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The Arthurian Legend: A Vehicle for Symbolic Appropriation of the Insular Space

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Around the twelfth century, there was a change in the English concept of territory, which explains the origins of the legal formulation of England and Britain's inalienability at the turn of the thirteenth century. This shift in territorial conceptualization arose from the structural changes of the proto-state during Henry I's reign, the transformation of social identity from being ethnic-based to territorially-politically-based, and the construction of a proto-national historic *corpus* that, among others, William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon elaborated. However, the key element was Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae,* especially King Arthur's story. Indeed, if we understand that a myth—King Arthur— and a twelfth-century politico-cultural shift during King Henry I's reign were the roots for the construction of the British and English nation-states, it contributes to our understanding of social identities in the region. In addition, this approach serves as a conceptual model that could be adapted for the historical study of other locales.

Political context and ideological reconfiguration

> England, that from his cradle had shined arduously by the scepter of his divine power, now falls down into darkness. She drooped along with her king, Normandy along with her duke. The former nourished the boy; the latter lost the man.[1]

The key to understanding Henry I's reign is found in the months following his coronation, especially in his *Charter of Liberties*, also known as *King Henry*

I's Coronation Charter, one of the most important legal documents and a direct precursor of *Magna Carta*. Henry I wrote this letter for his coronation in England in 1100, when his brother, King William the Conqueror's first-born, Robert, was on his way back to Normandy. He had yielded his duchy to his younger brother, William II, in exchange for resources for his expedition to Jerusalem, in what would be the First Crusade. The new monarch felt weak against the power his older brother would have once he established in his duchy. So, through this legal document, Henry I tried to win the Anglo-Norman and Anglo-Saxon aristocracies' support.

It is important to underline that the main incentive for Henry I to write the charter was political, not ideological. This motivation is made apparent in the opening dedication: "Henry King of the English to Bishop N. and M. Sheriff and all his barons and faithful, both French-born and English, of any shire, greeting."[2] Indeed, the monarch illustrates the existence of an important Anglo-Saxon nobility (almost eliminated during William I's reign, but restored under William II's). By not differentiating between the two "ethnic groups," Henry I presented a different project than the one his father and brother supported. The king progressively pushed for a politico-cultural union between the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Normand aristocracies. To support this endeavor, Henry I sought to combine Norman and Anglo-Saxon legal traditions, which he outlines in his thirteenth point: "I restore to you the law of King Edward along with those changes to the law that my father amended in the advice of his barons."[3]

While the monarch did intend to stress the equality between the two "ethnic groups," this approach was also a criticism of the "Norman yoke" over the Anglo-Saxons. In other words, Henry I wanted the restitution of the local tradition; he aimed to change the oppression that the kingdom, especially the Anglo-Saxon nobility, suffered during the reigns of his father and brother. Still, in no way was the new king questioning the legitimacy of the Norman dominion, the conquest or even its nobility. Under his vision, it appears to be not an ethnic hierarchy for the simple reason that they shared the same territory.

These structural changes presented a new avenue through which to define England as a territory and as a concept. With his charter, Henry I set up the foundation of a "State," or a central power that administrates or rules a specific territory. Thus, his charter came to represent Law as superior authority, even higher than the king.

> Grace as well as Justice and Law remained eternity-values not easily to be discarded, and they were co-operative at building up the continuity of the new monarchies [. . .] the value of immortality or continuity upon which the new polity-centered rulership would thrive, was vested in the *universitas* "which never dies," in the perpetuity of an immortal people, polity, or *patria*, from which the individual king might easily be separated, but not the Dynasty, the Crown, and the Royal Dignity.[4]

In other words, the *Charter of Liberties*, as the representation of Law as an abstract and transcendental institution, was the first step in the development of the concept of Crown as the ideological basis of the monarchic state. It is not a coincidence then that this notion appeared in England with relative anticipation in relation with the rest of Europe (except maybe for Sicily)[5] and under Henry I's reign.[6] With this process of ideological and administrative restructuring of the State as a "*corpus morale, politicum, mysticum,*" the concept of "kingdom" was assimilated to the concept of "*patria*."[7] The latter was used during the Early Middle Ages to designate a region where people of the same ethnic origin and language lived.[8] During the twelfth century, the concept of *patria* changed its meaning to signify a specific territory that was administrated by a state juris- diction, represented by the King, and whose habitants possessed a common history. This last idea is crucial; by the time of the first appearance of the con- cept of the Crown, the history of England written by William of Malmesbury was circulating, and Henry of Huntingdon was writing another. To be sure, the new territorial conception of *patria* held a feeling of almost religious devotion, something familiar to the Normans.[9] Henry I's ideological-administrative change created this "feeling" in England without ethnic or linguistic distinction,[10] and the defense of the *patria* as something abstract and transcendent was added to the personal and collective ambitions of the elite and royalty.

First Histories of England

Many historians have written about the early interest the Normans showed regarding England's past. Several have suggested that the appropriation of English history was a method of control over the Anglo-Saxon elite.[11] Although this notion is an attractive way to explain the political and cultural interaction between the Normans and the Anglo-Saxons, the situation was a lot more com- plex; the period in which the first histories were written, coincides—as mentioned above—with King Henry I's reign, which was a moment of political, ideological and social transformation.

The English historical *corpus* that was built during this time depended on several clergymen's—of both Norman and Anglo-Saxon heritage—pens, such as those of William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon.[12] Although they did not start from scratch (there were historians and writers like Bede before them), William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon were among the first writers to structure coherent histories after the political crisis of the conquest; in other words, they were the first to combine the Normans' and the Anglo-Saxons' histories in a single account.

To understand and analyze these works, it is necessary to keep in mind their conceptualizations of history itself. As Gabrielle M. Spiegel explained, for medi- eval writers, the causal process was part of the divine plan; this aspect was the keystone of their historical vision. They explained events in the context of pun- ishment for sinners and praise for the righteous.

> The exemplarist and stereotypical use of historical events and persons meant the abandonment of a concern for causal process. It elevated these data into the realm of universal moral precepts, denying what a modern historian would consider their historicity, their relationship to a historical context. The result was an enormously weak sense of anachronism, an inability to distinguish the particularity of historical phenomena and separate them from universally valid moral principles.[13]

Indeed, Henry of Huntingdon's words illustrate how History was seen as a never-ending battle between good and evil:

> Yes, indeed, in the affairs of all peoples and nations that are certainly the judgments of God, clemency, generosity, honesty, caution, and in those that are similar, and opposites, not only the spiritual values arise for good and hold back from bad, but also the secular values lead goodness and protect from bad. History, therefore, represents the past in a vision similar to the present; judges the future by imaging the past. Indeed and besides this, the acquaintance of what is done has illustrious virtues, especially in what distinguishes those who are rational from brutes; and because brutes whether be men or beast, do not know, ignore their origin, cannot understand the birth and fall of their country [*patriæ*], neither they want to know.[14]

Exploring these texts with the authors' historical approach in mind provides insight into how they understood "England" and the "English," and how they identified themselves as Anglo-Saxons, Normans, or English. To be sure, the titles themselves illustrate how these works served as markers of changing social and political identities; while William of Malmesbury named his work *Gesta regum Anglorum* (*Deeds of the Kings of the English*), Henry of Huntingdon chose the title *Historia Anglorum* (*History of the English*). If we compare these titles with the one of Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*Ecclesiastic History of the English People*), we can see that the word "*gentis*" disappeared in the former two. This concept had an ethnic meaning; eliminating the word paved the way for the creation of new notions of identity. Instead of denoting only people of Anglo-Saxon ethnicity, William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon chose titles that designated history to all those who lived in England, in other words, both Anglo-Normans and Anglo-Saxons.

Such displacement of ethnic identity and its replacement by a territorial or patriotic (*patria*) one is apparent throughout the texts. For instance, William of Malmesbury wrote: "Where for me, thereupon because of the dearness for the country [*patriæ*]."[15] Obviously, the writer feels love for his country (*patria*) England, a territory ruled by a king—in other words, a kingdom (*regnum*). These two categories allow for the inclusion of Anglo-Normans and Anglo-Saxons, a constant in the *Gesta*. William of Malmesbury even used his mixed blood to

support his book: "So, because I drag the blood of both people [English and Norman], I am going to keep such disposition on my speech: when I could know, I shall openly proclaim the good deeds without concealment."[16]

It is clear that William's loyalty was to England[17]; nevertheless, he displayed Norman values, and his general outlook of the Conquest was positive since, in his opinion, it helped the renewal of the Christian customs and the establishment of the order based on the law.[18] Nevertheless, this does not mean that he condemned the Anglo-Saxons; actually, he was the only writer of the time who did not criticize Godwin and his sons, and who did not consider the Norman Conquest as a punishment for the sins of the Anglo-Saxons (something that even the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* did).[19] In contrast, Henry of Huntingdon interpreted the conquest of 1066 as God's punishment for the English due to their savagery.[20] Yet, his overview of the Norman dominion contrasts with that of the conquest: "The more they [the Normans] spoke about right, the worst injustice was done. Those who were called righteous were the source of all injustice."[21]

Henry's case is even more complex than William's because he criticized both Normans and Anglo-Saxons. Even though his blood was mixed, his mother tongue was English and his work concentrated on events in England except for his account of the Crusades. Henry obviously considered himself an Englishman as his dedication to Bishop Alexander illustrates: "Considering this, I undertook the deeds of this kingdom and of the origins of our people in your command, Bishop Alexander, you who are regarded as the best and the highest of the kingdom and of the people."[22] Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, was of Norman descent and, even so, Henry of Huntingdon put him in the same category as him, i.e., as an Englishman. Thus, as Nick Webber suggested: "It would appear, then, that Henry's definition of 'English' included not only those whose descent was of pure or even partial English origin, but instead included all those people who had made England their home at the time he was writing, whether they were 'true English' or, to use a modern definition, Anglo-Norman."[23]

Still, it is necessary to outline how Henry conceived England as a territory. Sometimes it seems to be the whole island, such as when he stated: "Thus this the most noble of islands, that was formerly called Albion, later Britain, but now England."[24] Nevertheless, in other parts of the text, England only referred to the place formerly occupied by the Roman province; so, neither the Scottish nor the Welsh would be English because they lived in places partially external to it. On the contrary, the Anglo-Normans did live in this place and could be considered as English.[25]

Thus, it is clear that both authors replaced ethnic identity with a territorial or patriotic (*patria*) identity in their texts. Nevertheless, the appearance of this new form of identification did not involve the disappearance of the ethnic identity as the continuing use of the French language as a way to establish political and ethnic difference illustrate. Still, Anglo-Normans—who continued to be part of the high nobility—and Anglo-Saxons were both Englishmen. As Webber

stated, "One's *gens* was, for the first time, defined in a way that approximated the modern interpretation: you could reasonably be said to be 'English' if you could reasonably be said to be 'of England.'"[26]

Since these two histories were written under Henry I's project, they played a substantial role as an ideological structure, not only during his reign, but also during the last centuries of the Middle Ages. Both William and Henry were part of a unified elite working for the king. The former dedicated his work to Robert, Count of Gloucester, Henry I's oldest son (although, he was born out of wedlock), who is now considered to be the patron of his time. He was a well-educated man who compelled the development of literacy on the island, through the works of William of Malmesbury and through Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, among others.[27] On the other hand, Henry's dedication of his book to Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, makes sense because Henry was Archdeacon of Huntingdon, part of Lincoln's dioceses. Alexander was one of the most important clergymen of his time. He participated in the dioceses of Canterbury and helped Archbishop William of Corbeil in his dispute with York's Archbishop Thurstan. Before he was named Bishop, Alexander was Archdeacon of his uncle, Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, and Canceller of Henry I. In this period of his life, he supposedly wrote *Expositiones Vocabulorum*, a glossary in which he translated some legal terms from Old English to Anglo-Norman. It seems that it was because of Roger that Henry I named Alexander to be Bishop of Lincoln in 1123 and, afterward, he maintained a close relationship with the king. He was the other great patron of his time. Not only was *Historia Anglorum* written in his name, Geoffrey of Monmouth dedicated his *Prophetiae Merlini* to him. In this way, it is apparent that this elite group was working on the same project of ideological and administrative restructuring of the kingdom.

The State was in the processes of consolidation as an institution bigger than the physical and mortal figure of the king. At the same time, a historical *corpus*, written by those who belonged to the *regnum* and *patria Anglorum*, was built, showing the displacement of the importance of an ethnic identity towards a territorial one. At least among the elite, then, a conceptual awareness of that which we now call a Nation was developing. However, the legal concept of the inalienability of the territory was still not formulated. Even though territory was the nucleus of social identity with the elite and it was strongly tied to the State in the process of centralization, the attitude toward it had not changed. Its value came from its economical and strategic relevance. Even though some patriotic texts were beginning to be written, like those of William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, the attachment to the land went no further than a practical interest and a slight affection. The "English Anarchy," for instance, demonstrated that land was alienable, that is to say, it could be passed on, yielded and sold. This period also showed that all this transformation took place more in the discursive and representational spheres, rather than in practice. It is for this reason that George Garnett stated that of "Post-Conquest England it could truthfully be said

that there was no such thing as society, only individuals and their families."[28] Likewise, Thomas Bisson stated that if "Henry [I] had been a governor in his day, we would surely have the evidence of it in ours. What mattered to him, what he perfected once free of the encumbrances of his late father and brother, was an exercise of personal power that must have been the envy of lord-princes everywhere."[29]

The Arthurian Legend and the inalienability of the territory

The establishment of the inalienability in England has been dated around the year 1200,[30] but this legal formulation had its cultural representation and discursive antecedents: the Arthurian Legend in the *Historia regum Britanniae*. As refugees in the mountains and forests in the West of the British Island, the Bretons from Wales shaped one of the most important legends in history. Arthur's name became commonplace, from generation to generation, in stories that glorified the hero who delayed the German invasion for almost half a century. His figure merged with a rich mythological tradition concentrated in Wales because, when the centuries of German invasion ended, the Welsh islands, mountains and forests were the Celtic cultural center. Arthur, his court and his history absorbed the several Gaulish, Gaelic, Brythonic and Pictish legendary cycles,[31] giving shape to the greatest Celtic myth.[32]

It was a long way that Arthur traversed, from his struggle against the Anglos and Saxons during the first decades of the sixth century in the Roman Province of Britain, to his consolidation as the representation of the "King of the World." The key text to understanding the first stage in the evolution of Arthurian Legend is the *Historia Brittonum*, allegedly written by Nennius around the ninth century, where we can find the first historical record of Arthur:

> Then the warrior Arthur with the soldiers and kings of Britain fought against them [the Saxons] and even though many were nobler than him, yet he was twelfth times the war commander and victorious of the battles. [. . .] The twelfth battle against the Saxons was the more severe, Arthur perpetrated the battle of Mount Badon where nine hundred and forty men fell by a single strike, no one of the Britons kept close to him for help, instead himself alone with the Lord strengthening him; but in all the battles above mentioned they witness that he was always victorious, and also were many other Britons warriors. But no force or judgment can be against the will of God.[33]

Arthur is represented as a *dux belli*—not a king, but the leader of all the island's princes. This is the same attribute given to Indo-European heroes like Krishna, Hercules, Achilles and, to use an example from the same mythological *corpus*, CuChulainn, the Irish warrior. It is important to underline this idea because it will be the basis of his nature in the most elaborated stages of his legend, even though he already had the title of king.

The first literary accounts of Arthur's reign were created around the conquest period (Danish and Norman): *Prieddeu Annwn* and *Culhwch ac Olwen.* The former was a poem written in Old Welsh, compiled into the *Llyfr Taliesin* (Book of Taliesin). The exact date when the poem was written is still unknown, but it is believed it was between the tenth and twelfth centuries.[34] This poem relates the story of an expedition led by Arthur through the sea to the "Other World." He and his men go to the island of Annwn—literally the "Other World"—to give sacred power to their swords, in other words, to have the power of the gods in their hands. There is a bond between the hero and his sword, something not unusual in Indo-European mythologies. In Celtic culture, specifically in Gaelic, there are two perfect examples: CuChulainn with his sword *Calad Colg*, and his father, the most popular Gaelic god, Lugh, with his sword *Fragarach*. According to the *Táin bó Cuálinge*, which tells the adventures of CuChulainn, Lugh gives his sword to his son, meaning that the two swords are the same.[35]

It is important to underline this point because it suggests a possible relationship between these two characters and Arthur. There is a debate about the translation and origin of two words present in *Prieddeu Annwn*: *lluch lleawc* and *leminawc*. "*Cledyf lluch lleawc*" can be translated as "a sword of lightning slaughter," or as "the sword of Lluch Lleawch," a name that could be changed into Llenleawc, who appears in *Culhwch ac Olwen* in the taking of the cauldron (I will return to this later). Loomis has suggested a possible origin for this name, although his hypothesis has been criticized: Lluch Lleawc is a variant of Llwch Llawwynnyawf, mentioned in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, the Welsh version of Lugh.[36] To illustrate the veracity of this theory, it is necessary to analyze the first Arthurian tale: *Chulwch ac Olwen*. Part of the *Mabinogion*,[37] it was written during the last decades of the eleventh century, but it was compiled in the thirteenth century in two documents, *Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch* (*Withe Book of Rydderch*) and *Llyfr Coch Hergest* (*Red Book of Hergest*).[38]

"*Pen teyrnedd yr ynys hon*" is the way in which Culhwch refers to Arthur during their first encounter. It literally means "chief of the princes of this island." This is one of the key elements of the Arthurian Legend as we can see in *Historia Brittonum*: "and even though many were more nobles than him, yet he was twelfth times the war commander."[39] Although his nature did not change, *Culhwch ac Olwen* described him as "King of the World," or more precisely, as leader of the World.[40] Also, we can see a third key element of the legend: the promise of his return from the "Other World." This attribute is what caused more intrigue to the foreigners that traveled to Wales and was reason for them to mock the Welsh delusion.[41]

Returning to the analysis of the sword, in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, we can find that all of Arthur's armament is named. Caledfwlch, the first name of his sword, is named Caliburn in *Historia regum Britanniae* and Excalibur in the French romances. There are two mentions of the sword in the tale. The first occurs during a description of a list of Arthur's weapons, and the second is the following

passage: "When he had spoken them nay, Bedwyr arose and laid hold of the cauldron and put it on the back of Hygwydd, Arthur's servant; he was brother by the same mother to Cacamwri, Arthur's servant. His office was always to carry Arthur's cauldron and to kindle fire under it. Llenlleawg the Irishman seized Caledfwlch and swung it in a round and he slew Diwrnach the Irishman and all his host."[42] In this passage, the story of *Prieddeu Annwn* is recovered but modified. It is made more mundane; the context is no longer the island of the "Other World," but in Ireland. Nevertheless, there are three elements that repeat: the cauldron, the sword, and the one who brandishes it, Llenlleawg. In *Culhwch ac Olwen* it says that the sword that Llenlleawg uses is Arthur's sword, suggesting that the sword mentioned in *Prieddeu Annwn* is Caledfwlch. We know from the same tale that Llenlleawg is the son of Llwch Windy-hand (Llawwynnyawg) "from beyond the Tyrrhene Sea."[43] This figure, then, is the Welsh Lugh who—if Loomis is right—is the owner of the sword in *Prieddeu Annwn*. Thus, it is clear that Caledfwlch, the "sword of lightning slaughter" immersed in the magic cauldron, belongs to Arthur, although its original owner was the god Lugh or Llwch. Hence, Arthur obtained the divine power (specifically, Lugh's power) through his sword to protect the island ruled by several princes, whom Arthur led. This protection is targeted, literary and historically, against specific enemies: the Anglos and the Saxons.

Thus, through the three key elements—topics of epic literature—of the Arthurian Legend, the Leader of Princes, the King of the World, and the Return from the Other World, the structural contradiction and its resolution is represented: the establishment of a power strong enough to form an empire (King of the World) and reunite all the political cores of the British Islands without them to lose their independence (Leader of Princes). Arthur is not a common emperor; rather, he is a leader capable of unifying all the princes of the islands to secure their safety and increase their power. He is a *pen teyrnedd yr ynys hon*, who governs through the consensus of his men and whose position is given by a special (sacred) bond with the Britannic space (Return from the Other World and Sword). In other words, the figure of Arthur functions as the historic-myth of sovereignty over the island, and his legend works as the vehicle for symbolic appropriation of the insular space. The island, then, was a sacred place in and of itself for the Welsh-Bretons.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia regum Britanniae

The formulation of inalienability is nothing more than the derivation in legal terms of the appropriation of the space through the Arthurian Legend; and the keystone for this extrapolation was Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*. Indeed, as Kantorowicz stated:

> That the principle of non-alienation was clearly formulated in England, and was claimed as a fundamental law of government, belonged to the

time around 1200. Shortly after the turn of the century, an anonymous
Londoner composed a legal treatise, known as the *Leges Anglorum*, [. . .]
The work [. . .] reflects above all the glamorous ideals of the Arthurian
legend connection with which Geoffrey of Monmouth so often conjured
the idea of the "monarchy of the whole Island" which was obtained by
right hereditary and was held together with all its appurtenances beyond
the seas by the diadem of Constantine. He [the anonymous author]
claimed that [. . .] the Crown had vast and inalienable rights: "The uni-
versal and total land and the isles pertain to the Crown," [. . .] Here the
Crown begins to coincide with the ideas of kingdom and nation, presaging
also those of emperor-like sovereignty and imperial aims, with the *rex-
imperator* theory.[44]

Kantorowicz supported his analysis on juridical text and focused on social
and symbolic representational changes, as well as political practices. Still, this
global vision overlooked the complexity of local variations, especially those
that were not strictly law-related. While he observed the juridical aftermath of
the Arthurian Legend, he did not analyze it. Even when he conceived it as the
basis for the formulation of the inalienability of the English territory, he did not
explain how this was presented in Geoffrey's text, besides a vague mention of
two elements: the idea of a monarchy of the whole island and the hereditary right
to the monarchy.

The Norman Conquest did not just produce an identity transformation in
England; it also— with the entrance of the Armorican-Bretons to the island and
their establishment on the Welsh eastern border and Cornwall—created a cultural
and political bridge between them and the Welsh-Bretons, ultimately reinforcing
their Breton identity. So, through the Armorican-Bretons, the Welsh folklore
entered the English territory. Geoffrey of Monmouth, a descendent of Armorican-
Breton family, who was born in Monmouth, Wales, lived in Oxford and studied
the Welsh legends to introduce them in England (although his Armorican heritage
is not certain, it is most probable) exemplifies this connection.[45]

The Bretons had to be considered when the histories of England were written
because they were supposedly the first inhabitants of the island. For this reason,
the Bretons maintained an implicit legitimacy; still this was undervalued because
of the moral condemnations against them that presented them as barbarian people
that did not follow the Catholic moral and customs (despite the fact that they
were Christians). The relationship between the Normans and the Bretons (both
the Welsh and the Armoricans) was complicated, since the latter were constantly
subdued but never quite ruled due to the political complexity of Wales. By that
time, there were three kingdoms that were in constant conflict: Gwynedd, Powys
and Deheubarth. During King Henry I's reign, the Welsh began to make alli-
ances with the Anglo-Norman elite and most of all, with the Armoricans. An
ethnic-cultural fusion took place between these three groups on the western side

of the island, especially in Gloucester under the administration of Henry I's son, Robert, Geoffrey of Monmouth's patron.

This was the context of Geoffrey of Monmouth's work that presented an alternative perspective in the problem of identity. If an inclusive English identity began its consolidation with William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, the *Historia regum Britanniae* established the foundation for the construction of a British identity that would unite all who lived in the British Islands. The pretext for maintaining this insular unity helped the next English kings (especially Henry II and Edward I) to legitimate their expansionist ambitions toward Scotland, Wales and Ireland.[46]

In his book *Arthurian Literature and Society*, Stephen Knight explains that the stories narrated in *Historia regum Britanniae* are euphemisms for the events that happened during the Norman dominion—some other authors have adopted this theory, like Martin Aurell in his book *La légende du roi Arthur*. In this way, Knight shows that the *Historia* is an ideological work, in which Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote his opinions about the political events of his time. This characteristic opened the way for those subjacent ideological elements of the legend to be adapted into the political culture of Anglo-Normand England. Thus, while for the Welsh the island was a sacred being with which they understood themselves as having a symbiotic relationship, Geoffrey recovered this entailment but introduced it into the Christian-English world. Indeed, he so valued the land that he opened his book with a description of the island.[47] In this way, in the case of Great Britain, this love for his *patria* became a secularization of religious principle. Hence, the amalgamation of *patria* and *regnum* during Henry I's period is evident in Monmouth's book, and it is underlined during King Arthur's reign.

The Arthurian account in the *Historia* can be divided into four parts: the fall of the Saxons, the conquest of Europe, the war against Rome, and the last battle against Modred and the Saxons. In Geoffrey's words, "Right was on his side [Arthur's] as he should have been ruler of the entire island by lawful inheritance."[48] This gave Arthur the motivation and support to lead all his vassals against the Saxon invaders and, after twelve battles (the same number as in the *Historia Brittonum*) that finished with the one of Mount Badon, he was able to expel them. In this first section, then, the topic "Leader of Princes" is expressed. In the second part, Arthur pursues becoming the "King of the World" by establishing an Empire that could include all Western Europe. The third part, which appears to be Geoffrey's invention, is the journey of the hero. The context is new for the Arthurian Legend; nevertheless, it is a substitution for the story of the war against Ireland penned into *Culhwch ac Olwen*, and against Annwn (the island of the Other World) in *Priddeu Annwn*. In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, Arthur seeks to obtain the power over the entire world through the defeat of the Roman Empire. The change of context is logical: Geoffrey of Monmouth cannot say that the most important war of the greatest Breton king was against Ireland because at the time in which he wrote the text Irish leaders were not perceived as impressive

forces; thus, he chose the most powerful political and military force in history as the enemy instead.[49]

The fourth part relates how Arthur, after defeating the Romans in two battles, has to return to Britain because Modred, his nephew who administrated his kingdom, betrays him and allies with the Saxons. Arthur and his army confront them in the final battle of Kamblan, where he comes out victorious, although mortally wounded: "The illustrious king Arthur too was mortally wounded; he was taken away to the island of Avallon to have his wounds tended."[50] Here he starts the actual journey to the Other World, a symbolic death. The structure of the rites of passage is repeated in the account of the hero on two scales: the general adventure, or the symbolic death, in which the hero does not die, but instead goes to the Other Word and humanity is redeemed; and an episode inside the general adventure, where the hero literally dies and is reborn, obtaining a suprahuman power.[51]

Arthur gets his power not from his literal death, but from his sword, Caliburn. Geoffrey tells us that Arthur "also buckled on Caliburnus, an excellent blade forged on the isle of Avallon"[52] Thanks to *Priddeu Annwn* and *Culhwch ac Olwen* we know that Arthur's sword obtained its power through the cauldron of Annwn, the "Other World." Avallon, known as the "Island of Apples,"[53] was a derivation of Annwn, but it was more easily linked to the Garden of Eden. When Arthur died and was taken to this island, he suffered a literal, as well as a symbolic, death. For this reason, through his prophesied return he would become a suprahuman hero who has the power in himself to redeem his people, the Bretons. In other words, the story of Arthur stops just when he begins his rite of passage, the ritual death, but the promise of his return fills the rest of the story.

Arthur's sovereignty over the British Islands was not only due to inheritance, but also to this eternal link with the divinity, through his sword and his journey to Avallon. Arthur, as the representation of the "Leader of Princes," unites the political powers of the British Islands with the specific mission of protecting them and making them an empire; thus, becoming the "King of the World." If Geoffrey of Monmouth could insert the mythological Welsh world into England, it was because of this translation and adaptation to the Anglo-Norman Christian culture. There are 85 copies of the *Prophetiae Merlini* and more than 200 of the *Historia regum Britanniae,* of which almost twenty were from the twelfth century.[54] Wace translated it to French around 1140, confirming the Anglo-Norman elite's early interest in the book. Possible explanations for this phenomenon include the political position of Geoffrey and that the text started to circulate during the so-called Renaissance of the twelfth century, a series of cultural changes that expanded throughout Europe.[55]

The English elite suffered chaos and hostility when the reign of Henry I ended, a period that became known as the "English Anarchy." For this reason, these elite idealized patriotic discourse and the notion of a powerful monarchy as an escape from their reality and as an optimal condition for better times.[56]

Conclusion

The legal formulation of inalienability of the British and English territories was an extrapolation of the religious Breton conception of insular space. The Bretons thought the island as a sacred being and, because of this, only those whose right was granted by a sacred power could alienate it. Arthur was the only one who had this right to rule and protect the island, a bond that was sealed in his sword Caliburn. The Arthurian Myth became the basis of sovereignty over the island when Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote *Historia regum Britanniae*, which transformed existing mythological structures to fit into the Catholic world of Medieval England. Thus, the sacred bond between Arthur and the island was adopted by the English royalty and nobility and translated to form a juridical bond between the Crown and the British Island. In turn, the Arthurian legend became an ideological basis for the legal formulation of the inalienability of the British territory at the turn of the thirteenth century.

NOTES

[1] "*Anglia quæ cunis, quæ sceptro numinis hujus Ardua splenduerat, jam tenebrosa ruit; Hæc cum rege suo, Normannia cum duce marcet; Nutriit hæc puerum, perdidit illa virum.*" Henry, Archideacon of Huntingdon, *History of the English*, edited by Thomas Arnold (London: Longman & Co., 1879), 255, accessed July 24, 2014. https://archive.org/stream/henriciarchidia00unkngoog#page/n11/mode/2up. I translated all the quotes from Latin except for those from *The History of the Kings of Britain*, a bilingual edition. In this case I wrote the English version inside the text and the Latin version in the notes.

[2] "*Henricus rex Anglorum {N.} episcopo et {M.} uic(ecomit*i)† et omnibus baronibus et fidelibus suis tam francigenis quam anglicis † † de *{tali} scira salutem.*" Richard Sharp ed. and trans., *Henry I's coronation charter (Hn cor)*, (Early English Laws, 2014), accessed July 24, 2014. http://www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk/laws/texts/hn-cor/view/#edition,1/translation.

[3] "*Lagam regis Eadwardi uobis reddo cum illis emendationibus quibus pater meus eam emendauit consilio baronum suorum.*" Sharp, *Henry I's coronation charter*.

[4] Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 272.

[5] Some historians, like Harold J. Berman, consider the Kingdom of Sicily the "first modern territorial state in the West with the first modern Western system of royal law." Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 414.

[6] See Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 342.

[7] There is no word in the English Language for this concept; the closest translation would be "Father Land" or "Country."

[8] See e.g.: "*Porro cognatione fratres vocantur, qui sunt de una familia, id est patria; quas Latini paternitates interpretantur, cum ex una radice multa generis turba diffunditur.*" San Isidoro de Sevilla, *Etimologías: Edición Bilingüe*, translated and edited by José Oroz Reta and Manuel A. Marcos Casquero (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2004), 778. And "*Patria autem vocata quod communis sit omnium, qui in ea nati sunt.*" Isidoro, *Etimologías*, 1022.

[9] See Emily Albu, *The Normans in their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001) and Nick Webber, *The Evolution of Norman Identity* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005).

[10] In continuity with this project of union between the two elites, Henry I married Matilda, daughter of the Scottish King Malcolm III and Margarita, who, with his brother, Edgar Athelstan, were the

last survivors of the Anglo-Saxon royalty of Wessex. This marriage was important not only because the union between Norman and Anglo-Saxon royalties became a concrete reality, but because it reflected Henry I's objective: to further strengthen his political and ideological position inside the island through alliances with Scottish royalty, rather than him having to look for alliances among the most powerful monarchies in the continent.

[11] George Garnett, "Conquered England, 1066–1215," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England*, edited by Nigel Saul (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 61.

[12] There was a third author with the same relevance and, although his family's origin is unknown, it is thought he was related to the Armorican and Welsh-Bretons: Geoffrey of Monmouth. However, the subject of his book is the History of Britain not the History of England, which causes him to differ from the other two authors. See Karen Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (Lampeter: University of Wales Press, 2010).

[13] Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 90.

[14] "*Sic etiam in rebus gestis omnium gentium et nationum quæ utique Dei judicia sunt, benignitas, munificentia, probitas, cautela, et his similia, et contraria, non solum spirituales ad bonum accendunt et a malo repellunt, sed at sæculares ad bona sollicitant et in malis muniunt. Historia igitur præterita quasi præsentia visui repræsentat; futura ex præteritis imaginando dijudicat. Habet quidem et præter hæc illustres transactorum notitia dotes, quod ipsa maxime distinguat a brutis rationabiles; bruti namque homines et animalia unde sint nesciunt, genus suum nesciunt, patriæ suæ casus et gesta nesciunt, immo nec scire volunt.*" Henry, *History of the English*, 2.

[15] "*unde mihi, tum propter patriæ caritatem.*" Willelmi Malmesbiriensis Monachi, *Gesta regum Anglorum atque Historia Novella*, edited by Thomas Duffus Hardy, Vol. 1 (London: Sumptibus Societatis, 1840), 2, accessed July 24, 2014, https://archive.org/stream/willelmimalmesb00unkngoog#page/n0/mode/2up.

[16] 16   "*Ego autem, quia utriusque gentis sanguinem traho, dicendi tale temperamentum servabo: bene gesta, quantum cognoscere potui, sine fuco palam efferam.*" Willelmi, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, Vol. 2, 389, accessed July 24, 2014, https://archive.org/stream/willelmimalmesb00hardgoog#page/n0/mode/2up.

[17] Willelmi, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, Vol. 1, 358.

[18] Willelmi, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, Vol. 2, 414–415.

[19] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1912), translated by James Ingram, accessed November 13, 2012, http://omacl.org/Anglo/.

[20] Henry, *History of the English*, 208.

[21] "*Quanto magis loquebantur de recto, tanto major fiebat injuria. Qui justitiarii vocabantur, caput erant omnis injustitiæ.*" Henry, *History of the English*, 208–209.

[22] "*Hæc ergo considerans, hujus regni gesta et nostræ gentis origines jussu tuo, præsul Alexander, qui flos et cacumen regni et gentis esse videris, decurrenda suscepi.*" Henry, *History of the English*, 3.

[23] Webber, *The Evolution of Norman Identity*, 155.

[24] "*Hæc autem insularum nobilissima, cui quondam nomen Albion fuit, postea vero Brittannia, nunc autem Anglia.*" Henry, *History of the English*, 6.

[25] Webber, *The Evolution of Norman Identity*, 156–157.

[26] Ibid., 162.

[27] See Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, Stephen Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1983) and Martin Aurell, *La Légende du Roi Arthur (550-1250)* (Paris: Perrin, 2007).

[28] Garnett, "Conquered England," 80.

[29] Thomas N, Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 180.

[30] See Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 345–346.

[31] Rachel Bromwich ed., *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1961), lxxxy.

32 The myth is understood here based on the structuralist conceptualization of Lévi-Strauss, that is to say, a linguistic-symbolic structure, potentially narrative, that addresses a contradiction and its solution. Although, it is not the structure of the myth that is going to be analyzed, but its ideological representations. For this reason, the object of study is the "Arthurian legend," the narrative variant of the "Arthurian myth." See Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *The Journal of American Folklore* 68: 270, in Myth: A Symposium (Oct—Dec, 1955), 430–443; Eric Csapo, *Theories of Mythology* (Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 1–9; and Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Raisons du mythe," in *Mythe et societeen Grece ancienne* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1974), 195–250.

33 "*Tunc belliger arthur cum militibus bryttaniae atque regibus contra illos pugnabat et licet multi ipso nobiliores essent ipse tamen duodecies dux belli fuit victorque bellorum. [. . .] Duodecimum contra saxones durissime arthur bellum in monte badonis perpetravit. in quo corruerunt impetu illius una dcccc.xl. uiri. nullo sibi brittonum in adiutorium adherente. preter ipsum solum. domino se confortante; in omnibus autem supra dictis bellis protestantur semper eum fuisse victorem. sicut fuerunt et alii per plures militarii brittones; Sed nulla fortitudo vel consilium contra dei voluntatem.*" Nennius, *The Historia Brittonum*, edited by W. Gunn, B. D. (London: John and Arthur Arch, 1819), 78–80.

34 See Sarah Higley ed. and trans., *Preiddeu Annwn: The Spoils of Annwn*, (The Camelot Project: 2007), accessed July 24, 2014, http://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/text/preiddeu-annwn.

35 See Pádraig Bambury *et al*. electronic ed., *Táin Bo Cúlange Recension Recesion1*, translated by Cecile O'Rahilly, (Ireland: University College Cork. 2001), 166, accessed July 24, 2014, http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T301012/index.html.

36 See Higley, *Preiddey Annwn*.

37 The *Mabinogion* is the name of a collection of eleven Welsh stories from the Early and High Middle Ages.

38 See Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones ed. and trans., *The Mabinogion*, 2º ed. (Dent and London: Everyman's Library, 1974), xi–liv.

39 Nennius, *The Historia Brittonum*, 80.

40 Jones, *The Mabinogion*, 98–99.

41 See Richard Barber ed., *Arthurian Literature IV* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1985), 58.

42 Jones, *The Mabinogion*, 130.

43 Ibid., 104.

44 Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 345–346.

45 Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*.

46 See Roger Sherman Loomis, "Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast," *Speculum* 28 (1953), 114–127.

47 See Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, edited by Michael D. Reeve, translated by Neil Wright (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 12–13.

48 Ibid., 192 (for English translation). "*Commonebat etiam id rectitudo, cum tocius insulae monarchiam debuerat hereditario iure optinere.*" Ibid., 193 (for text in Latin)

49 Ibid., 220–221.

50 Ibid., 252. "*Sed et inclitus ille rex Arthurus letaliter uulneratus est; qui illinc ad sananda uulnera sua in insulam Auallonis euectus.*" Ibid., 253.

51 See Georges Dumézil, *Del mito a la novela: la Saga de Hadingus*, translated by Gerardo Deniz (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1973), 56.

52 Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, 198. "*Accinctus etiam Caliburno gladio optimo et in insula Auallonis fabricato.*" Ibid., 199.

53 Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The Vita Merlini*, translated by John Jay (Illinois: University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, 1925), accessed July 24, 2014, http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/vm/vmlat.htm.

54 Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 79.

55 Stephen Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society*, 43.

56 Henry, *History of the English*, 255–292; Willelmi, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, Vol. 2, 689–769.