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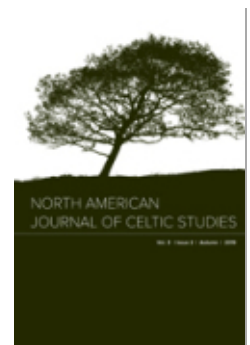
Gerald of Wales. New perspectives on a medieval writer and critic by Georgia Henley, A. Joseph McMullen (review)

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Gerald of Wales. New perspectives on a medieval writer and critic, ed. Georgia Henley & A. Joseph McMullen. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-78683-164-4. xv + 329 pages. \$110.00 (cloth), \$45.00 (paperback).

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Much ink has already been spilt over the life and works of Gerald of Wales (ca. 1146–ca. 1223), the cleric, royal chaplain, archdeacon of Brecon, and aspiring bishop of St. Davids. Gerald's royal Welsh and aristocratic Norman ancestry and identity; his career; his valuable descriptions of and perspectives on contemporary society, culture, religion, and history; and his writings on Ireland and Wales have been examined extensively to date.

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Based on papers presented at a conference on 'New Perspectives on Gerald of Wales' held at Harvard University in 2015, this collection of essays aims to draw attention to some of his lesser-known works—autobiographical, polemical, and hagiographical texts in which he gives advice for rulers, expands on his life and his fight for the bishopric of St. Davids, discusses clerical reforms, and so on. The editors contend that these constitute a part of Gerald's corpus which is 'almost untouched by scholars' and is 'almost a no man's land in Giraldian scholarship' due to their being less 'narrative-driven . . . and less accessible' (4–5). While this portion of his corpus is perhaps not quite 'almost untouched by scholars' to date (and this volume does not eschew frequent mention of his best-known works), it is certainly true that these lesser-known works merit further examination. Drawing upon these works, the volume additionally seeks to offer a reconsideration of Gerald's status as a writer.

The volume is divided into four parts. The first section focuses on the different ways in which Gerald appropriated the past in both his better- and lesser-known works for a variety of reasons. A superb chapter by Huw Pryce examines Gerald's sometimes selective and adaptive use of the Welsh past, focusing particularly on lists of archbishops and bishops of St. Davids in the *Itinerarium Kambriae* used in the debate over the metropolitan status of St. Davids, highlighting Gerald's 'readiness to make the past serve his interests in the present' (33). Ben Guy's chapter examines Gerald's use of Welsh genealogical learning in the *Itinerarium Kambriae* and the *Descriptio Kambriae*, in particular, and concludes that he used both recent, written texts of a patrilineal genealogy of Rhodri Mawr (†878) and a version of the Latin *De situ Brecheniauc* as a basis for his genealogies. Lastly, Joshua Byron Smith's chapter focuses on the accounts in Gerald's *Vita Ethelberti* and Walter Map's *De nugis curialium* regarding the estate of Lydbury North and its inclusion in the bishopric of Hereford. While both men were canons of Hereford, their appropriation of the past differed, as did their concerns and the milieu in which they were writing.

The second section, titled 'Gerald the writer. Manuscripts and authorship', features welcome essays by Robert Bartlett, Catherine Rooney, Michael Faletra, and Simon Meecham-Jones. Bartlett's chapter focuses on the *History of Llananthony Priory* (the Augustinian house of Llananthony Prima in Monmouthshire) from its origins to the twelfth century. He argues persuasively, based on a number of factors including style, sentiments, and quotations, that 'an educated, if somewhat cantankerous, cleric of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century' wrote it—a description which, in his words, 'fits Gerald perfectly' (93). Rooney's chapter on the early manuscripts of Gerald of Wales examines some 22 manuscripts of Gerald's works which can be dated to his lifetime, and concludes that more than half may be linked either paleographically or by place of production to Gerald. Faletra explores Gerald's revisions and uses his descriptions of beavers as a particular case study, shedding new light on the meaning and context behind his revisions. Lastly, Meecham-Jones in his chapter on the voice of Gerald's writings argues for rhetoric and originality rather than 'waywardness'; Gerald's work as a rhetorician with classical training used Quintilian rather than Cicero as a model.

The third section of the book is concerned with ‘Gerald the thinker. Religion and worldview’. In it, Peter J. A. Jones explores Gerald’s ‘sharp sense of humor’ (147) and its wider contemporary context and power in the church and the court during a time of reform, while Peter Raleigh uses Gerald’s *Vita Sancti Hugonis* and discussion of St. Thomas Becket in it as a case study for the tension and on-going conflict between the royal (temporal) tyranny and ecclesiastical sanctity. Suzanne LaVere examines Gerald’s *Gemma ecclesiastica* and his views on ecclesiastical reform, fleshly, material, and intellectual clerical sins, and the moral standards of the clergy in the years before the reforms of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). Finally, Owain Nash’s chapter focuses on Gerald’s views of natural theory and the cosmology seen in his writings, as well as how this connects with his ethnography, concluding that ‘Gerald’s interpretation of his surroundings was shaped by the assumptions of classical, systematic views of the universe, taken from contemporary medical works’ (215).

The final section of the book examines Gerald’s reception in England, Ireland, and Wales. Georgia Henley examines the Middle Welsh text *Claddedigaeth Arthur* (based on Gerald’s description of the unearthing of the supposed grave of Arthur and Guinevere in 1190 or 1191 at Glastonbury Abbey) and its wider context. Caoimhe Whelan turns to Gerald’s well-known *Expugnatio Hibernica* to explore its reception in Ireland in the fifteenth century, and the nature and meaning of a contemporary Hiberno-Middle English translation of this work. Lastly, Brendan Kane queries whether the Tudors read Gerald (they did, but the Stuarts more so), exploring the use of his writings, their influence on polemical works by sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English and Irish writers, and their wider significance for contemporary politics and culture.

Notable strengths of this rich volume include its varied, interdisciplinary, and critical perspectives. Its focus is not merely on Gerald as a writer or an historian in isolation, but on the many interconnections amongst his writing; his use of history; his milieu; his priorities and ambitions, values, and worldview; the wider context and significance of his work; and its reception. This volume is therefore a very welcome addition to the field, and will hopefully prompt future studies, critical editions, and scholarly dialogues concerned with Gerald, the entirety of his corpus, and his world.