic and political rights with racial supremacy.⁸¹ This fostered considerable racial antipathy, and yet in this prophecy, the correction of this injustice is associated not simply with a Welsh cipher, but (in the broader context of the prophecy) a Mortimer one also. For Cadwaladr is at once the hero of *Armes Prydein*, and a cipher for York, invoked through his Welsh ancestry. Cadwaladr presents an important literary-political nodal point between different articulations of nationhood, which are here held to be compatible. The duke of York had come to be associated, at least in this quarter, with Welsh interests. The proto-Yorkist dimension to the Cambricisation of *When Rome is Remoyd* almost certainly accounts for its place in Yorkist prophecy collections of the 1460s and '70s, which was, by virtue of the Welsh genealogy of York, fitted for proto-Yorkist and Yorkist application.⁸²

The use of northern and Scottish material by Yorkist prophecy compilers has long been noted, but little understood.⁸³ In terms of its utility and application to the earls of March and later the Yorkist kings, this is a Percy-ite debt. This line of influence has important ramifications for the historical study of Scottish prophecy-models in Wales. The circulation of Anglo-Scottish border prophecies in Wales during the fifteenth century have for a long time been considered evidence of a dialogue between Welsh and Scottish prophetic cultures,⁸⁴ in fact, in the movement of prophecies from the Anglo-Scottish to the Anglo-Welsh borders, the shape of Percy influence is one of the most important lines of transmission.

There are a number of very clear examples of the re-inscription of Percy-ite prophecy in *S Mysed*. The British deliverer identified as Cadwaladr is also identified as a falcon: 'Wen thys fawkon flees northe wth hys frech fay / Bryghte burnest barnys blythely mon ryse' (33-34) [3]. This is a direct reworking of the Percy cock of *Cock in the North*, who, also in the north, 'busketh his bridds and beddnys hem to fle'. The falcon here alludes to the badge of Edmund of Langley, duke of York and ancestor of Richard of York.⁸⁵ This badge was used by the Yorkist kings, and became a commonplace cipher in Yorkist political prophecy during the reign of Edward IV: the falcon appears in the list of Yorkist ciphers in Bodleian 623, fol. 171r ('ffalco').⁸⁶ This coheres

⁸¹ Davies, *Age of Conquest*, pp.458-59; *ibid.*, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales*, p.307; Griffiths, 'Wales and the Marches', p.154; Williams, *Renewal and Reformation*, pp.10-11, 13-14.

⁸² Cf. Lyell 35, fols 24r-26r.

⁸³ Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda', p.184.

⁸⁴ Cf. Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, p.211.

⁸⁵ Hope, *Romance of Heraldry*, p.118.

⁸⁶ See above, p.210.

with contemporary uses of *Cock in the North*, and its place in Peniarth 26: this prophecy has found a new hero in a new region of the British Isles, Richard of York.

The re-inscription of Percy prophecy is not only apparent in the reworking of the cock in the north as the falcon of York. The structuring role of *Cock in the North* in the passage which follows is apparent: the return of the dead man and subjugation of the Saxons (38-42) [4], the crusading career of the returned Ricardian hero (45-48) [5], and the involvement of the dragon (50) [7]. The relationship of this material to a Percy-ite source is elaborated in an earlier reworking of the return of the dead man of *Cock in the North*, alongside Percy symbols. We read of the appearance of ‘a gay man wth glydryng gore’ at the head of an army:

... a gay man wth glydryng gore
 wth x iiii and follow y trowe
 and the gome ther schal he
 the schylde of the mone schal lenge *in* a lawe
 The Saxons shal seke sore wen that syre comes

(9-13)

This is not a direct borrowing from *Cock in the North*, but it is reminiscent of the scene of the dead man’s return. The man ‘wth glydryng gore’ can only be the Ricardian dead man, and the man with the shield of the moon, a Percy. The application of the Percy cipher here comes very close to the coda of the CUL, Kk. I. v version of *Cock in the North* where we read of a prophesied time ‘When þe man and þe mone is most in his mycht’.

The second half of the prophecy, featuring the ass, moldwarp, lion, wolf, and dragon [7] is heavily indebted to the *Revised English Couplet Version of the Six Kings*, the reworking of the *English Couplet Version* manipulated by Percy-ite rebels during the early fifteenth century.⁸⁷ This version of the *Six Kings* was circulating during the 1450s alongside proto-Yorkist, and later Yorkist, prophetic material. My transcription of the text from Bodleian, Hatton MS 56, a collection of Yorkist and Percy-ite political prophecies (c.1453), is given in Appendix 6.2.⁸⁸ Only this section of the text is preserved here, suggesting that this sequence was circulating independently to the

⁸⁷ See above, Chapter 4, p.190.

⁸⁸ For date of the manuscript see Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.276-77. Hatton 56 has been understood as an anomalous manuscript combining Yorkist and Lancastrian prophecies. Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.201; Allan, ‘Yorkist Propaganda’, pp.365-66. The confusion in the categorisation of this manuscript can be resolved through notice of its Percy-ite interests, which accounts for its inclusion of both Yorkist and Lancastrian material. It is testament to the changing political affiliations of the Percies.

rest of the *Six Kings*, as a mid-century commentary on the events of the early fifteenth century: a retrospective prophecy of the deposition of Richard II, accession of Henry IV, and the Tripartite Indenture. The *Revised Couplet Version* is the earliest version of the *Six Kings* to include an account of the return of the ass: by the efforts of the Tripartite alliance, he returns following the exile of the moldwarp, as a ruler cast in the mould of Edward I,⁸⁹ acquiring the attributes of the powerful second king, the royal dragon, of the *Six Kings*.⁹⁰ Here the ass is named so for his 'lewte' (his honesty or justice). This interest in Richard II is a fundamental aspect to the use of this material in *S Mysed*, and the ass must be aligned with the other Ricardian ciphers of the prophecy, such as the dead man, with which the ass is here synonymous. Moreover, structurally, the return of the ass must be understood as a direct substitution of the return of the dead man of *Cock in the North*: these are one and the same figure, cast after the (reconstructed) heroic image of Richard II – a model which we can trace back to the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune* and the figure of the bastard. The positive reputation of the ass was long-lived in anti-Lancastrian prophecy: *assinus* appears as a positive prophetic cipher for the later Yorkist kings, set against the Lancastrian *talpa*, the mole.⁹¹

Alongside the Peniarth 94 witness, as it appears in *S Mysed*, this material has been termed by Smallwood the *Second Revised Couplet Version*.⁹² Unlike the *Revised Couplet Version*, which concludes with an account of the ass's death in a far country, and a period of national decline and mourning which follows (a reworking of the prophecy as given in the *English Couplet Version* of the death of Edward I and sufferings of the reign of Edward II),⁹³ this version concludes with the ass's journey to Brittany, and the implicit reversion of the land to his deliverers, the lion, wolf, and dragon. The locus of the ass's journey suggests an acquaintance with Galfridian material, and potentially Geoffrey's Welsh sources, drawing on the role of the return of the Breton diaspora in political prophecies of British restoration (the returning hero has gone to where, conventionally, returning heroes come from: Brittany).⁹⁴ Furthermore, this somewhat more positive end suggests a new type of British restoration: a threefold splitting, based on genuine expectations of the affirmation of Welsh national borders, signified by reminiscence of the early fifteenth century Tripartite Indenture.

⁸⁹ The return of the ass does not appear in the *English Couplet Version*. For the relevant section see Hall, *Poems of Laurence Minot*, pp.104-05.

⁹⁰ For the description of the dragon in the *English Couplet Version* see the text as printed by Hall, *Poems of Laurence Minot*, pp.98-99.

⁹¹ Bodleian, MS 623, fols 71r-71v.

⁹² Smallwood, 'Prophecy of the *Six Kings*', p.573.

⁹³ Hall, *Poems of Laurence Minot*, p.99.

⁹⁴ For discussion of this, see above, Chapter 1, pp.26-27.

S Mysed represents an important text in the reception history of the *Six Kings* on the Anglo-Welsh border, which we must place alongside the Welsh translations studied by Helen Fulton.⁹⁵ Although James Doig has argued that the prophecy was employed by partisans of Owain Glyn Dŵr during the early fifteenth-century revolt, within the broader context of the prophecy as a whole, the inclusion of the *Revised Couplet Version* suggests an affiliation to one particular party in the alliance of the *Six Kings*: the lion from Ireland, that is, the earl of March.⁹⁶ This material, although founded on an allusion to the early-century revolt, was held in relation to York's claim to the throne during the 1450s. In *S Mysed*, elements of Percy-ite prophecy, like the dead man or ass, function as a form of historical shorthand for the anti-Lancastrian movement, aligned with rebellion in Wales in the early years of the fifteenth century.

It was not the Mortimer right alone that made material relating to the earlier rebellion appealing on the Welsh border. We see in *S Mysed* expectations for the establishment of a new regime, following the toppling of the Lancastrian 'Saxons'. The precise nature of this new Britain remains un-developed, but certainly the allusion to the Tripartite Indenture within a broadly Mortimer context suggests some expectation for a level of Welsh independence to be secured under a Mortimer crown (as appears to have been the formal intention in 1405).

The prophecy interpellates national subjects in a strategy we can trace back to Iolo Goch's panegyric to Roger Mortimer: the political literature of Welshmen invested in English political figures. The text employs a long-standing prophetic grammar of cross-border address. The conclusion of the pan-Celtic alliance as we find it in *S Mysed* is lifted from the original source of the *When Rome is Remoyd* allusion, *Prophetiae*, 114: 'And then schall thys londe brutan be called/ After brute in kynde melyn doth mene' (43-44). This was Galfridian material with a long Welsh history of application to non-Welsh figures and addressees. In the course of this thesis, I have noted its employment by the monks of Margam to an Anglo-Welsh alliance in opposition to King John;⁹⁷ by Gruffydd Llwyd in his response to Edward Bruce in 1314;⁹⁸ and by Owain Glyn Dŵr in his letters to Wales and Scotland.⁹⁹ *Prophetiae*, 110-14 not only presented a long-lived reworking of Welsh political prophecy, but one with political currency beyond Wales: it came to function as a prophetically-minded political overture across borders. *S Mysed* was

⁹⁵ See above, n.13.

⁹⁶ James A. Doig, 'The Prophecy of "the Six Kings to Follow John" and Owain Glyn Dŵr', *Studia Celtica*, 29 (1995), 257-67 (p.263). Doig prints as an appendix to his article only the lines which comprise the *Second Revised Couplet Version*, pp.265-67. This skews his analysis.

⁹⁷ See Chapter 1, pp.57-58.

⁹⁸ See Chapter 2, p.82.

⁹⁹ See above, n.10.

conceived as a form of political address to York, by an author-compiler who identified himself as a member of the broader regional affinity of the earls of March, making use of a corporate British identity analogous (and closely related to) the terms of address drawn on by the broader Percy-ite milieu, noted in the previous chapter. However, this language of Britishness had reacquired Welshness.

When Rome is Removyd, *C-text*

This is a process apparent in another text of Peniarth 26, similarly based on *Prophetiae*, 110-14: the Welsh-border *When Rome is Removyd*, C-text.¹⁰⁰ The C-text, extant in a number of different variations, is essentially a contracted version of the A-text, focusing specifically on the pan-Celtic union.

In the Peniarth 26 variant, the pan-Celtic alliance of *Prophetiae*, 110-14 assumes yet another new meaning, relating to the vast territorial reach of the earls of March. In the later Middle Ages, the Mortimer inheritance was one of the few remaining lordships to span England, Wales and Ireland, a formidable power base.¹⁰¹ In many respects this prophecy presents another movement in the historical-literary process we first find in Geoffrey of Monmouth's prophetic allusion to the territorial holdings of Robert of Gloucester in *Prophetiae*, 151-69.¹⁰² The pan-Celtic alliance drawn on here is explicitly associated with the territorial interests of the earls of March: 'her kennys men of erlonde and yrlyys of hawors / schall spende hure sperys with dyntys & dolorys to brynge'. The Irish contingent reads as an allusion to the lordship of Ulster (historically Mortimer), a force drawn on by Richard of York throughout his career, and (as we shall see below) the subject of political prophecy beyond the March.¹⁰³ The precise location of 'hawors' is difficult to identify, but it possibly refers to Harlech, a seat of mythic British kings associated with an Irish alliance in Welsh literary traditions, as we find it in *Branwen Ferch Llŷr*, the second branch of the *Mabinogion*.¹⁰⁴ If Harlech is meant here, it is worth noting that it belonged to the historical kingdom of Gwynedd. Both locales (whatever 'hawors' might be) were presumably intended to invoke associations, genealogical or territorial, with the earls of March.

¹⁰⁰ *DIMEV*, 6400. Printed by Haferkorn, p.112; Jason O'Rourke, 'Imagined Histories: An English Prophecy in a Welsh Manuscript Context', *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 5 (2002)151-60 (p.154).

¹⁰¹ Dunn, 'Richard II and the Mortimer Inheritance', p.159.

¹⁰² See above, Chapter 1, pp.41-42.

¹⁰³ Michael Sheane, *Ulster and the Middle Ages* (1982), pp.136,141; see below, pp.237-38.

¹⁰⁴ *Branwen Uerch Llŷr*, ed. by Derek S. Thomson (2010), p.1.

Variations on this prophecy, forecasting the intervention of the men of Ireland, but in relation to a battle on the Humber, are found in roughly contemporary English collections: BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra C. iv, a prophetic commonplace book compiled in York, including some anti-Lancastrian material (c.1450);¹⁰⁵ and BL, Royal MS 7 A. ix, a collection also from the reign of Henry VI, incorporating the prophecy alongside sibylline material.¹⁰⁶ Although they include the pan-Celtic alliance, these witnesses do not contain the highly localised referent which the Peniarth 26 version holds in relation to the pan-Celtic alliance: the right of Gwladus.

The text substitutes the return of the lion of the conclusion of the A-text with an assertion of the territorial and royal rights of the descendents of Gwladus Ddu, and must be understood in relation to the Mortimer Galfridian genealogies. The prophecy concludes: ‘owte of brawe the keynde blode of brutus then/ the ryght schall to the ~~lyne of brutus~~ lyne of gwladus’.¹⁰⁷ As the scribal mistake here suggests, the line of Gwladus is interchangeable with ‘keynde blode of brutus’. This is an interesting choice of terminology: ‘keynde’ implies both a natural or innate right, but also a racial or familial one. On the level of semantics, this choice of word constructs a group identity around an Anglo-Welsh political figure: Richard of York is held to be representative of a blood line, and a kingdom.

Although this material has seen some analysis by scholars, the association this prophecy fosters between Richard of York in the 1450s and the earlier Mortimer earls of March has attracted little comment. In his analysis of the text, Jason O’Rourke, has observed the prophecy’s proto-Yorkist connotations, but regarded it as a piece of propaganda, intended to inspire support for York in the March.¹⁰⁸ However, the piece is better considered not as an attempt to foster regional support for the proto-Yorkist cause, but a reflection of pre-existing local interest in York as the heir to the Mortimer line. The prophecy’s framework of meaning is very much a product of the Welsh border, and the long memory of the events of 1405 as they mattered not simply in national but in highly local terms.

Like *S Mysel*, the prophecy also returns to the scene of the early fifteenth-century rebellion, and draws on the role of Sir Edmund Mortimer in the Tripartite Indenture as an important historical precedent. The ascent of the ‘lyne of gwladus’ is a movement the poet traces back to a

¹⁰⁵ Printed in Wright, *Political Poems and Songs*, II, p.249; for details on this manuscript see Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.186-92, 256.

¹⁰⁶ This variant is printed in Robbins, *Historical Poems*, p.313.

¹⁰⁷ Peniarth 26, p.122.

¹⁰⁸ O’Rourke, ‘Imagined Histories’, p.156.

coalition of ‘iii’ who reform laws: ‘...The iii – schall rekewyre and reckyn /of rulyys that grevously ar growyn mons longe days’. These ‘rulyys’ that ‘grevously’ lengthen men’s days are again the Penal Laws. As in *S Mysed*, the amendment of these laws is associated with the Mortimer heir, who here appears in relation to a historical three-fold alliance, reminiscent of the Tripartite Indenture. In the mid-fifteenth century, the ambitions associated with this alliance were invested in the heirs of Gwladus. Again, in this prophecy the interests of the Mortimer line are held to be coterminous with Welsh interests.

Like *S Mysed*, this prophecy is the work of a self-perceived member of a regional affinity, interested in the construction of a Welsh corporate identity, centred upon the Welsh genealogy of an English political figure. This was a distinctively localised, and political partisan, mode of address and self-identification. The next part of this chapter considers these models as they appeared in London in 1450, preserved in Cotton Roll, II. 23, and the full implications of the British identities those who wielded them espoused.

5.2 BL, Cotton Roll, II. 23

The mid-fifteenth century saw not only the formative interaction of English and Welsh prophetic materials on the Welsh March, but further afield. During the middle years of the century, the Welsh ancestry of the earls of March came to reshape the British resonances of Galfridian political prophecy in new and significant ways across England. One of the earliest documents suggestive of this shift is Cotton Roll, II. 23, and the prophecies it preserves in circulation during the Revolt of Jack Cade. A re-examination of this material in light of the Erceldoune prophecies of Peniarth 26 suggests a potential debt to Anglo-Welsh formulations: the use of a modified British history to endorse the claim of the earls of March to the English throne. The appearance of this material in the roll represents not, as previous scholars have conjectured, the inevitable use of popular prophecy in a popular revolt, but a self-conscious borrowing from, and re-application of, a discourse associated with the hegemonic positioning of a Marcher lord, aligned with contemporary uses of this material on the Anglo-Welsh border.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ For the popular argument see Coote and Thornton, ‘Merlin, Erceldoune, Nixon’, pp.135-36.

The Manuscript

Cotton Roll, II. 23 is a collection of material associated with the rebels of 1450, probably compiled in London in the wake of the revolt, roughly contemporary to the trials of the rebels in 1451.¹¹⁰ Alongside variant political prophecies to those found in Peniarth 26, the manuscript contains a number of ciphered non-prophetic political verses; and the rebels' demands.¹¹¹ The demands and poems are in many ways remarkably conservative in their relationship to the king: allegiance to Henry VI is continually professed.¹¹² The primary concerns of these items, alongside local issues, are the loss of France, held in relation to the bad counsel of the king's perfidious advisors, and the monopolisation of the king's finances by the same.¹¹³ Importantly, no overt statement in support of the earl of March as a claimant to the English throne appears in any of these documents, with the exception of a number of telling allusions in some (although by no means all) of the prophecies. Indeed, the demands refute the charge of a popular movement to depose Henry VI in favour of York as a rumour intended to drive division between the king and his 'friends'.¹¹⁴

Although once regarded by Kingsford as the 'collection of a Yorkist partisan', in any assessment of the manuscript, we must remain aware that the prophecies of Cotton Roll, II. 23 do not constitute a deliberate and consistent prophecy collection, but a collation of different materials employed during the course of the revolt, potentially by different interest groups.¹¹⁵ Some of the prophecies we find here, such as *Prophecy Professid* (discussed below) are primarily interested in Henry VI as a Lancastrian hero; whilst the *Dice Prophecy* professes allegiance to the king (although great hostility towards his officials).¹¹⁶ However, others, such as *Cock in the North* and *S Mysed* must be read as material oppositional not to the king's government but to the Lancastrian kingship as a historical institution and present reality. Even the most politically orthodox statements, such as we find in *Prophecy Professid* (discussed below), may possess vestiges

¹¹⁰ For the contents of the roll see Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, pp.324-25; M. M. O' Sullivan, 'The Treatment of Political Themes in Late Medieval English Verse, with Special Reference to British Museum, Cotton Roll, II. 23' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 1972).

¹¹¹ Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, p.324, item 1. Versions of the demands of 1450 from Magdalene MS and Stowe are printed as Appendix A in Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion*, pp.186-91; *John Vale's Book*, pp.204-06; 'Historical Memoranda', in James Gairdner, ed., *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles* (1880), pp.94-99.

¹¹² For the rebels' use of bills as petitions to the king see Watts, 'Politics and Polemics', p.10.

¹¹³ Much of this echoes the parliamentary charges against the duke of Suffolk, for which see Wilkinson, *Constitutional History*, pp.33-35.

¹¹⁴ 'Historical Memoranda', p.95.

¹¹⁵ Kingsford, *English Historical Literature*, p.359.

¹¹⁶ For a brief discussion of the *Dice Prophecy* see Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry*, pp.359-60; Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.196. Coote understands *S Mysed* as a dice prophecy, presumably taking the 'S' to figure 5. I understand it as a 'S', referring the sibyl. See above, p.218.

of anti-Lancastrian, or rather proto-Yorkist, material. As Coote notes, we cannot be sure whether all this material was genuinely in use by the rebels, or simply in contemporary circulation during the period of the trial.¹¹⁷ However, that the rebels were associated with prophecies such as *Cock in the North* and *S Mysed*, which we can now recognise as variations upon dynastic propaganda associated with the earls of March, is telling, and suggests that some elements amongst the rebels consciously drew on associations with the earl of March. This is not to say that a genuine intention to de-throne the king and replace him with York was in mind, rather York's name, and royal genealogy, carried currency during this period.

Jack Cade and John Mortimer

Alongside the Erceldoune prophecies of the Cotton Roll, the most compelling evidence we have of the rebels' proto-Yorkist sympathies is Jack Cade's use of the pseudonym John Mortimer.¹¹⁸ The use of this name was even referred to in an act of parliament following the suppression of the revolt;¹¹⁹ and during the revolt, rumours were reported of York's return to London to 'aid the Captain [Cade] his cousin'.¹²⁰ I. M. V. Harvey has ventured that, as some chronicles suggest, Jack Cade was an Irishman associated with the house of York, perhaps even an agent of the duke himself.¹²¹ By the sixteenth century, York's involvement in the revolt was given as something of a commonplace, as we find in Stowe's *Annal*, voicing a perception which endured into the ages of Hall and Shakespeare.¹²² However, we cannot read into this name any direct acquaintance between the two men, but a particular rebel strategy.

Use of the name Mortimer was a highly suggestive association for Cade and his followers, in a period when the duke himself identified as Plantagenet.¹²³ As Ralph Griffiths has noted, this name consciously recalled the scene of 1399, and the position of the Mortimer heir in relation to

¹¹⁷ Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.201.

¹¹⁸ Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion*, p.78; 'A Short English Chronicle: from Lambeth MS 306', in *Three Fifteenth-century Chronicles*, pp.66, 68; G. L. Hariss and M. A. Harriss, ed., 'John Benet's Chronicle for the Years 1400-62', *Camden Miscellany*, 24 (1972), 151-232 (pp.198-201); *Collections of a London Citizen*, ed. by James Gairdner (1876-77), pp.190-94; *John Vale's Book*, pp.207-08; *Chronicle of London, from 1089 to 1483*, ed. by E. Tyrrell and N. H. Nicholas (1827), p.136; *Six Town Chronicles of England*, ed. by Ralph Flenley (1911), p.154.

¹¹⁹ B. Brogden Orridge, *Illustrations of Jack Cade's Rebellion* (1869), pp.38-39.

¹²⁰ Lyle, *Rebellion of Jack Cade*, p.11.

¹²¹ Harvey, p.78; Cf. 'A Short English Chronicle', p.66. For another assessment of the balance of evidence see Lyle, *Jack Cade's Rebellion*, pp.16-18.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.18.

¹²³ See above, p.208.

Richard II.¹²⁴ Cade's assumed identity also drew on a particular geographical positioning with political significance: it aligned Cade and his rebels with a strong, aristocratic powerbase to the west (functioning as a form of hegemonic endorsement, as well as fostering an illusion of military strength); and it allowed for the use of a particular corporate language of Britishness. This is precisely the strategy of address drawn on in the Erceldoune prophecies of the Cotton Roll.

The Erceldoune prophecies circulating amongst the rebels in London in 1450, analogous to those circulating on the Welsh border, adapted a powerful strategy of national address from a border milieu historically defensive about territorial rights, and on occasion, oppositional to the English king. This border stance operated during the revolt as a means of crystallising, and centring, rebel identifications, as members of a distinctive British honour-group. This is a resounding testament to the lasting influence of Galfridian prophecy on the construction of late medieval English political identificatory strategies, but it also suggests an acquaintance with a particular regional strategy.

Erceldoune Prophecies and the Revolt

The 'strongly Yorkist slant' of *Cock in the North* as found in Cotton Roll, II. 23 has long been noted.¹²⁵ The precise meaning of the dead man has since attracted some scholarly attention, in terms of its relationship to the contemporary political scene. Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, has been put forward as one suggestion.¹²⁶ However, despite the interest of the rebels in Gloucester evidenced elsewhere in the roll, there is no particular reason to associate him with the dead man.¹²⁷ More recently, Paul Strohm has conjectured the function of the dead man as a 'herald' of Richard of York.¹²⁸ This is closer to the results of my own investigation, although Strohm regards *Cock in the North* as a creation of 1450, and an answer to prophecies drawn on in contemporary Lancastrian propaganda: an anomalous precursor to a Yorkist prophetic tradition that was 'only generated' with the accession of Edward IV.¹²⁹ In fact, we have seen that the

¹²⁴ Griffiths, *Reign of Henry VI*, p.686.

¹²⁵ Robbins, *Historical Poems*, p.310; Paul Strohm, *Politique* (2000), p.177.

¹²⁶ Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.199-200.

¹²⁷ For interest in Gloucester in Cotton Roll, II. 23 see Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, p.325, item 15; printed in Wright, *Political Poems*, II, pp.221-23. The roll also contains other material concerning the death of Gloucester, see Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, p.325, items 11, 13, 15.

¹²⁸ Strohm, *Politique*, p.177.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.174.

genesis of the prophecy stands forty-five years earlier, developed not in a Lancastrian but an *anti-Lancastrian* milieu, grounded in the events of c.1405. These events acquired great importance in a rich body of proto-Yorkist prophecy in circulation during the 1450s on the northern Welsh March and in London.

Prior speculation has precluded discussion of one of the most important aspects of the use of *Cock in the North* in London during the revolt of 1450: its broader relationship to the structures (in evidence also in analogues from Peniarth 26) drawing on Richard II's return and the Tripartite Indenture as statements of partisan support for Richard of York. These structures recur across the Erceldoune prophecies of the Cotton Roll. Importantly, in London in 1450 the dead man could still mean Richard II, a very particular harbinger not simply for political transformation, but one involving the Mortimer heir.

This is not to say that the uses of this material by the rebels were governed by precisely the same framework of interests as those of the scribe of Peniarth 26. First and foremost, the Erceldoune prophecies of the Cotton Roll are crusading prophecies. Although, as John Scattergood has noted, the abortive European crusading campaigns of the 1440s saw no English involvement, and subsequently little reflection in contemporary English poetry,¹³⁰ crusading prophecy remained *en vogue* during the 1450s, even past the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Last World Emperor prophecy, and its great expectations of universal conversion, are in evidence in the Cotton Roll. In the context of the revolt of 1450, crusading prophecy must be associated with anxieties regarding the English king's French territories during this period. As during the fourteenth century, into the fifteenth, the Galfridian crusading paradigm remained associated with prophecies of European conquest and empire, beginning with the French territories.¹³¹ This was a political grammar mobilised in defence of the king against his corrupt advisors. The crusading Erceldoune prophecies of the Cotton Roll are in this respect politically orthodox.

Henry VI was long associated with crusading prophecy, doubtless the legacy of his father's involvements in France. The earliest example of the type in association with Henry VI is the panegyric of the Shropshire priest John Audley, composed in celebration of Henry VI's coronation, envisaging the young king as the imperial hero who will win the holy cross.¹³² Instrumental to this construction was Henry's coronation not simply with the crown of England,

¹³⁰ Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry*, p.223.

¹³¹ See above, Chapter 2, pp.77-79.

¹³² Robbins, *Historical Poems*, pp.45-46; cited in Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry*, p.150.

but the crown of France also. In the first decades of Henry's reign, this paradigm saw enthusiastic application to the king. Amongst these was *Lilium regnans*, an English crusading prophecy which entered circulation during the early years of the reign of Edward III, and takes as its hero the Davidic Son of Man of Daniel 7.13, who appears as a Last World Emperor and European conqueror.¹³³ This is the principal hero of the London reworking of *S Mysed*, preserved in the Cotton Roll. However, this prophecy remains in many respects fundamentally aligned with the prophetic strategies noted in Peniarth 26, couching opposition to the Lancastrian regime in a statement of allegiance to the dead Richard II, and the Mortimer heir.

Although truncated (the text does not extend to the *Second Revised Couplet Version of the Six Kings* found in Peniarth 26), the Cotton Roll *S Mysed* nonetheless alludes to the Tripartite Indenture and the Ricardian hero. In the roll, this prophecy follows *Cock in the North*, and the two are likely to have been circulating as related materials. A variant on the dead man, we read here of a 'sonne', who voyages across the sea to the Holy Land, where he achieves universal conversion and wins the true cross, almost certainly in the model of a Last World Emperor (21-30). This borrows heavily from contemporary Lancastrian uses of *Lilium regnans*, but this king also possesses a decidedly non-Lancastrian aspect. The crusading activities of the 'sonne' are placed alongside three familiar figures, 'the lyon þe lune lyng shall to gede/ þe dragon bee derwoth when þ[a]t day comys' (31-32): the Mortimer lion, the Percy moon, and the Welsh dragon. The 'sonne' presents an important re-inscription of the dead man of *Cock in the North*, in this period, a proto-Yorkist symbol.

Alongside the Ricardian son of man and the threefold alliance, the Cotton Roll *S Mysed* contains another clear marker of proto-Yorkist prophecy in circulation on the border: a specific contraction from the Peniarth 26 variant. We read of a lion (a Mortimer cipher) aided by the moon (a Percy cipher), who subdues the Saxons:

The lion bee busked and lased in sonder
 Saue a legge laste in albany landes
 Vnnethes shall he shyne for shade of the mone
 The saxons shall sigh when þat byrd commys
 (3-6)

¹³³ Strohm, *Politique*, p.175. See above, Chapter 3, p.117.

This omits lines 5 and 7-11 of the Peniarth 26 variant, and in so doing brings the lion and moon into a direct alliance. This conforms to the broader, authorising use of Percy-ite prophecy, and the Percy rebellion, in proto-Yorkist prophecy of the mid-fifteenth century. It rests on the same relationship we find between the lion, the moon, and the dead man in the Peniarth 26 variant. It also incorporates the same allusion we find in the Peniarth 26 text to the return of Cadwaladr and the restoration of the island's name:

Whan Cadwallis name called is þe cursed may drede
 And albony with armony othes vp hold
 þu bee raryng and rewith in the riche towne
 To all Saxons sede sorow for euer
 After brute be þu bold bee the reme called
 Bretayne as merlion mellis in his sawes

(15-20)

This hero can only be the earl of March: the heir of Gwladus and of Cadwaladr, as he was perceived on the Welsh March. The pro-Lancastrian crusading framework applied to the prophecy covers oppositional material in a veneer of political orthodoxy. This is precisely the same strategy we find in another prophecy of the collection: *Prophecy Professid*.

Prophecy Professid

Alongside crusading materials, the 1450s also saw a renewed vogue for prophecies derived from the *Six Kings*, focusing on the career of the boar of Windsor. The boar of Windsor was operating during the 1450s as a Lancastrian symbol, associated with hopes invested in Henry VI. The boar is identified with the Lancastrian monarch on two occasions in the Cotton Roll. In *When Sunday Gooth*, a dice prophecy which, although largely unrecoverable in its Cotton Roll variant, possesses an extant conclusion detailing the winning of three crowns and a burial at Cologne (the career of the boar of Windsor), expectations placed on Henry are articulated through the use of this paradigm. A fuller working out of this transference appears in the item which precedes it, *Prophecy Professid*. Ascribed to the Sibyl, Merlin, Joachim of Fiore, and a wealth of more obscure figures, the text presents a reworking of material from the *Six Kings* applied to the English conquest of France as part of a crusading trajectory. It traces the activities of the ass in France,

followed by a period of turmoil appended by the appearance of the Lancastrian boar of Windsor, who conquers Europe and the Holy Land with the support of an imperial eagle (another borrowing from *Lilium regnans*, notably, here the hero is also identified as the Son of Man on one occasion). The *Six Kings* was not just employed by anti-Lancastrian movements during the mid-fifteenth century, but Lancastrian ones also.

Contemporary to the inclusion of *Prophecy Professid* in the Cotton Roll, is the variant preserved in Peniarth 50 (transcriptions of the two witnesses are included in Appendix 7). Although Peniarth 50 (compiled c.1445) is better noted for its Welsh prophecies (believed to have been taken from a book in the possession of Hopcyn ap Tomas), it draws on a similar range of English prophecies to the near-contemporary Peniarth 26.¹³⁴ These are constructed, however, not in the service of the earls of March but the Lancastrian kings. Alongside a Welsh translation and English witness of *Cock in the North*,¹³⁵ it also incorporates one of two extant Welsh translations and re-workings of the *Six Kings*.¹³⁶ The Welsh circulation of the *Six Kings* not only suggests a point of reception for *Prophecy Professid*, but allows for a hypothesis of its Welsh genesis.

Peniarth 50 almost certainly preserves an earlier witness of *Prophecy Professid* than the Cotton Roll, working on the basis of a much clearer (and, I argue, a more decisively Lancastrian) prophetic model. Potentially, like *S Mysed*, this material saw circulation in London via the Welsh March (the site of production of Peniarth 50 has yet to be ascertained, but given its high level of English materials, it has strong claims to a Marcher provenance). The Cotton Roll text coheres to the same overall structure as the Peniarth 50 – the movement from the ass to the boar to the Lancastrian hero – but with a number of striking additions. Whilst the Peniarth 50 variant contains an allusion to Henry VI's French marriage in 1445 (the subject of some suspicion), this appears to be the latest historical allusion of the text.¹³⁷ The Cotton Roll version, however, reads as a prophecy profoundly anxious about the loss of French territories, and corruption within the inner circle of the king, according fundamentally with the demands of the rebels. It gives an overview of the political scene of the first half of the fifteenth century: from the imperial

¹³⁴ Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, p.61. For a transcription and discussion of the Welsh prophecies of Peniarth 50 see Marion Bonner Jenkins, *Aspects of the Welsh Prophetic Verse Tradition in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1990). See also Fulton 'Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Uses of Prophecy', pp.117-18. The English language prophecies of the collection have received little attention, with the exception of Scattergood, *Poetry and Politics*, pp.391-93; and scattered references in Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, pp.200, 209, 212.

¹³⁵ See above, n.11.

¹³⁶ Fulton, *Welsh Prophecy and English Politics*, p.21; printed pp.27-32.

¹³⁷ Peniarth 50, p.223, lines 12-14.

ambitions of Richard II, to Henry VI's coronation with the crowns of England and France, his French marriage, the cession of French territory, and treason at court, identifying allies of the French king (figured as the wolf, an allusion almost certainly lifted from the *Six Kings*),¹³⁸ amongst the king's advisers. The prophecy breaks off in this crisis period. Where the Peniarth 50 version concludes with the victories of one 'harry', the Cotton Roll is concerned with the wrath of the boar towards his faithless agents. The Peniarth 50 version could plausibly pre-date the revolt and its immediate causes - the Cotton Roll version decisively could not.

Politically centred in line with the concerns of the rebels (as preserved in the demands), the text presents an important example of prophetic application and adaptation, rooted in a clearly historically located example. Amongst these numerous acts of historical centring is a suggestive interest in the prophecy with a number of partisan markers associated with the earls of March, not found in the Peniarth 50 variant, but in other material in circulation on the Welsh border.

The Peniarth 50 version begins with an application of prophetic ciphers associated with Richard II: an ass, resting on the long-lived identification of Richard II as the deposed ass of the *Six Kings* (a Welsh translation of which is also found in Peniarth 50).¹³⁹ This ascription to Richard is presumably pejorative, in line with the Lancastrian *Assinus coronatus* ('Crowned Ass'), a retrospective of the deposition of Richard II,¹⁴⁰ which although an oblique allusion to Richard II's retrospective identification in the king-list of the *Six Kings*, was far more interested in the incompetence of the ass than the evils of the mole. The second cipher of the sequence is the hart, which appears in prophecies of the deposition recorded by Adam Usk, derived from Richard's badge, the white hart.¹⁴¹ As a historical reference point, the contestation between these figures is no more than an amalgamation of anti-Ricardian material. However, in the Cotton Roll variant, the usage of the ass comes closer to the characterisation of this figure as found in the Peniarth 26 *S Mysed* (the *Second Revised English Couplet Version of the Six Kings*). In the Cotton Roll variant, the ass's conquest is cast specifically in relation to an imperial token, 'þe courly crown' (24), and the defeat of the French wolf. This is not in any respect an accurate history of Richard II, but a highly revisionist presentation of the king's imperial interests, analogous to his position

¹³⁸ The figuring of the French king as the wolf is very likely to have been based on the wolf of 'vnkouthe lande' who allies with the fox (here a Scottish cipher) in the portion of the *English Couplet Version of the Six Kings*, pertaining to the reign of Henry III. See Hall, *Poems of Laurence Minot*, p.98.

¹³⁹ Fulton, *Welsh Prophecy and English Politics*, pp.27-32.

¹⁴⁰ Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.157-58.

¹⁴¹ *Chronicle of Adam Usk*, pp.52-53; discussed by Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, p.13. For the white hart as the badge of Richard see Aveling, *Heraldry, Ancient and Modern*, p.304.

as the crusading dead man in *S Mysed* and *Cock in the North*. It is a marker of an anti-Lancastrian political agenda.

The account of the ass's career in the Cotton Roll variant is followed by a contemporary scene of treason and treachery prophesied for the year 1450: 'In mony kyndomys þat be kene /Of traytours shall atteynted be' (46-47). This perception of treachery owes much to the so-called Percy 'romance' encapsulated in *Cock in the North*, and the role of the Lancastrian perjury in the construction of 'Troy vntrewe', during this period re-inscribed with proto-Yorkist resonances. In *Prophecy Professid*, this is associated with a new historical scene of treason: the accusations facing Suffolk *et al* in 1450. It is in relation to this perceived treachery that we find the foregrounding of a proto-Yorkist element: ciphers for the earl of March appear as the loyal servants of the king, both Richard II, and later Henry VI.

This association is found in the allusions to the arrival of reforming, and conquering, heroes from the west on two occasions in the prophecy. The Peniarth 50 variant exhibits a broad interest in the princes of the 'occident', that is, western Europe, and the place of a distinctively British *imperium* within this framework. Here, the ass brings with him a 'worthy & abyll' company from Albion, but the greatness of this company is not enough to prevent the ass's 'dissimulacion' and subsequent exile. The charge of dissimulation echoes one of the official charges against Richard II by the Lancastrian regime in 1399.¹⁴² This reference is not present in the Cotton Roll version, where the company of the ass finds far greater success in France. Furthermore, this heroic company is associated not with simply the British Isles, but the *western* British Isles. That this is meant here is suggested by the presence of a heraldic cipher for the earl of March amongst the ass's western company:

Out of the west worthy and wight
 Won of the best of blod and of boon
 a hewy ass honour ouer hight
 þe right of ffraunnces to deme and to dight
 Wt hym a here and a lyon
 The wolff to warne þat yit is wight
 ffro hym to take þe courly crown

(18-24)

¹⁴² *St Albans Chronicle: II*, pp.190-91.

This western locus potentially alludes to long-lived English rumours of Richard's survival in Wales,¹⁴³ but this also invokes an important military reserve associated with the earls of March, with whom (we must remember) in Edmund Mortimer's letter of 1402, Richard's right was decisively associated.¹⁴⁴ The use of the lion in this context strongly suggests the application of a cipher for the earl of March. The 'here' identified alongside the lion may well be an allusion to the Mortimer 'heir'. As E. F. Jacob has observed, York's return to London during the Revolt of Jack Cade, from Ireland via Beaumaris in Anglesey, where he gathered a force of armed men, placed him in a 'Mortimer context', regarded by some contemporaries as articulating a direct challenge to the throne.¹⁴⁵ Such a context was surely in the minds of the rebels in their expectation of the arrival of heroes from the west. The geo-political context of York's territorial possessions saw him associated with a clear political grammar, rooted in the old Mortimer heartlands, and the vestigial notion of an English royal genealogy, a British right, and a western army.

This western context was certainly one of the aspects associated with York's march on London ten years later, in 1460. We read of this in the commonplace book of John Benet, a Lincolnshire cleric (probably originally from Yorkshire),¹⁴⁶ who wrote a chronicle (possibly in London) during the 1460s: Trinity College, Dublin, MS 516.¹⁴⁷ Alongside the chronicle and a good deal of memorabilia concerned with political events of the 1440s and '50s, exhibiting a Yorkist bias,¹⁴⁸ the manuscript includes a two-stanza prophecy in rime royal reworking material from *Cock in the North* (also included in the collection), beginning 'This is the prophecij yt thai have in Wales' (fols 16r-16v).¹⁴⁹ The text prophesies an assault on London by the Welsh, Scots, and Irish, under the leadership of the heir of Lionel of Clarence, concluding 'and sir lyonil the

¹⁴³ *An English Chronicle, 1377-1461: A New Edition*, ed. by William Marx (2003), pp.29-35. Other examples are discussed by McNiven, 'Rebellion, Sedition, and the Legend of Richard II's Survival', pp.96, 101. The survival of Richard in Wales was also a subject of early fifteenth-century Franciscans expectation, for which see Whitfield, pp.329-30.

¹⁴⁴ See above, n.16.

¹⁴⁵ Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, p.499. For an assessment of the political considerations which informed this route see Ralph A. Griffiths, 'Richard Duke of York and the Royal Household in Wales, 1449-50', *Welsh History Review*, 8 (1976), 14-25.

¹⁴⁶ The dialect for Benet's English is located in *LALME* as north Derbyshire or south Yorkshire, I, p.77.

¹⁴⁷ Hariss and Harris, 'John Benet's Chronicle', pp.151-74; T. K. Abbott, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin* (1900), pp. 78-79. Prophetic contents catalogued by Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.250-51, and John Benet is discussed, p.219.

¹⁴⁸ Although Benet has been understood by commentators elsewhere as distinctively Lancastrian in his prophetic interests (Robbins, 'Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', p.1535), we have no reason to believe this material is parodic. The most recent editors of the chronicle suggest that Benet's sympathies lay with York. Hariss and Harris, 'John Benet's Chronicle', pp.168-69.

¹⁴⁹ *IMEV*, 3618.5. Printed by Robbins as 'The Fall of London', in 'Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', p.1535.

mortimer shall have ye best / the prise'. This pan-Celtic alliance (yet another reworking of *Prophetiae*, 110-14) is associated with York's bearing of Lionel's arms on his 1460 campaign.¹⁵⁰ As in the Cotton Roll *Prophecy Professid*, and the C-text of *When Rome is Remoyd* in Peniarth 26, his western territories present a reserve of military strength, as well as a locus which is fundamentally prophetically authorising. By the 1460s, the reputed prophecies of Wales (almost certainly here a reflection of the circulation of *Cock in the North* in the March) had become prophecies of a Yorkist accession. In the 1450s, prophecies in circulation in London from the March, and the western hero with them, appear to have been similarly regarded.

The Cotton Roll *Prophecy Professid* incorporates another western hero associated with the earl of March: a figure identified as a leopard and a lion. The basis for this character is found in Peniarth 50, where the leopard appears as a generalised cipher for the English crown, held in relation to the conquest of France, and a forebear of the boar of Windsor:

And vpon this the grete Sybille writeth / *meru*vously touchyng the remes
of Gaule / albion & albonye in the *partes* of the occident / the whiche
Sybille saith that a lybarde shall / be so worthy & so myghty that he
shall assaile / the Reme of Gaule so sharpely that vnneth / ther shall
ben ony *contradiccion* ayenst hym / maignteynyng that the same Reme
of Gaule / is longyng to hym by right . And of hym ther / shall come a
Bore the whiche schall be bore at / Wyndesore

The leopard appears in the Cotton Roll version too, identified through a double cipher which also employs the lion (the two symbols function for the most interchangeably in English heraldry):

Sibill writyth full wonderfully
Towchyng the reme of ffraun~~n~~ce and kyng
and a lion þat is myghty
Out off the occident shall spryng
A libart þat shall be lordely
ffraun~~n~~ce to fray both holt and yong
With pine his tyme shall sharply
no thyng agayns him shall plye

¹⁵⁰ Crawford, *The Yorkists*, pp.16-17.

ffor be right that reallme beyes his

(62-70)

On a surface reading, the lion of the occident who conquers France in the Cotton Roll, like the leopard of Peniarth 50, is surely intended to be Henry V, himself an important precursor for our understanding of the application of imperial prophetic paradigms to Henry VI. However, it is possible (as I have observed in lines 18-24), that the incorporation of the western lion carried a secondary, more subversive, political meaning, in reference not to the prowess of the Lancastrian king in France, but the earl of March. In this framework of meaning the lion from the occident assumes a new pertinence, signifying not simply as a king from Britain, but a king from *western* Britain.

A notable association of Richard of York with an imperial lion is found a roughly contemporary Becket prophecy in northern English alliterative verse, extant in CUL, Kk. I. v.¹⁵¹ The introduction to the poem is incomplete, but the rest of the prophecy reworks a holy oil of St Thomas narrative, fused with the account of the boar of Windsor of the *Six Kings*, and northern English Erceldoune traditions relating to the Scottish wars. As extant, the text details Thomas's receipt of a book of prophecy from the Virgin Mary, and his recounting to his companions, FitzWarin (the son of the Lord Warin) and one Sir Edmund of Abingdon, a prophecy of a victorious boar of Windsor who will subdue the Scots and conquer France, before 'casting up' his crown before the Virgin Mary. The prophecy of the boar of Windsor is followed by an account of a second hero after the same fashion:

He [the boar] sall be ware in the west whare A wye comes,
 A lefe knyght & A lene, wyth two long sydis;
 He salbe hardy, ane hathell, and her of hime felwyne [fellow to the
 boar];
 Lacede iij. liberttis, ande all of golde lyke,
 Wytht A labell full lele, laide ewene our,
 A Red schelde wytht A quhyt lyoune, sall fall *cum* fra the felde.

(191-96)

¹⁵¹ Prophecy is printed by Lumby, *Bernardus de Cura rei familiaris*, pp.23-31. Discussed briefly by Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp.58-60. Another incomplete witness of the prophecy (with a truncated ending) appears alongside other Yorkist prophecies in Hatton MS 56, fols 46r-47v.

The white lion of the earldom of March must be understood as the key to the hero's western locus: the heroic knight is Richard of York (for later readers, Edward IV).¹⁵² In the Kk. I. v prophecy, this heraldic invocation aligns York overtly with the royal prowess of his Plantagenet ancestors: the white lion of the Mortimers held alongside the royal leopards. The 'two long sydz' of the hero re-invent York as a second Edward 'Longshanks' (Edward I), whose early crusading activities were well-noted by late thirteenth-century chroniclers.¹⁵³ The western knight goes on to conquer Europe, wins three crowns (we have seen, an Arthurian commonplace), converts the pagans of the Middle East, and 'sall lewe his trouth on crystis owyne grawde [grave]' (211), a reference to the career of the English Last World Emperor which takes him from Europe to the Holy Land, the peoples of Gog and Magog, and Golgotha. Notably, York was re-invented as a proto-crusading figure, even a candidate for the Last World Emperor, during the 1450s, associated with a vast empire and imperial status. In the second version of his Chronicle, the composition of which Kingsford dates between November 1457 and the death of York at the Battle of Wakefield in December 1460, Hardyng wrote of the vast territories which were York's due: alongside much of western Europe, this included the kingdom of Jerusalem.¹⁵⁴

An association of the earl of March with Last World Emperor material proved long enduring. The application of this material to Edward IV is well-noted. The king who will win the holy cross was an important component of Yorkist prophetic grammar during the Wars of the Roses.¹⁵⁵ We find a notable treatment of this theme in the Yorkist prophecy collection of commonplace book Bodleian, Lyell MS 35, compiled c.1478-91, probably in Hampshire.¹⁵⁶ In the *Sayings of the Prophets* (a compilation of prophetic references to an English Last World Emperor), we read of an imperial hero of sibylline prophecy (the same authority as that espoused in *Prophecy Professid*), identified as the lion: 'Sybyll the wyse callith hym the second lyon of grete bretayn[e] whiche shall gete the holy cros'.¹⁵⁷ The Mortimer lion had become one of the definitive images of the Last World Emperor. This prophetic identification is also a direct allusion to *Cock in the North* (also found in Lyell 35), where we read of the lion as the the boldest and þe best/ þat in brytayne

¹⁵² The prophecy was understood by Coote as a prophecy from the reign of Edward III, concerned with the supporting role of the Black Prince in the conquests of his father, the boar of Windsor. This reading is based on the three leopards. However, Coote omits from her analysis the line which follows: the presence of the white lion. *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p.132.

¹⁵³ See above, Chapter 2, p.87.

¹⁵⁴ Hardyng, pp.20, 259. Kingsford, 'The First Version of Hardyng's *Chronicle*', pp.465-66; for an earlier discussion of the dates and dedications for the Lancastrian and Yorkist versions see C. L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (1913), pp.143-44.

¹⁵⁵ Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda', p.186.

¹⁵⁶ Albina de la Mare, *Catalogue of the Collection of Medieval Manuscripts bequeathed to the Bodleian, Oxford, by James P. R. Lyle* (1971), pp.87-92; Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, pp.277, 232-34.

¹⁵⁷ A variant of this prophecy is found in Bodleian, Hatton MS 56, fol. 42r.

was born syne arthers day'. Arthur was the first imperial lion of Britain; the Yorkist king the second.

The western interests of the Kk. I. v Becket prophecy, a text which is otherwise in many respects indebted to a northern English (rather than western) Erceldoune tradition, is notable. We must associate this inclusion with York's magnate status in the north of England, yet in its foregrounding of a western hero, it is indebted to a prophetic grammar born on the Welsh borders. This was a re-inscription which saw rapid circulation, and had a significant impact upon Erceldoune prophecy across England. The Yorkist and proto-Yorkist Last World Emperor was not simply an English Arthurian hero, but a Marcher one. The association of Richard of York with the crusading paradigm potentially stands in an important relationship to the changing uses of the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune* in the March in the mid-fifteenth century, preserved in Peniarth 26.

The Erceldoune Hero in 1450

A western crusading hero is found in a fragment of the *Romance and Prophecies* preserved in Peniarth 26. Recorded in the *IMEV* as a distinct prophecy, the following isolated quatrain found on the top of p.177, is in fact the beginning of the prophecy of the bastard's return in fyfte three:¹⁵⁸

A bastar schall come owte of the west
 In sowth England borne shall be
 He schall wyne the gre for the best
 And then thys lande schall Briten be

In the current state of knowledge, this fragment is a unique witness of the Welsh circulation and re-inscription of the *Romance and Prophecies*, the value of which in the history of insular political prophecy must not be under-stated.¹⁵⁹ It suggests the prophecy of the bastard was circulating independently to the *Romance and Prophecies* during the 1450s: a pithy statement of a British deliverer, which carried particular weight on the Welsh border. In the broader context of the English language prophecies of Peniarth 26, we must align the bastard with the interest in the

¹⁵⁸ *IMEV*, 23.5.

¹⁵⁹ The circulation of the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune* in Wales is suggested by Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, p.210. She notes the incorporation of elements of the prophecy alongside Welsh material, but gives no specific references.

British deliverer, identified as the earl of March throughout the collection. Following directly after *S Mysed*, the unit potentially functions as a gloss on the prophecy. Within this context, the western hero can only be Richard of York. This is the earliest witness to attribute a western provenance to the bastard, although this application became commonplace in the Tudor period.¹⁶⁰ The Peniarth 26 fragment suggests that before the terms of the *Romance and Prophecies* were applied to the Tudor kings, they were held in conjunction with the proto-Yorkist claim, and the British credentials of the heirs to the Mortimer line. The Tudor romance was first the romance of the earls of March.

Notably, a variant of the *Romance and Prophecies* was almost certainly circulating within the milieu of the rebels of 1450. This is material to which the western heroes of the Cotton Roll *Prophecy Professid* may well be indebted. In its scene of the boar's revenge upon his faithless advisors, the Cotton Roll prophecy directly alludes to a romance as its source:

þe riȝt on Romamnce whoso can rede
 ffor all þer blode þer shall þey blede
 þat were some tyme full hye in hall

(188-90)

The *Romance and the Prophecies* is the only contemporary romance which we might place in the company of sibylline and pseudo-Joachite crusading prophecies (the authorities espoused in *Prophecy Professid*), and certainly this scene of righteous violence recalls the behaviours of the bastard, and later the dead man. Furthermore, a few lines later, the Cotton Roll text prophesies an end of the present age of treason, when a hero shall call a parliament:

Vntil a day he shall be dight
 With game and with goodnes to be gyn
 ffro wyndessor wt mykell wyne
 A parlement to be pight with pride

(199-202)

This is much in the manner of the bastard of the *Romance and Prophecies*, who similarly holds a 'parlament of moche pryde' (615).¹⁶¹ However, this hero is not a man from the west but the

¹⁶⁰ See above, Chapter 3, p.141.

¹⁶¹ This allusion is extant in fragmentary form in the Cotton and Cambridge, and more fully in the Lansdowne manuscript, which I quote from here.

Lancastrian boar, here figuring Henry VI. In 1450, Erceldoune material was turned to uses at once Lancastrian and proto-Yorkist, seemingly without awareness of contradiction. The prophecies of Cotton Roll II. 23 evidence complex, and in many respects, indissoluble loyalties. Amongst these, however, we find a marked interest in Richard of York, and the Mortimer claim as it was first constructed on the Welsh border.

Conclusion

While the direction of the transmission of material common to Peniarth 26 and Cotton Roll, II. 23 is by no means absolutely certain, there is an inarguable relationship between Erceldoune prophecy as it developed on the Welsh March, and as it developed in London, during the 1450s. This chapter suggests the movement of this material from the March to London as the strongest possibility. The political development of this material bears a fundamental debt to a long-lived Mortimer mythology, rooted in the enthusiastic uses of Galfridian political prophecy amongst the Anglo-Welsh affinity of the earls of March. Certainly, the Mortimer line was the subject of political prophecy in the region long before some amongst the followers of Jack Cade came to draw on the British credentials of the duke of York. This mode of prophecy, much like the Percy-ite, was part of the political discourse of an affinity, defining a particular, originally regional, identity constructed in the highly nationalist terms of Galfridian political prophecy. In the March it drew on elements both English and Welsh.

Conclusion

Political Prophecy and the Borders of England, c.1136-1450s

The years from the publication of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* to the proto-Yorkist and Yorkist prophecy movements of the 1450s, encapsulate a long developmental history of political prophecy, yet over these three centuries we see the preservation of the same essential shape: a chosen people with a right to rule over the British Isles. The impetus for this movement in England rests on cultural contact on the Anglo-Welsh, and later the Anglo-Scottish, borders. The historical evolution of this material makes sense only if we acknowledge the transmission of prophetic materials across England's northern and western borders, and subsequent political re-inscriptions.

England's medieval borders – more specifically, border zones – were regions where the jingoistic elements of political prophecy, whether Welsh, Scottish, or English, were at their most potent: where territories and peoples felt themselves to be under threat. This is a provenance which we can reconstruct not through (as has hitherto been perceived by critics) the supposedly Celtic resonance of Galfridian political prophecy, but through documentary evidence relating to a far more meaningful and contemporary term: Britishness. In the medieval British Isles, to be British was a statement of entitlement, of a right to a prophetically and historically sanctioned territory. Into the later Middle Ages, Britishness appears as a feature of prophecy collections from the northern English border to the Welsh March. In England it functioned as a constructed identity not reliant on distant and obliquely Celtic elements, but resting on the increasingly chauvinistic value of Galfridian material in the construction of national, and regional, identifications. In its earliest invocations, Galfridian prophecy framed a group identity configured in terms of overwhelming exclusivity.

Yet the borders are also where the shape of the nation is at its most protean, and, by virtue of the broad dissemination of Geoffrey's *Historia*, definitions of Britishness spanned these borders. As a universal political grammar, prophecy presented not just a space of contestation, but of cross-border alliances. This use of prophecy was at its most prolific during the fifteenth century, in the northern English prophecies contemporary with the alliance between the Percies and Owain Glyn Dŵr, and the less formal allegiance pledged by the Welsh scribe of Peniarth 26

to Richard of York. These points of intersection rest on specific dialogues of English prophecy with Welsh and Scottish literary-political texts and traditions, brought into line with factional political ambitions which crossed borders. This must be understood as the natural extension of centuries of cross-border re-inscription of prophetic material.

Above all, the greater part of the texts surveyed in this thesis operated in relation to members of the English aristocracy, and, on occasion, royalty. On the aristocratic level, this material was employed by those within the environment of powerful magnates (I have noted that its usage owes much to the affinities of late medieval England). It was even utilised on occasion by members of the aristocracy themselves, a phenomenon we find most clearly in relation to the Percies, and almost certainly the Geraldines and Mortimers also. The medieval history of Galfridian prophecy is in many respects a history of the border aristocracy, and like these political actors, from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, Galfridian prophecy walked an uneven line between oppositional and authorising positions, both challenging and endorsing royal power.

Until the very end of the period surveyed in this thesis, political prophecy engaged with fundamentally hegemonic positions. The uses of prophecy in Jack Cade's Revolt of 1450 saw the beginnings of the genuine popularisation (in the fullest sense of the word) of the genre. It is from here that we see the beginnings of a new history, which paved the way for the genuinely popular printed prophecies of the later fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, but this movement is another story altogether.

Appendix 1

The Relationship between *Prophecy of the Eagle*, the *Prophetiae Merlini*, and the Prophecies of the *Expugnatio Hibernica*

(Transcription from BL, Cotton Faustina MS A. viii with Analogues; Translations; Sources for Interpretations)

[Primary Material for Chapter 1.3]

1. Transcription with Analogues

	<i>Eagle</i>	<i>Prophetiae Merlini</i>	<i>Expugnatio</i>	Historical Allusion/ Interpretation
1	Dentatus aper cancro succedet qui... in regni robora dentes exacuet. (fol. 116r, col. 2)	Deaurabit illud aquila rupti foederis et tercia nidificatione gaudebit. (93-94)		Accession of Henry II.
2	Ex apri libidine catuli nascentur qui caninis in patrem morsibus conuertentur. Patris iniuria prosternet filios quorum primus regni culmen ascendens. subito tum & quasi floris u[er]nus citra fructum emarcescet. Ex delicto genitoris: geniti delinquent in genitorem & pr[a]ecedens delictum fiet causa sequentium delictorum	Euigilabunt regentis catuli et postpositis nemoribus infra moenia ciuitatum uenabuntur. Stragem non minimam ex obstantibus facient et liguas taurorum abscedent. (94-96)	Ex delicto geniti delinquent in genitorem, et precedens delictum fit causa sequencium delictorum. Filii insurgent in parentum, et ob sceleris vindictam in ventrem viscera coniurabunt. In virum sanguinis sanguis insurget, et desperabilis fiet affliccio, dones Albania peregrinantis fleverit penitenciam. (Silvester, <i>Expugnatio</i> , p.124)	<i>Prophetiae</i> : Rebellion of Henry's Sons / Murder of Becket. <i>Expugnatio</i> and <i>Eagle</i> : Rebellion of Henry's sons / Conquest of Scotland

	filii insurgent in partem. & ob sceleris [v]indictam in uentrem uiscera conuorabunt . In uirum saunguinis sanguis insurget . & desperabilis fiet afflictio: donec albania peregrinantis fleuerit penitentiam. (fol. 116r, col 2)			
3	Veniet ab aurora turbo ualidus qua in occidentem irruens hybernie robora cuncta subuertet . coram ipso procident principes & fucato sub federe pacis amore[m] consequentur. (fol. 116r, col. 2–fol. 116v, col. 1)	Sextus Hiberniae moenia subuertet et nemora in planiciem mutabit. Diuersas portiones in unum reducet... (99-100)	Veniet ab aurora turbo validus, qui in occidentem irruens, Herimonie robora cuncta prosternet (Moling, p.92) Coram ipso procident principes et fucato sub federe pacis amorem consequentur' (Moling, <i>Expugnatio</i> , p.96; given alongside Merlin Ambrosius's <i>sextus</i> -prophecy)	Henry II's conquest of Ireland
4	dolor & gaudium conuertetur cum matris in utero patrem trucidabunt. (fol. 116v, col. 1)		Dolor in gaudium convertetur, cum matris in utero patrem filii trucidabunt (Silvester, <i>Expugnatio</i> , p.74)	Murder of Becket
5	Descendens leonis ex semine linx succedet. cuius acumen ferrea simul & saxea robora transpenetrabit. Huius aggressu utrumque insulam relinquet neustria. & miro mutationis modo gladius a	Egredietur [sextus] ex eo linx penetrans omnia, quae ruinae propriae gentis imminebit. Per illam enim utramque insulam amittet Neustria et pristina dignitate spoliabitur. Deinde		Accession of John and the loss of Normandy/ invasion plans of Philip Augustus.

	sceptro separabitur propter fratrem discordiam regnabit ex <i>transverso</i> ueniens. (fol. 116v, col. 1)	reuertentur ciues in insulam; nam discidium alienigenarum orietur. (105-08)		
6	In ultimis diebus albi draconis semen <i>eius</i> triphariam spargetur pars in apuliam tendens orientali gaza locupletabitur . pars in hyberniam descendens occidua temperie delectabitur. Pars ii tercia in patria permanens: uilis & uacua reperietur. (fol. 116v, col. 1)	Deinde reuertentur ciues in insulam; nam discidium alienigenarum orietur ... Cadualadrus Conanum uocabit et Albaniam in societatem accipiet. Tunc erit strages alienigenarum, tunc flumina sanguine manabunt, tunc erumpent Amorici montes et diademate Bruti coronabuntur. Replebitur Kambria laetitia, et robora Cornubiae uirescent. Nomine Bruti uocabitur insula, et nuncupatio extraneorum peribit.(108-14)		<i>Eagle</i> : reworking of the <i>Here Prophecy</i> , a prophecy of English exile incorporating events from the reigns of Henry II and Richard I. <i>Prophetiae</i> : Welsh resurgence and English exile.
7	Igneus ab euro globus ascendet & amoriam in circuitu deuorabit. Ad eius lucernam aues insule conuolabunt & maiores in illius alis accensis corruent in capturam. Ex hoc igne scintilla nasceatur cuius insulani terrore et [sic] contremiscent. Maiore presente indebitur absens . potiorque fiet priore secundus		Igneus ab euro globus ascendet et Hiberniam in circuitu devorabit (Silvester, p.92). Ad eius lucernam aues insule conuolabunt, et maiore in illis, alis accensis, corruent in capturam (Silvester, p.96)	<i>Expugnatio</i> : Henry II's arrival in Ireland. <i>Eagle</i> : Franco-Breton alliance.

	excessus. (fol. 116v, col. 1)			
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2. Translations

	<i>Eagle</i>	<i>Prophetiae Merlini</i>	<i>Expugnatio</i>	Historical Allusion/ Interpretation
1	A tusked boar will succeed the crab who will whet his tusks on the kingdom.	the eagle of the broken covenant shall gild it over, and rejoice in her third nest		Accession of Henry II.
2	From the lust of the boar cubs will be born, who will turn on their father and bite like dogs. The injustice of the father will lay low the sons, of whom the first will climb to the summit of the kingdom. Then suddenly he will wither away like a flower before it bears fruit. From the sins of the father: the sons will wrong the father & following the first sin will rise in faction & it is decreed on account of the crime the entrails will conspire against the stomach. The man of blood will rise against blood & suffering will be desperate: until Albania will	The roaring whelps shall watch, and leaving the woods, shall hunt within the walls of cities. They shall make no small slaughter of those that oppose them, and shall cut off the tongues of bulls.	Because of their father's sins, sons sin against him who begot them, and an earlier crime becomes the cause of subsequent ones. Sons will rise against their parent, and to avenge a crime the bowels will conspire against the belly. His own flesh and blood will rise up against a man of blood, and he will suffer terrible affliction, until Scotland bewails the penitence of a pilgrim (p.125)	<i>Prophetiae</i> : Rebellion of Henry's Sons / Murder of Becket. <i>Expugnatio</i> and <i>Eagle</i> : Rebellion of Henry's sons / Conquest of Scotland

	cry for penitence.			
3	There will come from the east a strong whirlwind rushing upon the west, overturning all the forces of Ireland. Princes will yield in its presence and they will simulate love under a treaty of peace.	The sixth shall overturn the walls of Ireland, and change the woods into a plain. He shall reduce several parts to one...	There will come from the east a mighty whirlwind. As it storms its way towards the west it will overview all the oaks of Herimon. (p.93) Princes will prostrate themselves before him and will win his love under the terms of a false pact of peace. (p.97)	Henry II's conquest of Ireland
4	Grief will be turned to joy when they they slaughter the father in the womb of the mother.		Grief will be transformed into joy when sons butcher their father in their mother's womb (p.75).	Murder of Becket
5	A lynx descending from the seed of the lion will succeed, whose sharpness will pierce both the strength of iron and stone. Because of his attack Normandy will lose both islands. By a marvel of a change the sword will be separated from the sceptre, on account of discord that comes between two brothers, one from the other side will reign.	From him [sextus] shall proceed a lynx penetrating all things, who shall be bent upon the ruin of his own nation; for through him Neustria shall lose both islands, and be deprived of its ancient dignity.		Accession of John and the loss of Normandy.
6	In the last days of the white	Then the natives will return		<i>Eagle</i> : reworking of the Here

	<p>dragon its seed will be scattered in three parts: part will draw towards Apulia and will be made rich by the treasure from the east, part will go down to Ireland and will take delight in the temperance of the west. The [ii is a slip] third part will remain in the country: it will be worthless and empty.</p>	<p>to the island for strife will break out among the foreigners... Cadualadrus will summon Conanus and make Scotland his ally. Then the foreigners will be slaughtered, the rivers flow with blood, and the hills of Brittany burst forth and be crowned with Brutus's diadem. Wales will be filled with rejoicing and the Cornish oaks will flourish. The island will be called by Brutus's name and the foreign term will disappear .</p>		<p>Prophecy, a prophecy of English exile.</p> <p><i>Prophetiae</i>: Welsh resurgence and English exile.</p>
7	<p>A fiery ball arising in the east will circle and devour Brittany. The birds of the island will fly to its light and the greater birds of prey will fall into captivity. Out of this fire a spark will be born, for fear of which the islanders will tremble. The one that is absent will appear greater than the one that is present, the second expedition will be stronger than the first.</p>		<p>A fiery ball will rise in the east and as it circles the sky will engulf Ireland. (p.93)</p> <p>The birds of the island will flock to his lantern, and the larger among them, with their wings ablaze, will fall to the ground and be caught. (p.97)</p>	<p><i>Expugnatio</i>: Henry II's arrival in Ireland.</p> <p><i>Eagle</i>: Franco-Breton alliance.</p>

3. Sources for Interpretations

Accession of Henry II [1]

A reworking of a prophecy concerning the Empress Matilda in the *Prophetiae*, this is the subject of numerous commentaries on the *Prophetiae*.¹

The rebellious whelps [2]

The identification of the rebellious whelps, or cubs, as the sons of Henry II is an association made explicit in the Leningrad Commentary on the *Eagle* printed by Sutton and Visser-Fuchs.²

The Murder of Becket [2 and 4]

The prophecy concerning ‘*liguas taurorum abscent*’ (*Prophetiae*, 95) was commonly associated with the restrictions placed on Thomas Becket by the English crown in the years immediately prior to his murder. In Herbert of Bosham’s complaint to the Pope he writes that Henry II used this prophecy of Merlin against Becket.³ In the *Expugnatio*, this prophecy is employed by Gerald in relation to the Constitution of Clarendon, which Gerald regards as a pivotal event in the division between the archbishop and the king.⁴ The murder of Becket as alluded to in the *Eagle*, ‘*dolor & gaudium conuertetur cum matris in utero patrem trucidabunt*’ [4] is glossed as this in Gerald.⁵

The Conquest of Scotland [2]

Following the murder of Becket, Henry’s right to rule was open to challenge; and the rebellion of Henry’s sons provided an important mechanism for this challenge, exploited by the French king. The rebellion was quietened following Henry’s public display of contrition at Canterbury and an unexpected victory for English royal forces in Scotland the next day, which, as Gerald writes, came to be associated with the intercession of the deceased archbishop of Canterbury.⁶ This is precisely the meaning of the reference we find in both the *Expugnatio* and the *Eagle* to the sorrowing of Albania (Scotland) from ‘*peregrinantis...penitentiam*’ [2], the penitence of the pilgrim Henry II, to which Gerald applies this gloss.

¹ See Chapter 1, n.67.

² Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, ‘Prophecy and Commentary Continued’, p.256.

³ Crick, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth, Prophecy and History’, pp.364-65.

⁴ *Expugnatio*, pp.218-19.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.74-75.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.122-25. For a clear overview of this as a broader contemporary perception see M. T. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers 1066-1272* (1983; 2nd edn 1988), pp.92-93.

From the reign of the Sextus to the reign of the lynx [3 and 5]

The lynx in whose reign Normandy is lost, the son of *Sextus*, was conventionally glossed as John, son of Henry II, conqueror of Ireland.⁷ *Sextus* is an epithet drawn from the *Prophetiae* and associated with Henry II by Gerald in the *Expugnatio*.⁸

French Conquest [5]

By the 1220s, the allusion to the separation of the sceptre and the sword was used as an overt reference to the losses of John's reign. Ralph of Coggeshall makes use of the prophecy as such in his c.1225 chronicle, a testament to the rapid and far-reaching geographical circulation of the *Eagle*.⁹ In its original use, this very probably functioned as a presentiment of the invasion of Philip Augustus, king of France, this being the allusion meant by the coming reign of one from the other side. This places the composition of this portion of the prophecy roughly contemporary to 1212-13, when advanced preparations for the invasion of England were afoot in France.¹⁰

The Franco-Breton Alliance [7]

This is most plausibly an allusion to the Franco-Breton alliance of 1203-04 against John, following the disappearance of John's nephew and rival for the English succession, Arthur of Brittany, whilst in John's custody.¹¹

English Exile [6]

A genuinely futurist prophecy reworked from the late twelfth-century English *Here Prophecy*, alluding to events from the reign of Henry II and Richard I.

⁷ Crick, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth, Prophecy and History', p.368.

⁸ *Expugnatio*, pp.92-93.

⁹ Radulphi de Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, ed. by J. Stevenson (1875), p.146; cited by Putter, p.99.

¹⁰ Warren, *King John*, pp.202-03.

¹¹ David Bates, 'The Rise and Fall of Normandy', in *England and Normandy in the Middle Ages*, ed. by David Bates and Anne Curry (1994), p.29.

Appendix 2:

The Structural Relationship of the *Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune* to the earlier Erceldoune Tradition

	<i>Als Y Yod</i>	Harley <i>Reply</i>	Arundel <i>Reply</i>	<i>Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune</i> (all quotations taken from Thornton unless otherwise stated)
<i>Chanson d'aventure</i> opening [1]	Als y yod on ay Monday .../ faire lords sette ij fonde; / In ilke ay hirn ij herd ay lay / and levedys south me loude sange (1, 70-72)			Als j me wente þis Endres day, / full faste in mynd makand my mone, / In a mery mornynge of Maye (26-28)
Question concerning the end of the wars with Scotland [2]	Miri man, that es so wythe, / of ay thinge gif me answere, / For him that mensked man wyt mith, / wat sal worth of this were? (81-84)	La countesse de Donbar demanda a Thomas de Essedoune quant la guere descoce prendreit fyn e yl la respoundy e dyt (<i>incipit</i>)	Thomas de Erseldoune, Escot et dysur, dit au rey Alisandre le paroles desuthdites, du rey Edward ke ore est, kaunt yl fust à nestre (<i>incipit</i>)	Telle me of this gentill blode / wha sall thriife, and wha sall thee / wha sall be kynge, wha sall be none / And wha sall weld this northe countre? (343-47)
Death of the aristocracy [3]	Cf. So comeli so men dyen here, / povere na riche is nane to spare (185-86, a reference to Halidon Hill)	When laddes weddeth lovedis (15)	Hwan laddes weddeth levedes (7)	Cf. [Of a] batelle, j sall the saye, / [That sall] gare ladyse morne in mode.... Gemtill knyghtis sall stombill downe (377-83, a reference to Bannockburn)
Arrival of Arthurian deliverer and conquest of insular territory [4]	Fra suth sal blessed brether comen, / and dele the lande even in twa... (203- 04)		To-nyght is boren a barn in Kaernervam, / That ssal wold the out ydlis ylcan (1- 2)	A basterd shall come out of the west, / And there he shall wye the gre; / he shall bothe Est ad west, / And all the lond breton shall be (Lansdowne, 609-12)

Final battle of Anglo-Scottish wars cast in eschatological framework [5]	A tyme bifor the Trinité, / Thare shal deye ay day / a folke on feld, ful fa sal flee (102-04)	Whenne shal this be? / Nouthur in thine tyme ne in myne. / Ah comen and gon with-inne twenty wynter ant on. (17-18)		And is called sondyford; / þer þe last battel done shal be (Cambridge, 630-31)
European conquest and journey to Jerusalem [6]				þe basted shall gett him power stronge, / all þe fyue leishe lande - / there shall not on him bodward brynge / as I am for to vnderstand. / þe basted shall die in þe holly lande (Sloane, 638-41, quoted here as the best preserved witness to this portion of the text)

Appendix 3:

The Geographical and Political Provenance of *Cock in the North* Witnesses, Mid to Late Fifteenth Century

Manuscript	Date	Region Produced (if known)	Political Orientation of Manuscript
National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 50	c.1445	Wales / the March	Contains Welsh material associated with the Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr, and also English prophecies of a Lancastrian affiliation.
British Library, Cotton Roll, II. 23	c.1451	London	Materials associated with Jack Cade's Revolt, some of which are clearly proto-Yorkist.
National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 26	c.1456	Oswestry	Yorkist / Welsh separatist.
British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian E. vii	c.1461-80		Percy manuscript.
Cambridge University Library, MS Kk. I. v	c.1460s	Anglo-Scottish Border	Prophecy relating to affairs on the northern English border. Likely Percy-ite.
Trinity College, Dublin, MS 516	c.1460s	Compiled by John Benet, a Lincolnshire vicar, probably originally from Yorkshire, and possibly writing in London.	Collection of political materials from the 1440s, '50s, and '60s. Political affiliations probably Yorkist.
Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lyell MS 35	c.1470s	Associated with Reginald Andrew, a Hampshire gentleman.	Yorkist prophecy collection.
Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, MS 249/277	c.1475	Compiled by John Herryson, in Cambridge.	Yorkist commonplace book.

Appendix 4:

Early Fifteenth-century Illustrated Glosses on the *Prophetiae Merlini*, in BL, Cotton Nero A. iv, fols 73r-75v¹



fol. 73r

¹ Images provided by the British Library.



fol. 73v



fol. 74r



fol. 75v

Appendix 5:
Diplomatic Transcriptions of *S Mysel*

1. NLW, Peniarth MS 26, pp.112-16

S mised in mydys mevyll towart
 Seyth a P on plyght mekyll pyne *after*
 Seyth agane schallen tyme trew yn *non* othyr
 Thys lyone schalbe busked and lenged yn *sonder*
 and ther londys loste for a long tyme 5
 Saw a legge shall be loste in albyns londe
 Mony camut schall be tolde hym fre to tr[e]w
 ther schalle a warden of were trowe hyt welle
 and a gayns hym a gay man wth glydryng gore
 wth x iii and feler y trowe 10
 and ther gome *yer* schal he
 the schylde of the mone schal lenge *in* a lawe
 The Saxons shal seke sore wen that syre comes
 they schul curse that hym bare *basterd* and othyr
 The hownde and the heware down schall he dryue 15
 the lok and the raggyd tre the rede baner vnder
 The foxe and the quytrat sore schal they grieue
 The bere shalbe baytyd the schepe schall be schent
 The ratton schal be raysed & reft fro hys rest
 the ... shalbe strayt & stonyd *in* stedd 20
 Then a fawkon sall flee wyth hys frech fay
 The Bael of thes bestys schall byde wth tham selue*n*
 And mangel wth metall *mercy non* haue
 The falsed ye for cast fowle schall be fonde
 Wyth stepps ferfull standing styfly of blod 25
 and frecly fle mony felds ovyr
 The wallis schall be wastid of mony rych *to*n*s*
 and wander in thar wone do*z*ytly mon dye
 Wen cadwaladrs name calls the cursed may dred

And albony wth armony endles vp all 30

[p.113]

Then roryng & redeth be *in* the ryche tounes
to the Saxon seed woo be for *euer*

Wen thys fawkon flees northe wth hys frech fay
Bryghte burnest barnys blythely mon ryse
and wolt owyr walls vndere to wake 35

The horne schall be he hewyn for his grete helpe
the north schall haue thught that no man can *number*

A ded man schall a ryse a giuyth to deme
he schall see owre sorow and ryght schall vp ryse
Then schall no man rob for joy of the same
but krep*e in* to a rode for that cler schew 40

the saxons schall sor[o]w ther seytt that ye wrought
for ther lyne schall be strayed yn a lytel stonde

And then schall thys londe brutan be called
After brute in kynde as melyn doth mene
Then schall the prince scheche ouer the see 45
And ... the wastes of xv remys

And then he schall ... of the cursed Sarysones
hys honds schall be holy y hete yowe for sowyth
the lyon and the lyly lege schall to *geder*
the dragon schall derwarthest wen the day comes 50

of a ii a schall the ynde sprynge
of vp and of l eche is to wete
of all bryton by thre crowne schall he bere
And hethones holly hald in his owne hands

In tyme that is comynge ther schall come an asse 55
that beres an hande of leed the soothe y yowe telle

And hed of steel wth an hert of brass
hys skyn schall be of yren y say the fole sothle
And harde beste he schall be wth owten wyn
hys londe schall be hold & kepe hyt in pes 60

in the begynnys of hys regnygs wth owte boot

[114]

He schall bygge hym a place wth wall & wth syd
 After hys concete ther ys *non* y lyk
 hys joys and hys kry as y vnderstonde
 schall be here and knowyn yn mony a kyngys londe 65
 he schall be called an asse for hys lewte
 ffor yn hys tyme he schall geve land and foes fre
 Wyth ane seguelle glade schall hys hert be fed
 Wroght the pelle of a wolfe that dredful ys
 Mekyll of hys londe schall stonde in grete mys 70
 but he schalbe hym agayn the more a lesse
 and he schall haue as merlyn seys
 soyefast lypps yn hys says
 in hys herte wryttyn schall be
 truth holynes and scharyte 75
 Then after thys been he trowy of beste
 A ffolle schall come owt of the north west
 A wykked man schall be ther gyde¹
 mech sorow sall the do by the see syde
 then schall he geve a way hys londe 80
 to *dyuerse* pepull to kepe in honde
 and they schall kepe hyt wth ther myght
 ffro the ryght blod as hys owne ryght
 Thus schall he kepe it tell a tyde
 tell he be ouercome for all hys pryde 85
 In hys tyme the sonne schall red
 as blode in token of mony to be ded
 The *iiii* hed waters mengyd wth blod
 of thys bane hyt tokynes no good
 So mych blode yn hys tyme sall be for lorne 90

¹ [seventeenth century hand glosses 'or his guide']

that many schall banne the tyme that he was borne

[p.115]

Thys ys the reme all owt of kynde
 wth crafte the moldewarp hym schall wynde
 whyle that lest ys kyng yn londe
 he schall be cursed of godds mude 95
 That prode moldwarp corst schall be
 And at euery grete nede bonde for to flee
 hys skyn schall be rogh as a bere
 So ys to tham that he may sere
 know 3e for trewth ther mannys yn hyme 100
 the venegedus of god for wykked syn
 for merlyn yn hys prophice says
 lechery schall be vyset yn hys days
 and soth of nede and los of londe
 for he schall lese all that he fonde 105
 In hys tyme sall be no ryght
 but hors wth fyre branne ful bryght
 Tyme of thys moldwarrp be fore sayd
 That law has ragyet low schalbe leyd
 halons wyth erthe downe ryve schall he 110
 the moldwarpp fast a way sal fle
 In that tyme & lasys full ryall
 stondyng on temys sone schall fall
 And hit schall seme that sywarne ys drye
 so many ded bodys thar yn schall lye 115
 And then schall the dragon com full scharp
 to crosse agaynst the moldwarpp
 And for sothe wyth owten fayle
 fonde on a ston schall be that batayle
 Then to the dragon at the laste 120
 Schall come a wolfe owt of the west

[p.116]

[Then] the ii bestys schul be fule scharppe
 to were agayns the moldwarppe
 Then owt o irelond schall come a lyon
 to holde wth the wolf and the dragon 125
 the moldwarppe fast schall flee
 Sothen *after* dye shall hee
 In the flood of the trebull see
 but in the tyme of the moldwarppe
 the hote bays schall wax cold 130
 And then schall englond on *euery* syde
 be wth outen *gouernawns* vn to a tyde
 Then schall come the asse wth y ren syde
 to schewe hym self wth hew and hyde
 to the dragon & to the wolf and to the lyon 135
 as he may be craft of hym self com
 to hem schall he full welcome be
 vn to the bests all thre
 and thys schall he come agayne to his londe
 By helpe of the beests y *vnderstonde* 140
 And as *mellyn* says yn reed
 he schall be full of me joy and of manye &
 Ryght as agote he schall hawe a berd
 his fome of hym schall be afere
 hys oon fote yn wyke set schall he 145
 the tothyr yn londyn ful sykerle
 the best he schall be that *euere* was
 Sythen Arthur dyed with wt owtyn les
 And *after* wart dye schall he
 be syde a maroye be yond the see 150

2. BL Cotton Rolls, II. 23

S mysed in myndes and marke þer a p
 S set by hem self savand a ii
 The lion bee busked and lased in sonder
 Saue a legge laste in albany landes
 Vnnethes shall he shyne for shade of the mone 5
 The saxons shall sigh when þat byrd *commys*
 þay shall banne þat hym bredde bastard or oþer
 Bothe honds and ebar hewen bee down
 The ruke and the ragged tre the redde baner vnder
 þe bale of the begle shall bide wt hem selffe 10
 þe steppne mon be staffull standard of blode
 ffor þis men flowe mony a feld one
 Walles mon be wasted of þer woke townes
 And they that ben þune wone with gly mon dye
 Whan Cadwallis name called is þe cursed may drede 15
 And albony with armony othes vp hold
 þu bee raryng and rewith in the riche towne
 To all saxons sede sorow for euer
 Afte brute be þu bold bee the reme called
 Bretayne as merlion mellis in his sawes 20
 And the sonne shall seke ouer the see
 And wyne þat was here wasted xv rennys
 And sith shall he conuerte of the cursid hethen
 þe hend bee haly I hote yow forsothe
 Bernys bright with breny shall ryde 25
 And dwell ouer wawys with riche wede vnder
 The hornys bee hewyn on hye hepe
 þe north shall haue noy but newe shall be sen
 þer shall no Jarmony jowke in joy for the son
 But they shall crepe on the crowke for the clere shade 30
 þen the lyon þe lune lyng shall to gede
 þe dragon bee derworth when yt day comys

Of 9 rr rr monne þe hende sprynge

a 5 and x eche it is to wete

And of *cristen* [g]odon mon he bere

35

hethenes mon haly holde at his will

Vt non plus de matia

Appendix 6: Composite Elements of the Peniarth 26 *S Mysed*

1. Key Source Materials

	<i>S Mysed</i>	<i>When Rome is Remoyd</i> , A-text	<i>Cock in the North</i>	<i>Revised English Couplet Version of the Six Kings</i>
The fate of the lion. [1]	Thys lyone schalbe busked and lenged in sonder and ther londys loste for a long tyme Saw a legge shall be loste in albys londe (1-3)	The Lyone, leder of bestis, Shall lowte to the Libert and long hume wytht.	The lion shall lache an hurt and not perished be But he shall broyde to þe best yat hym þe woo wrought	
The Pan-Celtic Alliance. [2]	Wen cadwladrs name calls the cursed may dred And albony wth armony endles vp all Then roryng & redeth be <i>in</i> the ryche tounes to the Saxon seed woo be for euer (29-32)	Tatcalders sall call on Carioun the noyus, And than sall worthe up Wallys and wrethe othir landis, And erth on tyll Albany, if thai may wyne. Herme wnto alienys, anever thai sall wakyne! The Bruttis blude sall thame wakyne and bryttne wyth brandis of stell: Ther sall no bastarde blode abyde in that lande.		
The flight of the falcon/cock. [3]	Wen thys fawkon flees northe wth hys frech fay Bryghte burnest barnys blythely mon ryse (33-34)		When the cocke in the North hath bilde his nest And busketh his bridds and beddnys h�m to fle	

The return of the dead man, and subjugation or exile of the Saxons. [4]	A ded man schal a ryse a nyks to deme he schall see owre sorow and ryght schall up ryse Then schall no man rob for joy of the same but krepe <i>in</i> to a rod for that cler schew the saxons schall sor[o]w ther seytt that ye wroght for ther lyne schall be strayed yn a lytel stonde (38-42)		Then shall saxons chese theym a lord þat shal rewle hem rightfully and bryng he ^m vnder A dede man shall make bytwene hem acorde and this a seely and grete wondere	
The crusading journey of the returned hero. [5]	Then schall the prince scheche ouer the see And ... the wastes of xv remys And then he schall ... of the cursed Sarysones hys honds schall be holy y hete yowe for sowyth (45-48)		In the cite of Babilon to bryng hem on bere xv dayes journey from Jerusalem The holy crossse shall be þe said bore shall wynne ye beme	
The Franco-Scottish alliance. [6]	the lyon and the lyly lege schall togedr (49)	And the Lilly so lele wytht lovelyche flouris For harmes of the hardé heyte sall hillyne his ledis, Syne speyde hime at sped, and spawne in the wynter.		
Alliance with the dragon. [7]	the dragon schall derwarthest wen the day comes (50)		And a dredeful dragon shall drawe hym from his denne The helpe the lion with all his myght	

<p>The return of the ass, and the alliance of three beasts. [8]</p>	<p><i>from</i> In tyme that is comynge ther schall come an asse that beres an hande of leed the soothe y yow telle And hed of steel wth an hert of brass</p> <p><i>to</i></p> <p>hys oon fote yn wyke set schall he the tother yn londyn ful sykerly (55-146) See Appendix 6.2.</p>			<p>As found in Hatton 56. See Appendix 6.2.</p>
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2. *Revised English Couplet Version of the Six Kings*, from Bodleian, Hatton MS 56, fols 43r-45r, alongside *Second Revised English Couplet Version*, from Peniarth 26, pp.113-16

Hatton 56 (<i>Revised English Couplet Version</i>)	Peniarth 26 (from <i>S Mysed</i>)
<p>herkyns speche of maukyn thyng Of grete ferly & wondryng Of a kyng þat after our day shall reigne whan we ar away and of þair heirs þat ar vnborn and how england shal be forlorn merlyn spoke of all this & of oþir thyng þat was & is In tyme shall come an as wit y wele þat shal haue fete of lede & hede of stele hert of bras & iron his skyn an hardy best shall he be forby any of his kyn mekil of his tyme <i>wit</i>hout any lees his land shal be keptid & holden in pees his wite & his cry i do you to vndirstand shall be herd full wele in euery land</p> <p>he shall be callid an asse for his lewte mekil of his tyme prayesd shal he be</p> <p>and he shall haue as merlyon seyes sothfast lippes in all his dayes in his hert for soth writen shall be trewthe & holynes wele wit ye þan after in tyme whan he wenes lest a folk shall come out of þe north west thurgh a wikked grehound led shall þei be and do make sorow bothe by land & see than shal... vnto...</p> <p>[fol. 43v.] and þe foure hede watirs be mengid wt blode</p>	<p>In tyme that is comynge ther schall come an asse that beres an hande of leed the soothe y yowe telle And hed of steel wth an hert of brass hys skyn schall be of yren y say the fole sothle And harde beste he schall be wth owten wyn hys londe schall be hold & kepe hyt in pes</p> <p>in the begynnys of hys regnygs wth owte boot He schall bygge hym a place wth wall & wth syd After hys concete ther ys <i>non</i> y lyk hys joys and hys kry as y vnderstonde schall be here and knowyn yn mony a kyngys londe he schall be called an asse for hys lewte ffor yn hys tyme he schall geve land and foes fre Wyth ane seguelle glade schall hys hert be fed Wroght the pelle of a wolfe that dredful ys Mekyll of hys londe schall stonde in grete mys but he schalbe hym agayn the more a lesse and he schall haue as merlyn seys soyefast lypps yn hys says in hys herte wryttyn schall be truth holynes and scharyte Then after thys been he trowy of beste A ffolle schall come owt of the north west A wykked man schall be ther gyde mech sorow sall the do by the see syde then schall he geve a way hys londe to dyuerse pepull to kepe in honde and they schall kepe hyt wth ther myght ffro the ryght blod as hys owne ryght Thus schall he kepe it tell a tyde tell he be ouercome for all hys pryde In hys tyme the sonne schall red as blode in token of mony to be ded The iiij hed waters mengyd wth blod of thys bane hyt tokynes no good</p>

<p>ffor it shall be tokyn but of littell goode but spillyng of blode & many men by dene Thurgh dynts of swerds bothe sharpe & kene The folk as stepchildre shull dwell & abide in many grete noyousnes vntil a tide So mekill blode in his tyme shal be spild þat wommen shull wary þe tyme þat þei bare child wele away shull men sey for sorow of one & opir but at þe last he shall be slayn wt swerd of his brothir</p> <p>This bred of þe Erne all out of kynd wt craft of þe moldwerp shall hym self bynd while this vnkyndely best is keper in land shall be woryed wt godds mouthe I do you to vndirstand a full prowde wrecche shal this moldwerp be and in euery gode nede also a coward shall he flee his skyn shall be rough as gots skyn The place shal be wers þat he comys in wt þe for sothe þere shall light in hym vengeaunce for old done syn angrifful & wikked shal he ay be grace in his tyme neuer gets he wt ye for sothe whiles þat he is kyng paynes shall be ynow & meke opir thyng he shall be praised mekil vnto a tide til he be ouercome & cast down wt pride and [INCOMPLETE] that horedom shall be vsed mekyll in his dayes¹ a deying of folke and lesyng of lands ffor he shall lepe mekell more þurgh beforefand wherfore þat folke of other cuntree full bold & kene ageyne hym shall be and in his tyme also shall men see</p>	<p>So mych blode yn hys tyme sall be for lorne that many schall banne the tyme that he was borne</p> <p>Thys ys the reme all owt of kynde wth crafte the moldewarp hym schall wynde whyle that lest ys kyng yn londe he schall be cursed of godds mude That prode moldwarp corst schall be And at euery grete nede bonde for to flee hys skyn schall be rogh as a bere So ys to tham that he may sere know þe for trewth ther mannys yn hyme the venegedus of god for wykked syn for merlyn yn hys prophice says lechery schall be vyset yn hys days and soth of nede and los of londe for he schall lese all that he fonde In hys tyme sall be no ryght but hors wth fyre branne ful bryght Tyme of thys moldwarpp be fore sayd That law has ragyet low schalbe leyd halons wyth erthe downe ryve schall he the moldwarpp fast a way sal fle In that tyme & lasys full ryall standyng on temys sone schall fall And hit schall seme that sywarne ys drye so many ded bodys thar yn schall lye</p>
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¹ Additions have been made to the line, almost certainly in the same hand likely, but in a different pen on a different date. A later revisiting of the text by the scribe might explain the omissions in the text. It may well be representative of an attempt to remember a prophecy, or work from incomplete witness, with a fuller (although nonetheless partial) witness provided at a later date.

amyd folk [INSERT:lye] in a dyke of
the see stones shul fall full evyn in
þat land þat before in castels were wont to
stand

[fol. 44r]

and in his tyme as it shall seme right
þat houses as fire brenne shall bright
þan shall come a dragon full fal & sharpe
forto reyse were ageyn þe moldwerp
I tell ye forsothe w̄itout any faile
fondid on a stone shall be þe bataile
and þe dragon shall gete to hym at last
a wolf þat shall come out of þe west
þe wolf shall geve batell betir & sharpe
Rise vpon his sede ageyn þe moldwerp
þe dragon & þe wolf w̄itouten any lye
shull reyse ther tailles togedr al vpon hye
out of Irlond þan shal come a lyon
& hold w̄it þe wolf & þe dragon
þan shall al Inghland quakand be
as leves þat gangyn on a tree
and þan shall þe moldwerp for dent of hem
thre

In þat ilk tyme ful quakand be
his folk shall he gedr & semle þen
his land for to kepe fro his foo men
w̄it dole & w̄it care ouercome shall he be
þe moldwerpe w̄it his folk shall turne & fle
þe dragon & þe wolf & þe lyon
shall dryve þe moldwerp fro towne to
towne

and so shall þe moldwerp lede his lyfe
in sorow and care wo & stryfe
and sithen evil deth dey shall he sone
for wykked synnes þat are before done
In tyme of þe moldwerp þerof be ye bold
shull þe hote baths become all cold
Thus shal al england on every side
be w̄itout keþer vntil a tide
till yt þe asse w̄it þe iii every side
shew hym self w̄it hewe & w̄it hide

[fol. 44v.]

To þe dragon & þe wolf & to þe lyon
as he may by craft of hym self one
þan shall þe dragon as a myghty best
cacche þe asse in his clawes & bete hym to
his nest

And then schall the dragon com full scharp
to crosse agaynst the moldwarpp
And for sothe wyth owten fayle
fonde on a ston shall be that batayle
Then to the dragon at the laste
Schall come a wolfe owt of the west
[Then] the ii bestys schul be fule scharppe
to were agayns the moldwarppe
Then owt o irelond schall come a lyon
to holde wth the wolf and the dragon

the moldwarppe fast schall flee
Sothen after dye shall hee
In the flood of the trebull see
but in the tyme of the moldwarppe

the hote bays schall wax cold
And then schall england on euery syde
be wth outen gouernawns vn to a tyde
Then schall come the asse wth y ren syde
to schewe hym self wth hew and hyde

to the dragon & to the wolf and to the lyon
as he may be craft of hym self com
to hem schall he full welcome be
vn to the bests all thre
and thys schall he come agayne to his londe

Sithen to þe asse fall shall þat lond
 & he shall it yeme wele in his owne hond
 This land of good playne shall it be
 Graciously in his tyme yemed it shal be
 the fomen in to frends turne þei wol all
 & sorow shal pas & joye þei wil home call
 ffor meryn seyes in þat ilke thede
 his hert shal be mengid wit mercy and
 felhede
 and right as a gote he shal haue a berd
 þat al his fomen for hym shal be ferd
 he shal geve shadow to england all
 ffor cold & for hete yeve he shall
 his oo fote in wyke set shal he
 his oþir in london for sothe wit ye
 iii wony wastede he shall ennlap þat tide
 to wales ward he shall opyn his mouth wide
 and gar quake by north & by southe
 for drede of þe blast þat cometh of his
 mouthe
 his hand shal stretche to many contre
 þe brethe of his mouthe ful swete shall be
 he shall ouercome many vnkowthe stede
 þat werryn ageyn hym & hym mys hede
 þus al his fomen ouercome shal he wel
 & bretayn yeme shall he euery dele
 merveyles werk in oþir contre
 þat many of hym full glad shall be
 & one of þe best holden shal he be
 þat euer in þe world in his tyme shall be
 And sithen at þe last die shall he
 beside a fer merche in an oþir contre

[fol. 45r]

Then after shall england dwell in werre
 as stepchildre witouten keper
 wele away shull man sey þene aldir moste
 as stepchildren þat aren for loste

By helpe of the beests y vnderstonde

And as mellyn says yn reed
 he schall be full of me joy and of manye &

Ryght as agote he schall haue a berd
 his fome of hym schall be afere
 hys oon fote yn wyke set schall he
 the tothyr yn londyn ful sykerle
 the best he schall be that euer was
 Sythen Arthur dyed with wt owtyl les
 And after wart dye schall he
 be syde a maroye be yond the see

Appendix 7:

Diplomatic Transcriptions of *Prophecy Professed*

1. NLW, Peniarth MS 50, pp.221-26

The *prop*hesy of Sibille and Merlyn

Ffor to susteyne the forseid *prop*hecy of the right / wise and right nobyll
 sibyll merlyn and other / to acordyng so that or the yere of our lord a m^f
 cccc l i be ended in Gaule shall suche a / sorowe also also a right wode
 diuision so that / the sonne shall make werre a yenste the fadere / and
 the fadyr ayenste the sonne for her destruc / cion . Wherby ther schal
 sew mutacion of londe / Joachim saith also sooth Ezechie that in thys /
 tyme the *pr*ncys shall be full of gyle and full / of pride and of angyr
 cruell wtout dredyng / godde or his sentys his worde ne the aungelys .
 / And vndyr a couert striff fayned & sotyll they / shall assemble in a
 grete nombre ayenste the / lybarde and his generacions for to deuoure
 his blode / and hit to conquer also . But they shall doo her / owen
confusyon . Wherby ther shall sew mutacion of londe.

The heuy asse wt a great *company* schall come / out of albion worthy &
 abyll and vpen the ffile / yng hert and his maigne shall make moche noy
 / se that out of the towne . And also out of the / felde he schall putt
 hym wt vengiaunce horri / ble wt fere & bloode wt out ony
contradiccion

[p.222]

that he dooth vndyr *dissimulacion* so that he / shall *neuer* come a yen in
 to his contre / ne cite ne noon of his meigne . Wher through ther shall
 come mutacion of lond.

The extent of the *prop*hecy of maister / Baltasar Cador Doctor and
soueraigne philoso / fer & astronomer of the *pr*nces of almayne / after
 the *prop*hecys of Samesum say in glose / in a certayne place of the

sawter that in the /tyme of the yere of oure lord a M^f CCCC & / 1 i
 many kyngdomes and grete regions of / cristiante ther shall be suche
 grete diuision / and schedynge of blood by the weye of wer / so that a
 M^f yere a fore ther was neuer so damp / nable so cruwell ne detestabyll y
 sey as hit / shall be at that tyme.

And vpon this the grete Sybille writeth / *mervously* touchyng the remes
 of Gaule / albion & albonye in the *partes* of the occident / the whiche
 Sybille saith that a lybarde shall / be so worthy & so myghty that he
 shall assayle / the Reme of Gaule so sharpely that vnneth / ther shall
 ben ony *contradiccion* ayenst hym /

[p.223]

maignteynyng that the same Reme of Gaule/ is longyng to hym by right
 . And of hym ther / shall come a Bore the whiche schall be bore at /
 Wyndesore and right moche he schall loue the / place of his natiuite and
 shall dignifye Galle / hant . And *in* his yong age he schall be crownyd
 wt / ii crownys . And of the ii crownys he shall be / put fro for a
 certeyn tyme by *dyuerse* & strange / menys . Not wyth stonyng that he
 schall all / wey bere the name of the kyng of ffrance . / labouryng hym
 in his werrys and during that / werrys aforsayde ther shall be made a
 trete of / the pece and wynyng marriage the whiche trete / of the pece
 schall be but fraude & stryff *couert* / ligyng loue dissimled.

And in this this tyme in albanye ther shall be so / grete effusion of
 bloode of the princes & of / the gentyllys and of the commyns of the
 con / tre that the wyld bestes & the wilde foulys/ shall lyghtly be take
 at her wyll.

And thane the Reme of Gaule shall arise / ayenst the Sonne of man and
 of wondyrfull / woundys [they] shall hurt his sheepe & desyreth/

[p.224]

to fall vp on the celer of the sonne of man / and thenn at the laste he
 schall take the name of / the bore for to battayle a yenste Gawle he
 schall / strengthe hym in suche wise that to the woulf / and to all thoo
 that ben of the woulff is secte / he schall make hem to holde her tailys
 by twene / her leggyss as fleyng a way . In the whiche tyme Occident
 schall right moche haue to suffre / and thanne the same bore schalle
 whette his teeth / vp on the gates of paryssh where he schall make /
 grete effusion of bloode . And there he schall make des / truy the yll
 blood so that the laborereye and the / comyns of the londe schall banne
 here lordes / out of the londe and shall take the Bore for / here lorde .
 And the woulff shall here his coun / cell in fforest and wodes wt the
 serpentys and / wylde bestys but thenne at the laste he shall be / all
 destroyed and disconfited and neuer he shall / come to his holde agayne
 . To the whiche acordyng / many filosofers and astronomyers which
 sayn / more ouer that the churche vniuersall of Germain / & of Italy in
 this tyme manuelesly shall haue to suffre by cause of the feyth and other
 cau/ sys also . And that the egle and this bore shul / joyne to geder and
 by hem tweyne the a poynte / ment shall be made by twen hem . And
 agayne

[p.225]

they schall putte the churche in the true feith agayne / thorough out all
 the werlde as ferre as crystiante / dureth . The prophycye of merlyn in
 Englysh acor / ding to the same . the Bore shall haue an hole hede / the
 herte of a lyon a regard of pete his tonge shal / speke the worde of
 trowth . his port shall be meke / as a lombe as long as he leuyth . And
 this Bore / at the bygynnyng of his ruelth shall haue a / grete anoye
 to iustifie thoo that ben fals longyng / vn to his reme . This Bore by his
 puissance / shall make the wolff be come a lombe . this bore shall /
 come out of Wyndesore and he shall goo whettyng his teth by four
 dyuerse remes and he shall a / hapely and boldely all thyngs that he hath
 to don / vn to the Borowe of Ierusalem . Spayne shall tre / mely for
 fere & aragon schall quake . This ylke / Bore schall putte his grete

power in to ffraunce / and his grete tayle shall reste in Englonde ther he
 / was borne . Thys Bore shall whette his teeth / vp on the gates of
 Paryse . Germanye shall drede / hym moche . This Bore shall gladely
 long dwell in tweyn townes of his Reme of Englonde . This / Bore shall
 make the canell of the weys renne / blode and shall gete a yen all that he
 has loste

[p.226]

And all that his aun[t]cederys haue lost also in / tyme passen . And
 more ouer he shall putte a / londe in suche subiaccion that hit shall
 neuer / rewue ayen . This Bore shall conquer more / than euer dede any
 of his blood . Also he shall / bere iii crownye afore that he dyeth . And
 the / moste [parte] of the world shall hold hym for / here k[yng] . And
 all shall be in good pese and .../ ... as long as he leuyth and / he shall
 dye in a strange contre.

Then shall a kynge of justyce be borne / Whiche shall be called Harry
 the wronges / of ffraunce he shall caste down he shall / bere the fete of
 a counslete and he schall / dignifye Gallehautte . And he shall gete /
 the holy crosse and late he shall bygyne / and in short tyme he shall don
 all thys.

2. BL, Cotton Roll II. 23

The p^rophesy professid and I pight
 Of maiden Sibille and many mo
 Merlion a man of mykell myght
 that in his thradam was full p^roo
 þey said the Reaume of fraunce shall right
 Dysseyvere on synder and tweyne in to
 And þe yere of oure lord be laid and light

A M^d CCCC L and moo
 þe sonne shall be þe faders woo
 Of wode dyvision theym be twene 10
 On gronnys a gaynst þe fader go
 Theyme to be tray and to tene
 þe fader shall stryve þe son agayn
 ffor þe destruxion of his right
 Bold in bataill and full bayn 15
 The son the assaill and feell in fight
 A man shall com with myght and mayn
 Out of the west worthy and wight
 Won of the best of blod and of boon
 a hewy ass hon^{our} on hight 20
 þe right of ffraun^{ces} to deme and to dight
 Wt hym a here and a lyon
 The wolff to warne þat yit is wight
 ffro hym to take þe courly crown
 With ffyre and fflynt he shall be flay 25
 Sale blode out of his body bryng
 his deth is deme bith nyght and day
 Off sorowe in ffight thenne may he syng
 So þat he shall neuer affte þat day say
 here is my bildis and my bidyng 30
 his werks shall wirke to wele a way
 neuer affte in lond to haue longyng
 his bernis agayn shall he not bryng
 Vnto his cowrte ne his co^{untre}
 ffor wo þey shall þer hands wrynge 35
 And dye no is þer destenye
 ffor Baltazar þat was so bold
 And dame doughty of dignite
 That now ben moveyn in the moold
 p^{ro}phets preferrid in prophecy 40
 Cader comly þat now is cold

prophecied as hit shall be
 Or the yeris of oure lord be full told
 A M^f cccc and ffyfte
 And no mo as I tell þe 45
 In mony kyndomys þat be kene
 Of traytours shall atteynted be
 And trailed on trees trapped wt tene
 Then shall dyvision by nyȝt and be day
 Shedyng of blode ffull oft be seyn 50
 An iii wynter I dar well say
 Suche bataill before neuer hadde bene
 Ne nevir affte with outyn nay
 Vnto þe dome nyth be dene
 ffor mony a man both goodly and gay 55
 Kaysors kyngs knyghts so kene
 pytuosly to god shall ben
 wt derfully dynts þer deethes ben dyȝt
 That were wonte to go in gay grene
 ffull lowe shall lye with hert vnlight 60
 And as towchyng of such a thyng
 Sibill writyth full wonderfully
 Towchyng the reme of ffraun^{ce} and kyng
 and a lion þat is myghty
 Out off the occident shall spryng 65
 A libart þat shall be lordely
 ffraun^{ce} to fray both holt and yong
 With pine his tyme shall sharply
 no thyng agayns him shall plye
 ffor be right that reallme beyes his 70
 Of hym shall come a bore trewly
 The Reame of ffraun^{ce} shall affte stride
 At wyndsor born shall he be
 ffull prestly loue shall be þat place
 Off his own ryght natiuite 75

In hym shall growe full mykell grace
 In his yong age crowned shall he be
 with to crownes in litell spase
 ffrom þat toon put shall he be
 And from all þe right þat he þer hase 80
 Yet shall he haue as sibill saies
 the name of ffraunꝛce in his writyng
 kyng to be cleped in mony a case
 All his life and his lykyng
 Ownyng þe werre be fore þis day 85
 All in is tyme sho saith also
 A trefy shall be made for a tray
 To make pese with outyn mo
 A mariage make shall þey
 As sibill saith it shall be so 90
 Bought wt pride pompe and play
 þerto þe frensshemen shall be full þro
 Booth þe parties shall tome to woo
 ffor no lone shall shewe to sight
 But hit moste nede twynne in to 95
 ffor hit was made agaynis þe right
 Though hit be made with game and play
 On sondirr agayn yit shall hit twynne
 Syn treson by gan so shall it tray
 With deelfull dynts and mykell dyn 100
 Effused of blode both nyght and day
 Shall þen be for sorow of synne
 Off paine prowde some tyme display
 ffor that treson shall tome and twynne
 The wild beests shall þider wend 105
 ffor to sowte of manns blode
 ffor þer shall dye both more and myn
 That were agayns the boor stode
 þe reame of fraunꝛce þen shall ryse

Agaynst the son of man so fre 110
 his shepe to bred in many
 out of the foldes to fell and to slee
 The sonne of man both meke and wyse
 þe borys name then take shall he
 And bataile hym self in his avyse 115
 ffraunce to flay both ferre and nye
 he shall wirke full wonderfully
 The wolff may ware that wirkyng
 ffor doule and dere þen shall he dree
 When all his men þere tailes down hyng 120
 By twixte there lymmis sothely to say
 As prevde by p^rophecy may ply and spell
 Willfull wyning in there way
 Ne howse ne hall ne forto dwell
 In the which tyme with outeⁿ nay 125
 þe occident shall belowen and bell
 & suffirr that sorow segge on theym say
 þen shall þe bore both yerne and yell
 & grase his teeth on parise gate
 þe frensshemen down to ffold and to ~~fell~~ slee 130
 And all the þe bests fforto abate
 Blode shall be spiled grete plente
 And brought to ground that falk hath been
 So þat the suggetts full sikerly
 Shall t^oment þis lord with tray and tene 135
 ffro bourgh to bourgh bannysh beeth hee
 won of his mene ne shall hym mene
 ffor all his werke was right nought
 As at the last the sooth is seene
 Synne with his werke ther he wrought 140
 ffor then is his comfort t^ome to care
 To wander mong þe gr[e]vis grene
 Sekand among þe serpents sare

Broght vnto þe beere þer shall he bene
 ffor all his wold is wofull wight 145
 And neuer to come to his countre
 noþer by day noþer by nyght
 to þe whiche according he
 mony prophetts of mykell myȝt
 And astronomyers all redyly 150
 Tellyng þe tale what shall be tight
 What dole and drede shall be truly
 Vnto þe Churche vniversally
 To Rome þat þe head by ryght
 To Garmany and to ytaly 155
 þe that tyme well wete ye myght
 þey shall suffre booth tray and tene
 ffor the ffeith euerych a dele
 With lenge kynd both cold and kene
 þis with mouth as we yow tell 160
 þen shall þe Egull so full off wele
 [With] þe bore to geder ben
 þerewith þe were of fortune whele
 be ... be at one i wene
 Bataill bold be forn hath ben 165
 Betwext þe dowghty both in dede
 To gedre þen shall mete on a grene
 And be at one as hit is nede
 In þey shall be þan
 And.... nis in bour and in hall 170
 be þe werld as knyghts kene
 As mony as longeth to cr̄ist wt all
 The bore shll dwell þen on his deme
 As a p̄ince prowde on purpull pall
 An hale hedde haue shall he þan 175
 þe here of a lion knyghts shall hym call
 To rewle all right þe most part

his tonge shall speke þe word of trouthe
 his port meke his myddell small
 Vpon crystys man to haue grete rewthe 180
 At his bygging shall he be
 Child of age child in dede
 till he be xxxth yere full nye
 to þe world full litell shall he take hede
 Wt fflaterers shall he sobbed be 185
 þat are full wayteles in þer dede
 And all shall tome to traytoure
 þe riȝt on Romance whoso can rede
 ffor all þer blode þer shall þey blede
 þat were some tyme full hye in hall 190
 Jhs crīst sue harry spede
 kyng wt crown mon dooth hym call
 ffor his mekenes and his myght
 The wolff som way þen shall he wyne
 And as a lombe loth for to light 195
 That reyson was shame and synne
 Merlion tellith as hit is taght
 þe bore of his berre shuld long blynne
 Vntil a day he shall be dight
 With game and with goodnes to be gyn 200
 ffro wyndessor wt mykell wyne
 A parlement to be pight with pride
 þerof shall dure full mykell dyn
 ffore shape be take þat tide
 ffro wyndesore shall he come 205
 Whetyng his tuskes by diuers londes
 ffull doughtyly to deme in dome
 All þo agayn his riȝt þat stonde
 he shall þen gede with mony a gome
 þat are full hend and harty of honde 210
 luffesom on lase to be left in londe

Bothe by see and eke by sonde
 he shall passe þer by Aragon lond
 And so þorow spayn off mykell myght
 Burgwyne and berne both bynd in hande 215
 And ffraun~~ce~~ shall be ffull sore affright
 Jerusalem þat gentill town
 Shall be vnto þe bore so bold
 And rome most riall of renown
 Shall to our speche ffully ffold 220
 To Germany he shall hym bown
 as most myghtiest on þe mold
 þer to be crowneth wt a crowne
 ffull gay glittyng all in gold
 Yif ffraunce fro hym be bou~~gt~~ and sold 225
 yet shall his luddere long þer in
 his taile in Englonde hit is told
 Wt worship and wt mykell wyne
 The ffreedom of fraunce he shall ffray
 Agayn to gete þat is for gon 230
 And all his antecessours I say
 he shall hit wyne wt welle þat ...
 he shall theym pot to suche a paye
 That ende of that commys neuer noon
 þorow dynt of sword a pon a day 235
 To many a bon he shall be boon
 Oure leege his selff lussum aloone
 Shall þeym in to mykell payn
 There towre hye þer shall be noon
 But all ... 240
 þen shall þe boore do affte this
 ffall all down by ffeeld and by ffloode
 Miche of this world to iwis
 And litell giff of the worlds goode
 Off thre crownys he shall not mysse 245

Theym forto haue with mayn and m[yght]
 Noon striffe off enmyes shall hym streffe
 yiff theym for wo wold waxen wode
 ffor that right rent was on þe rode
 And tached vnto a comly tre 250
 Graunt hym grace to do but goode
 Englund to saue both ffaire and ffre
 Moost of this world in welth and rest
 As long as he lovith that lowly boore
 Dye he shall ye may well trust 255
 In suche a place he came *neuer* or
 þat may ye here yeff þat ye lust
 How Sibill saith vnto vs more
 All this shall be tide no thyng myssed
 Or þe yere off *crist* be in the store 260
 a M^f CCC ffifty before
 And not unfulfilled wall [*sic*]
Neuer one shall set to be fforse bore
Neuer in boure ne in hall
 The *prince* of peer no man shall drede 265
 To justyfy his own entent
 And all shall be for loue off mede
 Who saith þe trowth he shall be shent
 yeff hit be right no man woll rede
 Ano[there] tale he will vp hent 270
 ffull mykell bale hit shall hym breede
 Whan crist here bodyes maketh to bent
 The mowthe þer with to speke is shent
 To wirke his will ffor well or woo
 Stiff to stabill and to and to stynt 275
 fflatterers fayre before his ffoo
 O thyng to do another to shewe
 As wikked men ffull offte
 Rawson agayns will renewe

Whether it be on dede or thought 280
 The monarches them shall mell
 Within that tyme forth shall be browght
 The penytere the poynt vntreke
 When at the soth shall be fought
 Affte the wolff therẽ shall be wrought 285
 The ffleyng egull and eke þe bore
 þe tigere best with in a thought
 Vnto the wolff hym selff shall swere
 Agaynst þe bore all this shall be
 The wolf to serve that is fo wight 290
 ffor his gret wrath shall wrye
 Agaynst hym both day and nyght
 Yiff one be take dole shall dree
 The somẽ tyme was of gret myght
 Be [...] with bale þen shall 295
 Then shall all rewe þat d...
 And ffor ffeer be sore affer[d]
 Therẽ blisse shall blaken...
 As treytoure atteynt all shall be...
 And so there sorow shall waxen ay new 300

Abbreviations

BL	British Library
Bodleian	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Chaucer	<i>The Riverside Chaucer</i> , ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, 3rd edn)
CUL	Cambridge University Library
<i>DIMEV</i>	<i>Digital Index of Middle English Verse</i> < http://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/imev/ >
EETS	Early English Text Society
EETS OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series
<i>Historia</i>	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>The History of the Kings of Britain</i> , ed. by Michael D. Reeve, transl. by Neil Wright (2007)
<i>IMEV</i>	<i>Index of Middle English Verse</i> < http://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/imev/ >
<i>LP</i>	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> , ed. by J. S. Brewer, 37 vols (Public Records Office, 1963)
<i>LALME</i>	<i>A Linguistic Atlas of Late Middle English</i> , ed. by Angus MacIntosh, M. L. Samuels, and Michael Benskin, with the assistance of Michael Laing and Keith Williams, 4 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986)
<i>LAEME</i>	<i>Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English</i> , ed. by Margaret Laing and Roger Lass (University of Edinburgh, 2007) < http://www.lal.ed.ac.uk/ihd/laeme1/laeme1.html >
NLW	National Library of Wales
NS	New series
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006) < http://www.oxforddnb.com >

- Opera* *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, 8 vols, ed. by J. S. Brewer, James F. Dimock, and George F. Warner (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861-1891)
- Shakespeare *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. by Harry Levin, Herschel Baker, Anne Barton, Hallett Smith, Marie Edel, Frank Kermode, and G. Blakemore Evans (Boston, Massachusetts; London: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997, 2nd revised edition)
- TEAMS The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages
- TNA, KB The National Archives, King's Bench

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