

ELIS GRUFFYDD AND WELSH IDENTITY IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

by

ANN DOBBS RILEY-ADAMS

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THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Ann Dobbs Riley-Adams for the Master of Arts in History was submitted to the graduate college on June 20, 2018 and approved by the undersigned committee.

COMMITTEE APPROVALS:



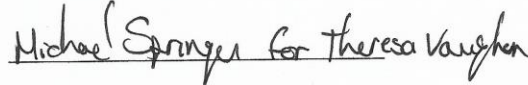
Michael Springer, Professor of History



Mark Janzen, Assistant Professor of History



David Macey, Professor of English



Theresa Vaughan, Professor of Humanities

## THESIS SUMMARY DOCUMENT

1. **Statement of Problem or Issue:** In 1552, Welsh soldier and chronicler Elis Gruffydd (c.1490-c.1552) completed a 2500-folio manuscript, which is little known and rarely studied. Its obscurity belies its importance. This document can tell us much about Welsh opposition to Tudor policies in the British Isles, an often-overlooked subject; his experience as Europe transitioned from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern era; and writing as a form of resistance, a subject receiving little scholarly attention prior to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

2. **Brief Summary of the Literature:** Less than ten percent of Elis's "Chronicle" has been published. The vast majority of scholarly attention on the manuscript has been focused on the medieval aspects; for example, Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, Patrick Ford, and Amy Mulligan have researched the Taliesin, Merlin, and Arthurian sections of the "Chronicle." Jerry Hunter has published several works on the Tudor part of the "Chronicle," most recently in 2000. One challenge scholars face is that the document is written in Middle Welsh, making it difficult to read for most. The scholars named above are all linguists and Celticists and their interest may be a product of the text's language. Their studies of the "Chronicle" have examined Elis's work in terms of the sources that were available to him (Lloyd-Morgan), the archaic linguistic forms and tropes preserved in the text (Ford), the common themes between Celtic and biblical narratives (Mulligan), the chronicle format (Hunter), and Elis's interpretations as court narratives (Hunter). This thesis is the first to place the work in its historical context, analyzing Elis's motivation to write a chronicle, and to discuss what the text tells us about the influences and experiences of a soldier in that space and time.

3. **Thesis Statement:** Despite living and writing in England the whole of his adult life, Elis expressed his Welshness through his style, themes, influence, and most important, his language. This Welshness is a form of resistance, and his “Chronicle” is best understood as resistance, or exile literature, collected, copied and written to preserve Welsh language, tradition, and culture. Through his writing, he validated his personal and community identity, giving hope to future generations.

4. **Statement of Research Methodology:** I analyzed the “Chronicle” manuscript itself, as well as earlier Welsh historical writing, placing it in its historical context, which was notable in the histories of both Wales and Calais. I compared Elis’s “Chronicle” to contemporary English chronicles, as well as to other contemporary writing. I also analyzed all published scholarship on Elis’s “Chronicle,” as well as pertinent monographs and articles on related topics, in order to gather convincing evidence that the “Chronicle” benefits from being read as resistance literature.

5. **Brief Summary of Findings:** After completing my research, I found that Elis’s “Chronicle” continued a past tradition, participated in a current literary form, and might inform the future of resistance writing. He was part of a long history of Welsh writers using language to resist assimilation and annihilation of their culture. He was also part of a contemporary movement to use writing and the printing press to spread information and resist both rulers and the Church. Finally, reading his work as resistance provides insight to more modern, post-colonial research about identity and community.

6. **Confirmation, Modification, or Denial of Thesis:** After studying the “Chronicle,” other contemporary sources, government and secondary literature, I found

that my thesis was confirmed. Elis, influenced by his native tradition and the environment of his adopted home in sixteenth-century Calais, wrote resistance literature in order to maintain his language and culture in the face of threatened oppression and disempowerment.

7. **Statement of the Significance of the Findings:** This research is significant because Elis Gruffydd is a source completely unknown to many scholars, even those focusing on the sixteenth century (as I found at the Sixteenth-Century Society Conference in 2017). He lived and wrote in the British military center and staple port, Calais, which attracted a variety of independent thinkers, publishers, nationalities, and religions. Elis was the first known Welshman to convert to Protestantism and write about his experience. He observed important events like the Field of the Cloth of Gold, the coronation of Anne Boleyn, and hearings at the Star Chamber. Most significant to me, however, is that he used the Welsh language like a secret code, which allowed him to share his true feelings, opinions, and even blatantly pro-Welsh commentary safely and securely. Unlike his contemporary chroniclers, Elis wrote for himself and his people, not for a patron or monarch, and that kind of insight is rare indeed, especially in this period. Finally, few scholars have examined this document, probably due to the difficulty with language. As seen in the Literature Review above, this text, particularly the Tudor portion, is understudied, and my research provides a new reading of a source that has much left to reveal. Looking at it as resistance literature not only provides insight into Elis's motivation, but also contributes to the scholarship on resistance writing and exile literature for scholars in multiple disciplines.

8.       **Suggestions for Future Research:** Elis's "Chronicle" contains a wealth of information on all sorts of topics: linguistic, military, literary, and historical. It could take more than a lifetime to study the entire manuscript, but I am continuing my work with it this fall when I begin my doctoral work in the Department of English at the University of Arkansas. I will be working with Dr. Joshua Smith, who studies, among other topics, Middle Welsh and literary history. I plan to continue working with the text to find instances of resistance and pro-Welsh themes and language for my dissertation.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Amidst the tumult and upheaval of sixteenth-century Europe, Welshman Elis Gruffydd (c.1490-1552), the self-styled “soldier of Calais,” began his “Chronicle of the Six Ages,” a history of the world from Creation to the present, written completely in Welsh.<sup>1</sup> Elis divided his work into two manuscripts: the first from Creation to 1066, and the second from 1066 until the last entry in 1552. The texts total nearly 2500 large folios, and the “Chronicle” remains mostly unpublished aside from several extracts. Why had Elis assumed this task? Certainly not for profit, as there was little chance of a printer commissioning a composition of this size, especially in Welsh. He had no wealthy patron, nor was he a churchman. He was a common soldier serving in the English army in Calais, a poor relation to a prominent family in Llanasa, Wales.

Elis wrote his masterpiece in his native language for the preservation of Welsh history and culture and sent it back to Wales for safekeeping before his death. Because of the changes society and culture experienced during the Reformation, Elis must have thought that his nation was going to disappear, engulfed by England. The Laws in Wales Acts, known as the Acts of Union, which were enacted in 1535 and 1542 to destroy Welsh law and administration, forbade the native language. Elis stood at the confluence of the medieval and early modern worlds, one of the most turbulent periods in European history. He wrote his “Chronicle” in an effort to preserve his native identity for future generations back at home. Despite living and writing in England the whole of his adult life, Elis’ Welshness came through stylistically, topically, culturally, and most important,

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<sup>1</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” NLW manuscripts 5276D and 3054D. National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, f. 2r.

linguistically. This is a form of rebellion, and his “Chronicle” is best understood as resistance or exile literature, collected, copied and written to preserve Welsh language, history, and tradition. Elis utilized his chronicle to maintain his centuries-old narrative and linguistic heritage by compiling the lore he had grown up with, along with writings he found during his travels, to construct a proud and noble history for his people, with the hope of future redemption and a return to power and glory.

Elis Gruffydd was born around 1490 in Upper Gronant, Flintshire, a minor relation of the prosperous and important Mostyn family, descended from Edwin of Tegeingl, an eleventh-century lord of Flintshire. No genealogy for Elis exists, although historian Prys Morgan thinks Elis might be a son of Tomas ap Gruffydd ap Llywelyn Fychan of Pantyllongdu.<sup>2</sup> The Gruffydds of Pantyllongdu were closely linked to both branches of the Mostyn family, Talacre and Mostyn. This pedigree made Elis the nephew and heir of Sion ap Dafydd ap Rhys ap Gruffydd of Gronant, from whom Elis unsuccessfully claimed an inheritance of twenty-four acres of land in Gronant mentioned in the preface of his “Chronicle.” Piers Mytton had possession of these and other family lands by 1533, possibly by mortgage, and Elis petitioned the Chancery to reinstate the lands between 1533 and 1538.<sup>3</sup> He wrote of his struggle to regain this inheritance and begged his wealthier heirs to do so on his behalf upon receipt of his text.<sup>4</sup> These tidbits of information provide some backstory for Elis: he was a poor relation of a notable and wealthy family, who likely had some traditional education and influential contacts to help

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<sup>2</sup> Prys Morgan, “Elis Gruffudd of Gronant-Tudor Chronicler Extraordinary,” *Flintshire Historical Society* 25 (1971-72): 10.

<sup>3</sup> E.A. Lewis (ed.), *An Inventory of Early Chancery Proceedings Concerning Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1937), 123-124, 127.

<sup>4</sup> This text is available in Appendix A, document 1.

him seek more lucrative employment in London. Because of this, Elis enlisted in the Tudor army at the young age of twenty. The experiences he wrote about were war and soldiering, events he observed, sites and famous people, gossip of the court, and petty arguments. He was neither university educated nor a churchman; instead, he learned by observing, reading, traveling, and exchanging news among his fellow soldiers or servants of the court. No evidence exists that his work was read or edited by anyone prior to his sending it back to Wales in 1552, and it remained in private hands until the beginning of the twentieth century. His Mostyn relatives resided in Tegeingl, though the Pengwern estate in Denbighshire was their original home.<sup>5</sup> They were related to the Tudors through Ednyfed ap Tudur ap Goronwy and supported Henry VII in his quest for the English crown. Richard ap Hywel, who had inherited the estate, kept his principal seat at Mostyn and fought for Henry VII at Bosworth (1485). The family was wealthy, influential and maintained an excellent library, particularly its manuscript collection, both Welsh and non-Welsh.

Historian Daniel Huws claimed that five major manuscript collections have been made in north Wales: Hengwrt, Mostyn, Gwysaney, Brogyntyn, and Wynnstay.<sup>6</sup> Hengwrt suffered from neglect, and Wynnstay suffered two fatal fires. Brogyntyn was a small collection, but both it and Hengwrt came largely intact into the National Library of Wales. Mostyn and Gwysaney, however, had their non-Welsh portions auctioned off, but their Welsh portions remained in private hands. The great collector of the Mostyns, Sir Thomas of Gloddaith (1651-1692) constructed a library at Mostyn Hall to house his

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<sup>5</sup> "Mostyn Manuscripts," *Archifau Cymru*, Bangor University.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Huws, "Sir Thomas Mostyn and the Mostyn Manuscripts," *Books and Collectors, 1200-1700: essays presented to Andrew Watson* (1997), 451.

collection. He left a catalog of his manuscripts upon his death in 1692, which included works by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Nennius, Gildas, Giraldus Cambrensis, and Elis Gruffydd. Elis's manuscript appeared as follows:

Gloddaith Libri MSS in Folio (Welsh manuscripts only)

(33) A very large Collection of History (etc.) written in Welsh by one Ellis Griffith, a soldier in Calais.<sup>7</sup>

From the "Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language: I" *The Welsh Manuscripts of Lord Mostyn at Mostyn Hall, co. Flint* (London: Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, 1892).

HMC 158 NLW, MS 3054D Elis Gruffyth's autograph history of England and Wales to 1552. Owned by John Jones of Gellilyfdy (d. c. 1658).<sup>8</sup>

In 1551-1552, Elis wrote that he had sent both halves of his "Chronicle" to Tomas ap Tomas ap Sion ap Gruffydd Fychan at Pantyllongdy in Gwespyr, in Llanasa, in Flintshire, within Tegeingl. Some scholars have suggested that Welsh antiquarian John Jones of Gellilyfdy (1578-1658) claimed access to both parts of the manuscript, although he had a reputation for dishonesty.<sup>9</sup> Jones was a copyist and collector, as well as a notorious debtor. He became good friends with antiquarian Robert Vaughan, who upon Jones's death inherited his collection, which included the important Welsh manuscript the White Book of Rhydderch. In the "Report on Welsh Manuscripts" quoted above, John

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel Huws, "Sir Thomas Mostyn," 467.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Huws, "Sir Thomas Mostyn," 460, 467.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Shaun Evans, email to the author, January 23, 2017.

Jones was listed as a previous owner of Elis's manuscript to 1552, or the second half of the text.

By 1692, the manuscript/s was in the library of the Mostyns, possibly purchased by Sir Thomas Mostyn as part of the construction of his library. Alternatively, since the Gruffydds of Pantyllongdu and the Mostyns were geographically close as well as related by blood and connection, the manuscript perhaps had been transferred to them much earlier. No library catalog or inventory of books associated with Mostyn Hall prior to 1692 survived. By 1715, the first half of the "Chronicle" (to 1066) became part of Sir Thomas Sebright's manuscript collection.

Sebright (1692-1736) was 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet, and a close friend to Welsh scholar and Celtic linguist Edward Lhuyd (1660-1709), who had an extensive manuscript collection, including the important Irish texts the *Book of Leinster* and the *Yellow Book of Lecan*. Prior to his death in 1709, Lhuyd gave these and other manuscripts from his collection to Sebright whose heir, the 6<sup>th</sup> Baronet, donated the Irish texts to Trinity College, Dublin, in 1786. No mention is made of Elis's manuscript, but all of Lhuyd's manuscripts went to Sebright.<sup>10</sup>

According to Dr. Shaun Evans of Bangor University, Welsh antiquarian and naturalist Thomas Pennant (1726-1798) of Flintshire had access to the second half of the manuscript at Mostyn Hall during the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Both portions of the

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<sup>10</sup> Eiluned Rees and Gwyn Walters, "The Dispersion of the Manuscripts of Edward Lhuyd," *Welsh History Review*, no. 1 (January 1, 1974): 152.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Shaun Evans, email to the author, January 23, 2017.

manuscript likely came into the hands of the Mostyn family, possibly through close connection or perhaps by purchase for collection by 1658, but no later than 1692.

By 1709, Edward Lhuyd had obtained the first portion of the “Chronicle,” and Sir Thomas Sebright, 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet purchased it in 1713 to help settle Lhuyd’s debts.<sup>12</sup> This half passed to Sir Thomas Sebright’s heir, Sir John Sebright, upon his death in 1736, who likely kept the manuscript collection intact until the donation of the Irish manuscripts in 1786. In 1797, Sir John Saunders Sebright, 7<sup>th</sup> Baronet (1767-1846) donated many of the Welsh manuscripts to his cousin Thomas Johnes of Hafod who wrote ecstatically of the gift he had received from Sebright containing “all the MSS. which were compiled by Mr. Ed. Llwyd respecting Wales.”<sup>13</sup> Fortunately, the entire collection was not included the gift to Johnes, since fire destroyed about 100 of the 180 Welsh manuscripts gifted to Hafod when the entire manor burned to the ground in March 1807.<sup>14</sup> The first half of Elis’s manuscript was not on the list of texts that survived the fire, so it was not part of the Sebright donation to Hafod.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, Leigh and Sotheby must have sold Elis’s manuscript at auction in April 1807 with the remaining Sebright collection.<sup>16</sup> The location of this portion of the manuscript is a mystery for the next one hundred years. Sir Thomas Powel, first professor of Welsh at the University of Wales, Cardiff, eventually purchased this part of the manuscript. Upon his death in 1922, the National Library of Wales purchased it.

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<sup>12</sup> Walter D. Love, “Edmund Burke, Charles Vallancey, and the Sebright Manuscripts,” *Hermathena*, no. 95 (1961): 22.

<sup>13</sup> Eiluned Rees, Gwyn Walters, “The Dispersion of the Manuscripts,” 155.

<sup>14</sup> Eiluned Rees, Gwyn Walters, “The Dispersion of the Manuscripts,” 155.

<sup>15</sup> Eiluned Rees, Gwyn Walters, “The Dispersion of the Manuscripts,” Appendix.

<sup>16</sup> F. Norgate, “Book Sales 1744-1828,” *The Library* s 1-3, no. 1 (1981): 12-13.

The latter half of the chronicle, to 1552, remained in private hands at Mostyn Hall in Flintshire for several hundred years, until A. Cecil Wright purchased it and donated it to the National Library of Wales in 1918. When the earlier portion joined it in 1922, Elis's "Chronicle" was complete for the first time since at least 1709, and available to the public. The National Library of Wales digitized the "Chronicle" in 2007, and it may be viewed on their website.<sup>17</sup>

### **Historiography**

Over the last 200 years, Welsh historiography evolved from a mythological to a scientific approach, from an insular to a comparative focus, and from social to transnational history. The genre of Welsh history was slow to get off the ground as a discipline, starting in the 1920s. Prior to that, amateur historians and antiquarians used mythological sources and a romantic approach, in keeping with the Celtic Revival, rather than a scientific, evidence-based approach seen in European historiography prior to 1920.<sup>18</sup>

An example of the antiquarian approach to history is the work of Owen Jones (1741-1814), called Owain Myvyr, who collected the *Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, published in three volumes by the Gwyneddigion Society between 1801 and 1807. Jones was born in Denbighshire, but moved to London and worked in a furrier business,

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<sup>17</sup> Elis Gruffydd, "Cronicl o Wech Oesodd," National Library of Wales, <https://viewer.library.wales/4397453#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&xywh=-1%2C-1454%2C3249%2C4982> and <https://viewer.library.wales/4393586#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&xywh=-162%2C-347%2C3226%2C4948>.

<sup>18</sup> Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen, "Leopold Ranke's Archival Turn: Location and Evidence in Modern Historiography," *Modern Intellectual History* 5, no. 3 (2008): 427.

initially as an apprentice skinner.<sup>19</sup> He eventually became the owner of the business and a wealthy man. While in London, Jones met other Welshman who developed his interest in the literature of Wales, particularly in the medieval period. At first, Jones began copying the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym along with other writings he found in the manuscripts. He joined the Society of Cymmrodorion no later than 1778 and became a leading sponsor of Welsh learning for the rest of his life. The assembled Welshmen determined to collect and publish the material in the old manuscripts, which was the beginning of the *Myvyrian Archaiology*.<sup>20</sup> Jones not only procured manuscripts, but also paid copyists to transcribe them, and for the collected volumes to be printed. Although he was an important benefactor to the growth of Welsh scholarship, he was a collector, not a historian. He wanted the manuscripts to be collected and published but applied no method of analysis to them. Fact, fiction, or forgery, each manuscript received the same treatment from Jones. Historians and Celticists continue to use the *Myvyrian Archaiology* today. The text of *Brut y Tywysogion* is an important primary source for historians of Wales; for example, it dated the death of the legendary Cadwaladr in year 682.<sup>21</sup>

Although much of the material in the *Myvyrian Archaiology* is genuine, Iolo Morgannwg, whom Owen Jones hired to find manuscripts for the collection, forged a portion of it.<sup>22</sup> Jones not only collected the material, he also funded the project, and founded the Gwyneddigion Society in London to encourage the study of Welsh literature.

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<sup>19</sup> Griffith John Williams, "Owen Jones," In *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, National Library of Wales, <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s-JONE-OWE-1741.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Griffith John Williams, "Owen Jones."

<sup>21</sup> Owen Jones, *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* (Denbigh: Gee and Son, Ltd., 1870), 603-604.

<sup>22</sup> Griffith John Williams, "Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg)," In *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, National Library of Wales, <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s-WILL-EDW-1747.html?query=edward+williams&field=content>.



In addition to the known forgeries, the *Myvyrian Archaeology* is primarily a collection of poetry and folktales, with a few law texts and documents sprinkled about in the third volume. This type of collection and dissemination was popular at the time, and part of the Celtic Revival, a growing interest in romanticized Celtic culture and literature begun in the late eighteenth century with the Romantic period, which brought an increasing interest to folklore and folk music of the Celtic lands. This led to the development of romanticized Celtic literature like MacPherson's *Ossian* and Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*. The Welsh also sought to collect and differentiate their literary works from the English, and collectors like Owen Jones were leaders of this movement.

The collection and dissemination of texts evolved into analysis in the 1920s, beginning with the work of W. Llewelyn Williams (1867-1922), which developed into the discipline of Welsh history. In 1919, Williams published *The Making of Modern Wales; Studies in the Tudor Settlement of Wales*. In this work, Williams noted that he had not intended this work to be a history of modern Wales; rather, he planned to forge a new path to discern the transformation of Wales from a medieval to a modern nation.<sup>23</sup> He addressed the period from the Conquest in 1282 until after the nineteenth century, analyzing the material critically rather than just presenting it. Williams was a transitional historian; he used critical analysis and contemporary methods for citing sources, yet he stubbornly clung to some ideas that scholars had long proven false. For example, Williams steadfastly supported the work of notorious forger Iolo Morganwg.<sup>24</sup> Williams

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<sup>23</sup> W. Llewelyn Williams, *The Making of Modern Wales; Studies in the Tudor Settlement of Wales* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1919), vii.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Thomas Jenkins, C.B.E., "William Llewelyn Williams," In *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, National Library of Wales, <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s-WILL-LLE-1867.html?query=W.+Llewelyn+Williams&field=content>.

was born to a well-off family with a tradition of supporting Welsh independence.<sup>25</sup> After attending Llandovery College, he attended Brasenose College at Oxford, where he attained a degree in history. Back in Wales, Williams became a journalist, writing primarily in English. He also wrote a number of English-language articles on Welsh history, which he combined into *The Making of Modern Wales: Studies in the Tudor Settlement of Wales*. Later in life, Williams entered politics, espousing nationalism and independence for Wales (and the other Celtic countries) and became MP for Carmarthen.<sup>26</sup> Despite being an avid Welsh nationalist, Williams wrote the majority of his papers in English. Perhaps he was trying to make the Welsh point of view better known in England, or in the English-speaking world, or perhaps journalism jobs were more frequently available through English. Williams was the turning point between romanticized folklore and academically rigorous analysis of texts in the field of Welsh history.

In the 1950s, historians wrote social and cultural histories, like those of Thomas Jones. These works looked at Wales and its culture as a separate entity. In the 1930s, departments of Welsh history began to spring up in universities, giving the discipline more respectability, as separate from English history. While political, constitutional, and administrative histories were popular, this sort of history did not exist in Wales after the defeat of Llywelyn in 1282. From 1900-1950, Europeans had a tradition of these sorts of

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Thomas Jenkins, C.B.E., "William Llewelyn Williams."

<sup>22</sup> Robert Thomas Jenkins, C.B.E., "William Llewelyn Williams."

bureaucratic historiographies; in the 1950s and 1960s, economic history became fashionable.<sup>27</sup>

After 1960, social history gained in popularity, and in this area, the Welsh had a strange advantage. Since they had no bureaucratic or economic history for 700 years, they had of necessity focused on social and cultural history long before it became an accepted field of study.<sup>28</sup> The work of Thomas Jones (1910-1972) is an example of this type of historiography. He was one of the first to publish purely evidence-based Welsh history; his academic focus was Middle Welsh prose, and, as a historian, he used a social and cultural methodology. He translated and analyzed many important Welsh primary sources, including *Brut y Brenhinedd*, *Brut y Tywysogion*, and the *Mabinogi*.<sup>29</sup> In 1960, Jones published “A Welsh Chronicler in Tudor England.” In it, he translated and discussed several episodes from the “Chronicle” of Elis Gruffydd during the Tudor period. Jones provided some background on both Elis and the manuscript. He approached the topic both as literature and as history, which was likely due to his background and training.<sup>30</sup> After primary education at the local grammar school, Jones attended the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, graduating with First Class Honours in Latin in 1931 and in Welsh in 1932. He worked as a lecturer in the Department of Welsh in Aberystwyth. With a break for service in WWII, Jones rose through the ranks to professor and head from 1952-1970, when he retired. With formal training in language

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<sup>27</sup> Richard T. Vann, “Historiography,” In *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Encyclopedia Britannica, inc., <https://www.britannica.com/topic/historiography>.

<sup>28</sup> Ralph A. Griffiths, “Interview with Professor Ralph Griffiths,” Institute of Historical Research, London, July 23, 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Brynley Francis Roberts, “Thomas Jones,” In *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. National Library of Wales, [llgc.org.uk/en/index.html](http://llgc.org.uk/en/index.html).

<sup>30</sup> Jones was born in Alt-wen, Pontardawe, Glamorgan, the eldest of seven children. His father worked in the tinplate works.

and literature, it was natural for Jones to study historical prose manuscripts as literature as well. He worked in Latin, Old French, and Middle Welsh, earning both his master's and doctoral degrees while a lecturer.

Jones's main contribution to the discipline of Welsh history was his editing and publishing of primary sources, making these historical documents available to later generations of students and researchers. One of his greatest achievements was analyzing the texts of *Brenhinedd y Saeson*, determining their chronology, and identifying their lost Latin sources.<sup>31</sup> He used these same skills in "A Welsh Chronicler," analyzing and editing several manuscript sections and providing suggestions of their sources, as well as comparing the "Chronicle" to other contemporary texts to discern commonalities and differences. Jones found different sections of the "Chronicle" of "unequal merit," and preferred Elis's personal observations of events to his transcription of other manuscript sources.<sup>32</sup> Jones noted that Elis was not likely a trained historian, based upon his stories of Greek gods and heroes, but it was clear to him that Elis had access to Welsh manuscripts in both London and Calais.<sup>33</sup> Jones took particular pleasure in Elis's observations of the French king in 1520, which are extremely detailed and unlike anything extant in contemporary sources.<sup>34</sup> The interest he took in descriptive Welsh language and cultural reference show him to be largely a cultural historian. His critical

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<sup>31</sup> Brynley Francis Roberts, "Thomas Jones."

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Jones, "A Welsh Chronicler in Tudor England," *Welsh History Review* (January 1, 1960): 5.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Jones, "A Welsh Chronicler," 6.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Jones, "A Welsh Chronicler," 7.

analysis of sources and rejection of mythology make Jones the next step in the evolution of Welsh historiography.

In the 1970s, historians began to write transnational history, expanding their area of research geographically through Indo-European linguistic and cultural scholarship, including the work of Patrick Ford (1935- ) who approached familiar material in a different way; his *Mabinogi*, published in 1977, was the first since Thomas Jones's edition published in 1948. Ford translated the texts in an approachable way, and his analysis of the material was accessible to readers from many backgrounds. Ford leaned heavily on oral history, Indo-European studies, comparative philology, and the findings of Georges Dumézil (1898-1986), particularly his tripartite ideology of myth.<sup>35</sup> Ford included the *Ystoria Taliesin* in his *Mabinogi*, which came from the same chronicle that Jones worked with in "A Welsh Chronicler." Although they used the same or similar texts, their analyses are very different. Where Jones saw the "Chronicle" as a Welsh cultural and linguistic memory, Ford saw it as having much deeper and more complex significance. Ford described the *Ystoria Taliesin* as a view into the distant mythology of the proto-Indo-European past and drew parallels between Welsh cultural references and classical or Vedic tales. For example, he described an incident in the *Ystoria Taliesin* in which Elphin discovered the infant Taliesin in a basket within a salmon weir, rather than the fish he expected to find. This story recalled the Biblical tale of Moses. The development of Taliesin used the motif of the archetypal poet, another global theme.<sup>36</sup> Ford made use of the linguistic turn in philosophy and humanities, which became popular

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<sup>35</sup> J. Gonda, "Dumézil's Tripartite Ideology: Some Critical Observations," *Journal of Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (1974): 140.

<sup>36</sup> Patrick K. Ford, *The Mabinogi* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 160-61.

during the period of his research. This movement theorized that language constituted reality, and provided more funding for linguistic research, making it available to scholars in every field of study. The increased focus on linguistics in diverse areas of the humanities gave Ford a strong and validated foundation for his Indo-European approach to Middle Welsh language and literature.

Ford's affinity for language and linguistics, paired with a natural gift for both prose and poetry, made him one of the most important Celticists in the modern age. He initially studied Old English at the University of Michigan, and then discovered Germanic and Norse languages, leading him to the Celtic ones, which became his research focus. Ford completed a Ph.D. in Celtic Studies at Harvard University, then a Fulbright Fellowship in Aberystwyth. After this, he published his *Mabinogi* and began an English professorship at UCLA. He was later the Margaret Brooks Robinson Professor of Celtic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University.

Ford took a comparative view of Welsh history and literature, linking it to the ancient past through both language and mythology. In this way, his methodology is more global in approach, since he sought commonalities across culture and geographic region to study and analyze the Welsh sources.<sup>37</sup> In his translations and discussions, he brought these commonalities to the forefront, providing a completely different experience than Jones had. Ford translated into modern English, making these challenging Welsh sources accessible to many and providing insight into the mythological basis for many of the cultural references found there. When comparing the two bodies of work, Jones analyzed

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<sup>37</sup> "The Different Schools of Historiography: A Reference." *LibraryThing*, accessed October 15, 2017, <https://www.librarything.com/topic/61376>.

material strictly and used archaic language, whereas Ford was more interdisciplinary in his analysis, using modern language. The evolution is clear, even though less than twenty years separated these two works.

Transnational history as a discipline emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and has become popular more recently.<sup>38</sup> The Welsh have a strong tradition in this area, particularly migration history due to Wales's unique and longstanding relationship with England, as seen in the work of J.E. Caerwyn Williams (1912-1999) in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1984, he published "Cultural Survival in an Age of Conquest," A brilliant scholar, he mastered all of the Celtic languages and their literatures, published extensively, and was the consulting editor of the *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* from 1970-1999. His work in history is primarily cultural and literary and included *Traddodiad Ilenyddol Iwerddon*, *Geiriadurwyr y Gymraeg yng Nghyfnod y Dadeni*, and *The Court Poet in Medieval Wales*.<sup>39</sup> In "Cultural Survival," Williams discussed the effect of the Welsh Age of Conquest (1063-1415) on Welsh administration, bureaucracy, language, and culture. His methodology was comparative, like Ford's, but it had evolved from looking at ancient commonalities to finding modern ones in areas of migration and cultural annihilation, which is more transnational and post-colonial.

Despite spending little time abroad, Williams had a transnational and post-colonial view of Welsh history, and in particular of the effect of conquest on a traditional

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<sup>38</sup> Christopher Endy, "Glossary of Historiographic Terms," Department of History, California State University, Los Angeles, 2015, <http://www.calstatela.edu/sites/default/files/groups/Dr.%20Christopher%20Endy/glossary.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Geraint Gruffydd, "J.E. Caerwyn Williams," In *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, National Library of Wales, <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s6-WILL-CAE-1912.html?query=Caerwyn+Williams&field=content>.

culture. Despite multiple takeovers and relocations, Wales continued to maintain its linguistic and cultural identity into the sixteenth century; Williams' article provides insight into how a lack of emigration of English people into *Pura Wallia* allowed the Welsh to maintain their cultural integrity except in the Marches. Using migration patterns to explain cultural effects is typical of a transnational historian.<sup>40</sup> Williams continued to utilize accessible language and analysis, as Ford had, and both used comparative analysis. However, unlike Ford's linguistic-based comparisons, Williams compared Wales and England on a geographic basis. This change may be due to each scholar's nationality. Ford was born and educated in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s, where English was dominant and Americans were conquerors. Bilingual Williams learned the history of oppression, conquest, and colonialization.

By contrast to Caerwyn Williams, the research of Glanmor Williams, who also wrote in the 1980s, was insular geographically. Although he advanced the use of media to support the study of Welsh history, in terms of the evolution of Welsh historiography, he was more traditional. In *Wales and the Reformation*, published in 1997, Glanmor Williams was a historian of ideas. His work revolutionized the study and writing of Welsh history and raised its importance in the universities, particularly at Swansea where he served as chair. Williams was an active teacher and energetic supporter of Welsh language and history throughout the country. He tirelessly attended local and national society meetings, spoke with aspiring students and academics, and sat on numerous public bodies in both Wales and England. By doing this, he was able to accrue funding and support for his many Welsh history projects. His determination to bring Wales to the

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<sup>40</sup> "The Different Schools of Historiography: A Reference."



forefront led him to found the Glamorgan Historical Society and to convince the Board of Celtic Studies that Wales required its own historical journal; they founded the *Welsh History Review* in 1960, with Williams as editor.<sup>41</sup>

His writing was like his public life: active, purposeful, and eloquent. His primary academic interest was religious history, and he worried that youth of his time were turning away from these topics. Williams published prolifically and emphasized the important role religion had in Wales throughout history, particularly during the upheaval of the Reformation. In *Wales and the Reformation*, he described religion as unifying the Welsh when everything else was taken from them. His methodology studied the effect of religion on the culture and history of people; he did not study the scripture itself.<sup>42</sup> He discussed how the beliefs people held influenced them both personally and as a culture or nation. For example, some of the Welsh found the Protestant religion to be a unifying force with England, more so than the linguistic or administrative changes enforced by the Acts of Union. Williams supported this view with a poem from Lewis Morgannwg, a chief bard who favored Henry VIII, addressing him as, “Helmsman, defender of the faith, Head under Christ, chief in Christendom.”<sup>43</sup>

Unlike other contemporary scholars with a comparative view, Williams instead looked at Wales as its own entity, valuable for itself and its culture. He was a nationalist; when he referenced other cultures, primarily England, he treated them almost as an extension of Wales, not the other way around. This may be a step back in

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<sup>41</sup> Prys Morgan, “Glanmor Williams,” In *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, National Library of Wales, <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s10-WILL-GLA-1920.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Prys Morgan, “Glanmor Williams.”

<sup>43</sup> Glanmor Williams, *Wales and the Reformation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 217.

historiographical evolution or an aberration; however, post-colonial thought, which was popular at the time, may have influenced him. In either case, his use of media and the public forum were both innovative and successful, and it deeply influenced the study of history in Wales. His importance and influence make him a necessary part of any historiography of Wales.

In 1985, historians Ralph A. Griffiths and Roger S. Thompson published *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, which uses both primary and secondary sources to trace the origin of the Anglo-Welsh Tudor dynasty, embodied by Henry VII. They began by discussing Ednyfed Fychan, a Tudor ancestor, and his family, which eventually ruled Gwynedd during the thirteenth century. They followed the family through Edward I's conquest and Owain Glyndŵr's failed rebellion against Henry IV. In the next generation, Owen Tudor married the widow of Henry V, Katherine de Valois, and their sons, Edmond and Jasper became English earls during the reign of their sibling Henry VI. The Crown exiled Edmond's son Henry along with his uncle Jasper in Brittany during the Yorkist reign in England, but Henry returned to claim the English crown after defeating Richard III at Bosworth Field in 1485. The authors described the relationship between the exiled Henry Tudor and the rulers of France and Brittany, who wanted to use him to disrupt English rule.<sup>44</sup> This focus on the relationship between Welsh and English is transnational, particularly the use of Welsh nobility to foment discord in England by third-party nations. In addition, as the Tudors gained power, they used their Welsh ancestry to gain support and safe passage in Welsh territories and sought Welsh soldiers

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<sup>44</sup> Roger S. Thompson and Ralph A. Griffiths, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty* (Stroud: The History Press, Sutton Publishing, 1993), Preface.

and bureaucrats once settled in London, then betrayed them once their cooperation was no longer needed.<sup>45</sup> Like Caerwyn Williams, Griffiths focused on the relationship between Wales and England, but where Williams studied the effect of conquest on a conquered people, Griffiths looked more at the way each nation influenced the other, for good and ill.

American Celticist Jerry Hunter explored the link between Wales and America, using an anti-colonial and linguistic method in the 1990s. He discussed the literary form of Elis Gruffydd's "Chronicle" in his 1995 Ph.D. dissertation "The Chronicle of Elis Gruffydd." Hunter analyzed the structure of the chronicle genre and its development from medieval times through the Humanist histories of the sixteenth century.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, he discussed the difference between "ethnic genres" and "analytical categories."<sup>47</sup> Hunter is not a historian, but in this dissertation, he attempted to determine how the author's native tradition meshed with the chronicle tradition; in other words, Hunter wanted to discern Elis's historiography and method. Prior to the sixteenth century, Welsh history was primarily kept by a class of professional poets, or *cyfarwyddyd*, in what Hunter defined as a "genre system" binding native learning and a manner of remembering and ordering that learning.<sup>48</sup> Hunter's analysis of the chronicle form as a means to illustrate a change in the mind of his author is post-colonial, and a change from the transnational methodology.

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<sup>45</sup> Glanmor Williams, *Harri Tudur a Chymru* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1985), 39.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Gerald Hunter, "The Chronicle of Elis Gruffydd," Abstract, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures, Boston, 1995.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Gerald Hunter, "The Chronicle of Elis Gruffydd," Abstract.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Gerald Hunter, "The Chronicle of Elis Gruffydd," 144.

Hunter not only considered the relationship between geographic neighbors Wales and England, he extended his comparisons to the influences of the wider world through the chronicle form and the texts to which his author had access. This focus on multinational influences, which may arise from his professional training in English, gives Hunter more opportunities for analysis. He is currently professor of Welsh at Bangor University where his focus on language is part of a currently well-funded trend in Wales to keep Welsh alive and in use, which was also very important to historian Glanmor Williams.

The work of historian Rees Davies (1938-2005) continued the development of historiography in Wales during the 2000s. Davies's primary contribution to the discipline of Welsh history was his rejection of the Anglo-centric focus of British Medieval history. He was educated at University College London, where he later lectured, before becoming the professor of history at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth in 1975. He became Chichele Professor of Medieval History at Oxford University in 1995, where he remained until his death. Davies was bilingual, and although passionate about Wales and Welsh history, he was realistic. His parents were Welsh-speaking farmers who encouraged him in his intellectual pursuits. Davies's academic focus was Medieval Wales, and, in particular, the Welsh Marches, where he studied the changeable identities and endless confrontation between Welsh and English. His study of Welsh assimilation is in keeping with a transnational historian, and his focus on the Welsh point of view during the Age of Conquest is post-colonial, that is to say, he seeks the viewpoint of a conquered people. By locating his research in the Welsh Marches, Davies also used a borderlands

methodology, studying the interaction of the Welsh and English in this historically borderless geographic region.

In *The First English Empire*, Davies explored the relationship between England and Wales, and the way they influenced one another. He described the disdain with which English soldiers and officials spoke of the Welsh people, as heathens and barbarians unworthy of a seat at the table, much less the rights and privileges of citizenship.<sup>49</sup> Despite this, the English were quick to adopt Welsh King Arthur as their own, along with the glorious claims of a united Britain.<sup>50</sup> These cultural relationships were slippery and difficult to define, which makes the region particularly interesting in terms of cultural appropriation. Davies explored the relationships not only of Wales but Scotland and Ireland with the English crown and discussed why the United Kingdom had not existed in the Middle Ages. He was nationalistic but also wrote sympathetically of each culture.

Historian D. Huw Owen wrote about the conflict between Welsh and English in “Clans and Gentry Families in the Vale of Clwyd, 1282-1536,” published in 2011. Owen analyzed the organization of the population of the region from surveys and other demographic documents. He found that the area was subject to unusual upheaval and dislocation during the period.<sup>51</sup> Owen also argued for the persistence of kinship based on genealogy as maintained by the poets, and the importance of literary works in this region through the Renaissance period.<sup>52</sup> Owen worked in transnational history, comparing the

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<sup>49</sup> R.R. Davies, *The First English Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 113.

<sup>50</sup> R.R. Davies, *The First English Empire*, 41.

<sup>51</sup> D. Huw Owen, “Clans and Gentry Families in the Vale of Clwyd 1282-1536,” In *Wales and the Welsh in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to J. Beverly Smith*, edited by Ralph A. Griffiths, Phillip R. Schofield, and J. Beverly Smith (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), 145.

<sup>52</sup> D. Huw Owen, “Clans and Gentry Families,” 149.

land ownership and influence in a highly conflicted region where both English and Welsh resided. He was formerly the keeper of Pictures and Maps at the National Library of Wales, has worked as an archivist, and has lectured at both Aberystwyth and Cardiff. Owen is reputed to be a strong supporter of the Welsh Presbyterian Church and wrote a book on Welsh chapels, *The Chapels of Wales* (2012). His methodology has much in common with the work of Davies; however, Owen relies more heavily on demographic records, possibly due to his training and experience as an archivist, as well as to the rising importance of geography in the study of history during the 2000s.

Since its beginnings in the early 1900s, the discipline of Welsh history has evolved along with European historiography, though due to the unique position of Wales in history, it was slow to get started, and quick to adopt modern historiographic approaches including social, cultural, comparative, post-colonial, and transnational history. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Welsh antiquarians collected and published Welsh historical material without regard for veracity. In the early twentieth century, historians began to analyze these materials using scientific or evidence-based methodology. In this way, antiquarians recording folklore and mythology like Owen Jones and W. Llewelyn Williams evolved to social and cultural historians like Thomas Jones. In the late twentieth century, scholars like Patrick Ford, J.E. Caerwyn Williams, Ralph A. Griffiths, and Jerry Hunter expanded the discipline by comparing the relationship between Wales and England, Wales and other Celtic lands, and between Wales and the Indo-European world. More recently, R.R. Davies, Glanmor Williams, and D. Huw Owen have continued to use the method of transnational analysis in their research on Welsh assimilation and migration. Over the last 200 years, Welsh

historiography has evolved from a mythological to a scientific approach, from an insular to a comparative focus, and from social to transnational history. But what is Elis's place in the historiography of Wales?

Even among scholars interested in Celtic Studies or Reformation history, Elis has rarely been a focus of research. Those who have studied Elis have usually done so through the lens of linguistics or literary study, rarely as history. Among those who have worked on his "Chronicle," most have shown interest in the Arthurian sections, or the *Ystoria Taliesin*, as Ford and Mulligan have. Both of these scholars have also demonstrated a broad field of interest, and have published extensively. Elis has been just one of their many foci. Several of the scholars noted for working with Elis's texts wrote their studies soon after both halves of the manuscript were reunited by the National Library of Wales in 1922, including Thomas Jones, a trained historian who published until the mid-1900s. Prys Morgan, also a historian by training, worked on the "Chronicle," but both he and Ford have retired from academic life. Jerry Hunter has published somewhat recent work on the "Chronicle," with *Soffestri'r Saeson* published nearly twenty years ago, in 2000, along with several other publications in the mid to late 1990s, though his focus has now shifted to contemporary writing in Welsh. The only current publication focused on Elis is Mulligan's article discussed above, from 2016, but her research focus is Irish Literature.

Although these scholars have used Elis in their research to varying degrees, very little scholarly emphasis is currently placed upon him. Aside from Hunter, most have used a small portion of the "Chronicle" as evidence for a theory, rather than looking at

the entire text as a reflection of the man who wrote it, placing the document in its historical context. Elis occupied a position at the cusp of the modern world, in exile from an oppressive regime, a rebel writing to save his language and culture from assimilation by England. Social and cultural approaches have always been important when studying the history of Wales, and never more so than when studying Elis and his relationship to his world. Since ancient times, as the Celts moved across Europe, they were exposed to a variety of languages and traditions, yet through it all, they retained their own linguistic and cultural identity. Even when their nearest neighbor England became a world power, and set its eyes on absorbing them, the people of Wales maintained their distinct language, history, and culture. The literature of Wales has been lightly studied, often by philologists or linguists because of its archaic preservation of some Proto-Indo-European roots and declensions. As a literary historian, this has not been my approach, though it is certainly informative and often helpful. Instead, when I first looked at Elis's "Chronicle" years ago, I wanted to know who this man was and why he had taken on such a task. Because he wrote in Welsh, and his work was neither commissioned nor published, his opinions and observations might be a unique point of view of the sixteenth century. As a Welshman serving in the English army for most of his life, he may be a bellwether for his society and culture, at the juncture of medieval and modern, region and empire. After studying the text, I realized it was a piece of resistance literature, written by an exile, in order to maintain and elevate his native language and culture.

My example is the pioneering work of Natalie Zemon Davis, particularly *Trickster Travels*, and like her, I have focused on cultural and social history, looking at not only at Elis but also his contemporary writers and chroniclers, administrative and



judicial documents, and the Celtic oral tradition.<sup>53</sup> This point of view provides new insight about Elis and his time. For example, if he saw himself as next in line to carry the responsibility of Welsh language and literary tradition, it might make sense for a man without formal education to take on the job of writing a universal history. Looking at this work in the context of resistance literature furnishes new comparisons and insight into Elis's motivation when writing this epic text. Initially, I will discuss the provenance of the manuscript, after an overview of the author, and discuss the historiography used by multi-disciplinary scholars in the field to discuss the literature and history of Wales, as well as my own methodology, which begins with the origin of the Welsh language and culture near the time of the fall of Rome (c.450 CE).

Wales has been marginalized and oppressed throughout the centuries, resulting in the development of resistance literature in the Welsh literary tradition. Elis continued this tradition, influenced by both his native upbringing and the growing popularity of literature of rebellion in the divisive sixteenth century. I will address his community's history of loss, oppression, and betrayal from the death of the last native Prince of Wales in 1282 to the attempted assimilation of the region and destruction of its language and tradition by Henry VIII in the early sixteenth century.

During this period, Elis fled to London seeking employment, and eventually settled in Calais, England's last toehold in Europe. Calais was a center of both trade and the military, providing Elis with access to new and reformist ideas. His life in Calais exposed him to knowledge from throughout Europe, through meeting people and reading

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<sup>53</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).

books and pamphlets; his residence had a tremendous influence on his life and later his “Chronicle.”

Before Elis, a series of Welsh writers of history, mainly priests and poets, were charged with maintaining complex linguistic and metrical forms as well as preserving history. Elis included the works of these authors in his “Chronicle,” and likely saw himself as the heir of their cultural power and responsibility. There is nothing like his text in the Welsh literature of the time, but he was also unique among his contemporary chroniclers like Hall and Holinshed. Writing without a patron or editor gave Elis the freedom to write as resistance to English oppression. He kept notes about his adventures in the army, his travels, and the important events he witnessed, such as the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520.

Late in life, recuperating from illness in a declining Calais, Elis began his “Chronicle” in 1548. Examination of the text shows numerous examples of pro-Welsh thinking and a uniquely native point of view of events. He wrote in Welsh for privacy, as well as to edify the language. He told the history of his people, often oppressed but never giving in, and constructed a historical narrative for them as the legitimate rulers of not only Wales, but the whole of the British Isles.

In the same way that the English marginalized the Welsh in order to disempower them, they deprecated their so-called countrymen in Scotland, Ireland, and France, using dehumanizing and violent tactics. These strategies and the reactions to them might be the first signs of colonialism and nationalism, long before modern historians might allow. Elis as a resistant writer may be comparable to more contemporary, Third World authors

like Edward Said who critiqued the cultural representations used against native populations, and Franz Fanon who discussed stereotypical racist tropes used to encourage fear and mistrust of oppressed people.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979) and Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

## Chapter 2: Setting the Stage in Wales and Calais

Two major themes influenced Elis's decision to write a chronicle in order to maintain and preserve his native culture and language: the traditions of his Welsh homeland, and the environment of his adopted home in sixteenth-century Calais. Throughout their history, the Celtic settlers in the British Isles suffered invasions, relocations, and oppressions from a variety of sources that came to power during the late classical period and early Middle Ages. Because of this, the Welsh have a long tradition of maintaining their linguistic and cultural identity despite frequent incursions, intermarriage, and relocation. Elis grew up in this tradition, and it likely gave him the background and desire to defend the identity of his people through his literary works. This birthright informed much of his "Chronicle," so awareness of both the history and literature of medieval Wales is vital to understanding Elis's motivation. In addition, his environment and locality contributed to his access to books and information, and it is unlikely he could have written the same text without the experience of living in Calais.

Roman conquest ended Celtic expansion and pushed the remaining Celts north and westward to Ireland, the British Isles, and northwest France. The Common Celtic language divided during the Roman period, with the Brittonic branch emerging in modern Wales, Southern Scotland, Cornwall and Brittany, and the Goidelic branch in Ireland, Northern Scotland and the Isle of Man. The Welsh developed their own administrative systems, civil courts, and customs based upon tradition at this time. Elis traced the genealogy of his people back to the legendary figures of this era, like Brutus of Troy and his ancestor Aeneas, illustrating the way that Welsh traditions absorbed some

cultural information from Wales's conquerors, while maintaining a distinct identity. By linking Wales to Classical Antiquity, Elis raised its status and validated its long history.

As the Roman Empire began to weaken in the fifth century it lost control in Britain, and the Anglo-Saxon people gained power and began to settle in the south and east. Welsh emerged as a distinct language in the sixth century, and they had a word for their new homeland as early as the seventh century: *Cymru*.<sup>1</sup> As the Germanic tribes migrated from Europe, the Picts moved down from the north, eventually squeezing Wales by the ninth century into roughly the area it occupies now. However, despite this forced relocation, the Welsh retained their unique language and cultural attributes, primarily through their oral tradition, which Elis continued a thousand years later as he wrote his "Chronicle."

In the Anglo-Saxon period, Hywel Dda (c.880-950), who ruled much of Wales in the tenth century, codified the law, though the earliest extant copy of his law code dates to the thirteenth century. Hywel united the whole region in 940, at which time he determined that many of the current customs and statute were ineffective and that he should reform and codify them for future Welshmen. He summoned six men from every village in the dominion, along with churchmen of every rank, and chose from among them the twelve wisest laymen and one cleric to make the new laws covering the court, including the twenty-four officers of the King and Queen from Master of the Household to Mead-brewer, the Heir-Apparent, and Privileges of Protection.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Hywel divided society into five classes: rulers, free Welsh (nobles and yeomen), serfs,

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<sup>1</sup> T.M Charles-Edwards. *Wales and the Britons, 350-1064*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> "The Laws of Hywel Dda," *Cambro-Briton* 2, no. 18 (1821): 249.

foreigners, and slaves. Compensation figured prominently in the *Laws*, particularly lists of recompense owed for loss of body parts valued largely by use. The concept of *sarhad* (insult or honor-price) also appears, with the price for homicide settled at three times the *sarhad* for that individual.

Land in medieval Wales passed in joint tenancy to all sons, legitimate or not; the *Laws* provided that the youngest son partition the lands and the eldest take first choice. Hywel also addressed laws concerning marriage, succession, sureties, criminal law, and administration. These laws remained largely intact until the sixteenth century, when Elis observed the legal and administrative disempowerment of his country by Henry VIII (1491-1547). The change in land rights was particularly momentous for Elis, both personally and culturally. As he wrote his chronicle, he implored his relatives back at home to continue fighting for his inheritance of land, but the laws of that time were in flux and difficult to adjudicate in Wales. Traditional joint tenancy among heirs gave way to primogeniture during Elis's lifetime. In addition, England used the removal of land laws as a tool to impoverish and disenfranchise the Welsh, allowing easier purchase of large swathes of land by English lords and facilitating the rise of an English gentry class in the March of Wales.

A century after Hywel Dda's legal reforms, Gruffydd ap Llewelyn of Gwynedd became king, in 1039, and immediately began to reconsolidate Welsh lands, and redefined the border with England. He formed an alliance with Godwine of Mercia, whom Edward the Confessor had expelled. Gruffydd was ready to take advantage of this unrest by raiding across the border. By 1055, his power in Wales was unchallenged, and he even recovered some disputed areas that had previously been lost to Anglo-Saxon

kingdoms. Twelfth-century writer Walter Map (1140-c.1210) records that Gruffydd was willing to be a vassal of Edward only after he admitted they shared equal status as kings and even compared Gruffydd to Alexander the Great.<sup>3</sup> He was at the height of his power in 1063, but within the year, he lost both his holdings and his life to the Anglo-Saxon kingdom.

Soon after his death, the Normans conquered England (1066). Many of the warriors were landless younger sons with a reputation for greed and violence. Gruffydd's death destroyed the hope of Native Wales and made it vulnerable to conquest. Almost immediately, the Normans took Gwynedd, his home base, and soon after Roger of Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury, seized the lands of Rhys ap Tewdwr, ancestor of Henry Tudor, after he died in 1093. Norman invaders brought the best in medieval military technology: the castle. Despite the immediate and decisive ingress into Wales by 1100, they held on to very few of their territorial gains there. Though conquered, the Welsh were not easily subdued, and the Normans never had the success that native princes had in uniting Wales. Building castles was expensive, and the Normans had focused upon other interests both in England and across the Channel. Wales was fragmented politically and geographically, and the land was neither fertile nor accessible to agriculture. Rather than attempting to take it over wholesale, the Normans built a series of castles on the border between Wales and England, or the March, and granted lordships there. These barons generally had a lot of say in the rule of their lands, and some, like Osbern fitz Richard, were given license from the king to conquer "whatever he can take"

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<sup>3</sup> David Moore, *Welsh Wars for Independence* (Mt. Pleasant: The History Press, 2007), chapter 2.

from the Welsh in 1086.<sup>4</sup> Rather than subduing Wales personally, early Norman kings deputized others to do so; Marcher lords, barons, and sheriffs.

These borderland noblemen had different privileges from their English counterparts, such as far more independence, exemption from royal taxation, their own law and jurisdiction, and the right to set up markets and forests. In the twelfth century, the Crown attempted to strengthen the royal government in Wales and the Marches through changes in law and marriage agreements. Immigration into the area was encouraged, and new towns were established; however, the Welsh continued to rebel and raid across the border. During the thirteenth century, the principality of Gwynedd took precedence among Welsh districts. Flintshire, the county where Elis was born and raised, was part of medieval Gwynedd, and many of the stories he related in his “Chronicle” were connected to that location, like “Chwedl Huail ap Caw ac Arthur,”<sup>5</sup>

As early as the twelfth century, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Giraldus Cambrensis discussed the English assumption of the name Britain for their island kingdom, which originated in the Latin name for the once-Celtic region. Both authors claimed that after the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain (in what Geoffrey stated was the early seventh century), the native people were afterward called Welsh. The etymology of the words Wales/Welsh comes from the Germanic root *walha* meaning foreigners or non-Germanic speakers.<sup>6</sup> At some point in the mid-1100s, the Cambro-Latin words for Wales and Welsh

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<sup>4</sup> David Moore, *Welsh Wars for Independence*, chapter 4.

<sup>5</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” NLW manuscripts 5276D and 3054D. National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, f. 334.

<sup>6</sup> “The Adventurous History of the Word *Wales*,” *Old English: The Portal to the Language of the Anglo-Saxons*, <http://old-engli.sh/trivia.php?ID=Wales>.



(*Britannia* and *Britones*) were replaced by Old English names (*Walas* and *Wealas*).<sup>7</sup> Giraldus, claiming his native ancestry, stated in *Descriptio Kambriae* (1194) that “our British people (*gens Brittanica*)”, are now called a corrupted word, Welsh.<sup>8</sup> As conquerors, first the Romans, then the Anglo-Saxons, and then the Normans devalued and discriminated against the subjugated native people.

The last native Prince of Wales was Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, who began his rule in 1246 during the reign of Henry II and made alliances with several Welsh princes. In 1265, Llywelyn made an agreement with Simon de Montfort, who had recently defeated the king at the Battle of Lewes, which granted Llywelyn the right to rule Wales; however, the Crown executed Montfort at the Battle of Evesham later that year. In 1267, Henry II recognized Llywelyn as Prince of Wales in return for an annual tribute, but he soon had disputes with powerful Marcher lord Gilbert de Clare, and in 1272, Henry II died. Edward I became king and Llywelyn’s problems continued. He had trouble raising the tribute, and he continued his alliance with the de Montfort family, marrying Simon’s daughter Eleanor by proxy in 1275. Edward arranged for her capture by pirates and held her at Windsor, forcing Llywelyn to make concessions to him. Over the next few years, disputes continued, and in 1282, Eleanor died giving birth to their daughter, Gwenllian. Edward offered Llywelyn an English estate if he would surrender Wales, but he refused to give up the land of his ancestors. Llywelyn died on December 11, 1282, at the battle of Orewin Bridge; his enemies tricked him into leaving his army, then ambushed and killed him. They captured his only child and heir, Gwenllian, and held her in the Gilbertine

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<sup>7</sup> Huw Pryce, “British or Welsh? National Identity in Twelfth-Century Wales,” *English Historical Review* 116, no. 468 (2001): 780.

<sup>8</sup> Huw Pryce, “British or Welsh?” 785.

Priory at Sempringham, where she remained for fifty-four years, until the day she died. Thus ended native Welsh rule.

The death of Llywelyn (the Last) created a martyr for the native people. The tragic story of his only child added fuel to still-smoldering embers of rage and disempowerment. His loss was recounted and memorialized in poetry and folklore for centuries, and Elis incorporated these legends into his text. For example, he described the removal of Llewelyn's head, which was sent for display to the Tower of London, crowned with ivy, mocking the Welsh claim that a native prince was rightful heir to Britain.

During the Norman period, Welsh law normally applied to both Wales proper and the Marches. If a dispute concerned a Welshman and an Englishman, each party might not necessarily want to follow their own native statutes. For example, in a thirteenth-century dispute between Roger Mortimer, an English Marcher lord, and Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn, a prince of Powys, Mortimer argued for the use of Welsh regulations, and Gwenwynwyn wanted English. The (English) royal justice determined that since the land under dispute lay within Wales, the native law should apply.<sup>9</sup>

By the sixteenth century, Welsh traditional culture had given Europe King Arthur, Merlin, and a thousand years of bardic history. Naturally, the thought of English culture and language overwhelming native tradition horrified most Welsh people, aside from an anglicized gentry class that had developed along the Marches, for whom the rule of England was the next logical step. Elis described how the English appropriated the

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<sup>9</sup> David Moore, *Welsh Wars for Independence*, 149.

Arthurian legends, claiming them for their own, and defending the veracity of their cultural and territorial claims.<sup>10</sup> Throughout the Middle Ages, the Welsh shared a common identity, tied by language, culture, history, and religion. This type of association was common among medieval Europeans, and reflected a pre-nation-state community. Social identity preserves the community's traditions and achievements even today. In medieval Wales, a highly trained bardic or priestly class memorized the history and mythology of the Welsh, and court poets used verse to extoll the virtues of their patrons in both battle and generosity. Bards recorded and remembered history in medieval Wales through poetry; prose tales and romances for entertainment began to appear in the twelfth century. In this way, Welsh language and culture were preserved through the medieval period, despite several incursions by the English.

The geography of Wales aided in its isolation, with three sides bound by seas and the fourth by mountains. In addition to the unfriendly topography, it was also a land best suited to grazing sheep and goats rather than sowing fields of cereal grains easy to raid and carry off. The Welsh rebuffed attempts to unite or invade the area. When an incursion was successful, they quickly retook the lands once the enemy soldiers moved on. The medieval Welsh had strong cultural and linguistic links, which endured throughout the Saxon invasions, Viking raids, Norman Conquest, and division into various kingdoms that warred against one another. In the late Middle Ages, native people flowed into England, often as soldiers and usually for economic reasons. After 1300,

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<sup>10</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd and Multiple Versions of Geoffrey's *Historia*." Digital Collection, University of Brest. Accessed January 1, 2017. [https://www.univ-brest.fr/digitalAssets/36/36990\\_Ceridwen-Lloyd-Morgan-com---crite-Aber.pdf](https://www.univ-brest.fr/digitalAssets/36/36990_Ceridwen-Lloyd-Morgan-com---crite-Aber.pdf).

Wales suffered from a negative change in weather conditions, which was to last for two hundred years, in addition to bouts of plague.<sup>11</sup> Then and now, they had some of the highest poverty rates in Europe, currently running around twenty-five percent.<sup>12</sup>

During the late Middle Ages, poverty drove the Welsh into England for employment, especially within the military.<sup>13</sup> An estimated 10,500 Welsh foot soldiers fought for England at the Battle of Falkirk in 1298.<sup>14</sup> This tendency reflected a change among the native people. The loss of their last independent Prince of Wales in 1282 disheartened them, and by 1298, King Edward I (1239-1307) had taken not only Llywelyn's head, but also claimed the palace, regalia, relics, and seals of the once-royal house, parading them through the streets or melting them into tableware. Edward I intended "to put an end finally to the matter."<sup>15</sup> Professor Rees Davies described this period as an apocalypse: "'Is it the end of the world?' asked a poet, despairingly. 'And then all Wales was cast to the ground.'"<sup>16</sup> Davies related that the people continued to cultivate their own unique identity and language, stating, "Wales remained a country because its people believed it to be a country."<sup>17</sup> Despite being vanquished and humiliated by the English, the Welsh refused to be assimilated or absorbed, maintaining their culture through language and traditional narrative. In a similar situation, Elis reacted in the same way; the Laws in Wales Acts (1535 and 1542) disempowered the people and

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<sup>11</sup> Nigel Goose, "Medieval and Early Modern Statistics," The British Historical Statistics Project, presented at the Economic History Society Annual Conference, March 27, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> "Welsh Economy: in Numbers," Llywodraeth Cymru, [http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/economic-indicators/poverty\\_wealth?lang=en](http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/economic-indicators/poverty_wealth?lang=en).

<sup>13</sup> Text available in Appendix A, document 2.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Jones, "A Welsh Chronicler in Tudor England," *Welsh History Review* (January 1, 1960): 1.

<sup>15</sup> Rees Davies, "Wales: A Culture Preserved," BBC, accessed June 1, 2018, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle\\_ages/culture\\_preserved\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages/culture_preserved_01.shtml).

<sup>16</sup> Rees Davies, "Wales: A Culture Preserved."

<sup>17</sup> Rees Davies, "Wales: A Culture Preserved."

forbade their language, yet he determined to protect and maintain both through his “Chronicle.”

From 1450-1485, and particularly during the ascension of the Tudors, Welsh people became enamored of both Henry Tudor and the Crown, to the point that they considered the Wars of the Roses to be a war between Wales and England, and a victory by Henry Tudor was thought to be a victory for Wales.<sup>18</sup> During this period, the development of the anglicized landed gentry in Wales was highly significant, and it gradually allowed estates to pass intact to heirs in the English style, rather than to be divided as Welsh law and tradition required. This group adopted English language and customs and replaced the native Welsh ruling families.

The Welsh memorialized the activities and events of this period in the traditional manner, through poetry. For example, Dafydd Llwyd ap Llywelyn ap Gruffudd of Mathafarn (c.1420-c.1500), who wrote twenty-five percent of the 200 *cywyddau* or vaticinary poems in his era, wrote about the Tudors and the English dynastic struggles insofar as they reflected the chance for Welsh liberation.<sup>19</sup> Dafydd Llwyd used the idea of *hiraeth* (longing) for unity and freedom as inspiration for his poetry, which focused on the imposition of English culture and government upon the Welsh people. Elis described a legend that Henry Tudor spent the night with Dafydd Llwyd and his wife on the road to Bosworth. Dafydd’s wife advised the poet to foretell a brilliant future for Tudor, claimant

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas Jones, “A Welsh Chronicler,” 2. This was in complete conflict with Welsh feelings both before and soon after his reign.

<sup>19</sup> David Myrddin Lloyd, “Dafydd Llwyd ap Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, of Mathafarn (c. 1420-c, 1500), poet,” In *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, National Library of Wales, <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s-DAFY-APL-1420.html?query=Dafydd+Llwyd+ap+Llywelyn+ap+Gruffudd,+of+Mathafarn+&field=name>.

to the throne.<sup>20</sup> Even in the fifteenth century, native people believed that poets had the gift of prophecy.

Henry Tudor used his Welsh connections to aid in his claim to the English throne. His grandfather was Owen Tudor (Owain Tewdwr) who claimed descent from a native king (Rhys ap Tewdwr). These relations, however, were also cousins to Owain Glyndŵr, who led an unsuccessful revolt against English rule, and upon his defeat the Tudor family suffered the loss of land and privilege. Generations later, when Henry Tudor claimed the English crown, the Welsh supported him as one of their own, perhaps even the *mab darogan*, or the son who had been promised, like Arthur, Cadwaladr, and Owain Glyndŵr before him. The symbol on the modern Welsh flag, the red dragon (*Y Ddraig Goch*) has been associated with Wales for centuries; the earliest mention is in Nennius' *Historia Brittonum*, written in the ninth century. The dragon was linked to Arthur, Cadwaladr, and Henry Tudor (later Henry VII), who placed it on the Tudor green and white field for his march to Bosworth Field, in deference to his ancestry.

The Welsh allowed Henry's army to march across their lands unmolested on the way to Bosworth Field in 1485, where he defeated Richard III and became King Henry VII. They considered the Tudors to be fellow Welshman, rallied to their banner, and received places in the Tudor court and military. This loyalty continued when his son, Henry VIII ascended to the throne in 1509, and those looking for opportunity headed to London. The monarch responded graciously at first to the assistance of his Welsh brethren, finding places for them among his retinue, and the bards who a generation

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<sup>20</sup> David Myrddin Lloyd, "Dafydd Llwyd ap Llywelyn."

earlier had praised the valor of their patrons for their struggle against the English now wrote of their importance in “fair Henry’s” court.<sup>21</sup> By 1530, enough Welsh soldiers served in the king’s yeoman of the guard that the Crown granted them forty shillings to celebrate St. David’s Day, the Welsh national holiday.<sup>22</sup>

Entering the 1530s, Elis witnessed the tumult and conflict throughout Europe, and particularly between England and Wales. Henry VIII (1491-1547) faced challenges on every side. Unlike his father, who left the administration of Wales to the Welsh, Henry VIII eventually felt threatened by the chaos and lawlessness in the Marches, and the power and independence of the lords there, some of whom had survived the Wars of the Roses. To resolve this, he asked his chief minister Thomas Cromwell to come up with a solution. He advised the annexation of Wales, bringing it into administrative harmony with the English crown. The Laws in Wales Acts passed in 1535 and 1542, dissolving the Welsh political and legal administration and replacing them with English administrative units. They also redrew borders between the two countries that remain largely intact today. Most important, the 1535 Act made English the only legal administrative language, barring Welsh speakers from law courts and all public office. This resulted in the existing anglicized landed gentry ruling Wales, burying traditional native language and culture. By 1550, the Welsh language was associated with the poor and uneducated, and their courts and traditional administration disappeared under English domination.

Until the French conquered the city of Calais in 1558, it was also under English control. It served as a center of trade between Europe and Britain since the Middle Ages

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Jones, “A Welsh Chronicler,” 2.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Jones, “A Welsh Chronicler,” 3.

because of its location along the English Channel between Flanders, France, and the Holy Roman Empire. It lies on the northernmost point of France and is the closest continental town to England, which is only twenty-one miles away at Dover. Boulogne granted Calais a town charter in 1181, and the city soon became a focus for England's claim to the French crown under Edward III (1312-1377) as part of the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453). In 1346, the English king won a great victory at the Battle of Crecy and successfully laid siege to Calais in 1347. After taking possession of the town, the king drove out most of the French citizens, replacing them with English settlers and merchants.<sup>23</sup>

In 1360, the Treaty of Bretigny granted the "Pale of Calais" (Calais, Guines, and Marck) to England in perpetuity, and in 1363, it became a staple port, part of a system of trade and taxation used in Medieval Europe. Rulers required staple towns or ports to monitor all overseas trade in certain goods like wool, hides, metals, wine, grain, and exotic materials. This meant that officials in Calais examined and taxed all of the goods England shipped overseas or imported. The staple system simplified record keeping and ensured the government gained the mandated revenue from trade. The Merchants of the Staple dominated this trade, and the designation gave Calais a unique position among English towns. Many residents were wealthy, and the merchants and traders were multi-national and racially and linguistically diverse. A city so dependent upon overseas trade was unlikely to be overly restrictive in enforcing the cultural and religious norms of the period. This laxity led to the development of the illicit book trade, which provided Elis with many of his sources. Additionally, much of the population was transient, attached to

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<sup>23</sup> Jean Froissart, *Chronicles* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1968), 109-10.



the ships or military, rather than being permanent residents of the town. This environment also influenced Elis, as, by the sixteenth century, the town was not only a center for merchants and the military, but also had a reputation for harboring exiles, rebels, and freethinkers.

Calais was in a contentious position politically, due to its importance as a center of international trade and location. Even after England reclaimed the Pale in 1360, the region again rose to prominence as a point of conflict in the fifteenth-century wars between France and Burgundy, which began the rivalry between Valois and Habsburg. Both wanted to take Calais, but also agreed that it was better for England to possess it than their rival. During this period, Calais was very expensive and difficult to maintain and defend, as repeated raids damaged the defenses of the town. In addition, the area was in constant danger of flooding, so barriers also required maintenance. Elis was responsible for maintaining these defenses during his time in the city, and bemoaned the lack of financial support for this task from the Crown.<sup>24</sup> Despite the cost, England considered Calais to be the “brightest jewel” in its crown, and nearly one-third of the country’s revenues passed through the port in the fifteenth century.<sup>25</sup> In 1436, the English defeated a Burgundian blockade of Calais harbor, and as the English lost control of Normandy and Gascony in the early 1450s, Calais remained as a symbol of English strength on the continent.<sup>26</sup> As the Hundred Years War continued with France, it increasingly gained importance as a military staging point and even an pawn in the

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<sup>24</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” ff. 522r-524v.

<sup>25</sup> “14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries,” Calais.com, <https://www.calais.com/v/history/>.

<sup>26</sup> Susan Rose, *Calais: An English Town in France* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 76.

English dynastic power struggle the Wars of the Roses.<sup>27</sup> Richard Neville (1428-1471), Earl of Warwick, the Kingmaker, was Captain of Calais during the conflict and used his position to assist in his personal goals.<sup>28</sup>

In the early and mid-1500s, the Protestant diaspora began in Europe, with exiles from Italy, the Netherlands, Bohemia, and France moving to England, the Holy Roman Empire, and Switzerland, and other countries seeking religious refuge. These migrants had a pronounced effect on the areas where they settled, particularly regarding local knowledge, publishing, and scholarship in general.<sup>29</sup> Many of the Italian refugees were intellectuals and contributed to their host countries the learning and culture of Renaissance Italy.<sup>30</sup> Some religious exiles from the Low Countries moved to London, learning English and translating texts into Dutch for the benefit of other refugees.<sup>31</sup>

During this period, books and pamphlets with Protestant or anti-Catholic viewpoints were illegal and heretical in much of Europe, including England. People involved in the printing and dissemination of these tracts might face charges in either ecclesiastical or judicial courts, depending upon the region, though due to the changing relationship among the church, courts, and state, few cases completed prosecution. In England, a widespread clandestine book trade developed between London and outlying areas. Authorities found English imprints deemed subversive in Frankfurt, Antwerp, Paris, and Calais, and tribunals throughout Europe attempted to prosecute book

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<sup>27</sup> Susan Rose, *Calais: An English Town*, 76-80.

<sup>28</sup> Susan Rose, *Calais: An English Town*, 112.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Burke and Dror Wahrman, *Exiles and Expatriates in the History of Knowledge, 1500-2000* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 55.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Burke and Dror Wahrman, *Exiles and Expatriates*, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Burke and Dror Wahrman, *Exiles and Expatriates*, 56.

smugglers. In the Low Countries, pirate editions of popular tracts were printed and sent off quickly to eager readers.<sup>32</sup> For many merchants, hiding a few illegal books among approved books, or even other trade goods like cloth or wine, became a common way to make a little extra money from each passage.<sup>33</sup> For merchants who were already smuggling contraband, including illicit books and pamphlets, was a natural extension. However, in England, the production or dissemination of heretical texts was an ecclesiastical crime, and the punishment for heresy was death, often by burning. Since the city of Calais was a major focus of merchant trade into and out of England throughout the period, its residents were deeply involved in the illicit book trade.

The early sixteenth century was relatively peaceful in Calais, but in the 1520s, as reformists began publishing their anti-clerical views, Henry VIII's relationship with Rome also began to deteriorate due to his failure to receive an annulment from his wife Catherine in order to marry Anne Boleyn. In 1509, at age seventeen, the king had wed his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon, despite initial misgivings; by 1527, she had not produced a male heir and was now forty years old. Henry VIII was determined to end his marriage and remarry, but this required the approval of the pope. Despite every effort to convince him, Pope Clement VII (1478-1534) refused to set Catherine aside. Elis was living in London at the height of this conflict, and made friends with Catherine's Welsh servants. Elis always had an ear for gossip, and he related many anecdotes from this period in his "Chronicle."

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<sup>32</sup> John D. Fudge, *Commerce and Print in the Early Reformation* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 183-4.

<sup>33</sup> John D. Fudge, *Commerce and Print*, 184.

Eventually, the king took matters into his own hands and set a plan into action to remove England from papal authority and make himself head of the English church. To this end, he removed Catherine from her rooms and married Anne secretly in 1532. In 1533, Archbishop Cranmer declared the marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine null and void, and the following week, announced the validity of his marriage to Anne. Also during this time (1529-1536), Parliament legislated the break with Rome and formation of the Church of England through the 1534 Act of Supremacy, which stated that Henry was supreme head of the new church. Reformist and anti-clerical movements were spreading throughout Europe, driven by the availability of printed texts, disagreement with Catholic practices, and rising nationalism, among other factors.

As a merchant town, Calais was open to influences from reformist centers like Antwerp, providing easy contact to new ideas. The Crown noticed these migrants and the books they carried to Calais. In 1528, while Sir Robert Wingfield was serving as Deputy Governor of Calais, Elis was in charge of his London manor. In that year, Cardinal Wolsey's agent John West arrived in Antwerp seeking illicit authors, primarily William Tyndale (c.1494-1536.)<sup>34</sup> West captured two suspects named Francis Denham and John Corbett. Denham resided with a producer of contraband books, and Corbett had Lutheran sympathies. The two implicated a third man, Philip Smyth alias Fabry, who served as the Staplers' Chaplain at Calais.<sup>35</sup> West sent a letter to Calais asking Sir Robert to arrest the priest. When he went to the accused man's chamber at the Staple Hall, he found that it

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<sup>34</sup> William Tyndale wrote *The Practyse of Prelates* in 1530, declaring that Henry's hoped-for annulment of Catherine to marry Anne was not scripturally sound, drawing Henry's wrath. He wrote other religious texts, as well as translated the Bible into English. He was tried for heresy in 1536, and was strangled, then burned at the stake in October of that year.

<sup>35</sup> John D. Fudge, *Commerce and Print*, 197.

contained at least a dozen questionable books.<sup>36</sup> Among these were texts by Erasmus, Melanchthon, and Luther.<sup>37</sup> The authorities sent Denham and Corbett to Calais, with the request that all three prisoners and their contraband books be sent back to England for prosecution. Sir Robert considered this an ecclesiastical matter, not a criminal one, so he recorded their confessions, but kept them in Calais for three further weeks. Why had he not put them on the first available boat? Wingfield found the entire situation distasteful; the men were young, educated, and well mannered, not what he might expect from firebrand heretics.<sup>38</sup> Sir Robert wrote to Wolsey suggesting that he send the young scholars to Sir John Butler, Commissary of Calais, in Dover, and determined to wait for a response. London was suffering from sweating sickness at the time, and the disease claimed Denham while in custody. The king remained at Hampton Court, avoiding the illness in London, and Chancellor Wolsey attended him, working on his annulment from Catherine. Three months passed, and Sir Robert sent the confessions and contraband books to Dover, with no message of prisoner Corbett. Staplers' chaplain Smyth was absolved of all charges, after admitting that Denham had made several trips to Calais to sell Lutheran imprints and that Denham and Luther sent books and letters between Paris and Calais. Smyth claims to have resold these books in Calais.<sup>39</sup>

This episode is important on several counts; first, it established that merchants bought and sold contraband books in Calais during the 1520s. Elis had access to these books, and mentioned reading them, which affected his views as related in the

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<sup>36</sup> John D. Fudge, *Commerce and Print*, 198.

<sup>37</sup> Susan Rose, *Calais: An English Town*, 130.

<sup>38</sup> John D. Fudge, *Commerce and Print*, 198.

<sup>39</sup> John D. Fudge, *Commerce and Print*, 198-9.

“Chronicle.”<sup>40</sup> The reformist thinking he found in Calais convinced Elis to become a Protestant. Second, Henry VIII displayed various religious viewpoints at this time, and during his divorce, church law was in flux. Sir Robert might have felt unconcerned about enforcing the ecclesiastical law and ignored a case he felt lacked merit or justice. The laxity of religious law enforcement in Calais might have contributed to the ease with which Elis obtained and read illicit materials and attended anti-clerical meetings in town. In addition, his behavior illumines Sir Robert Wingfield’s judgment and character. As a learned man and collector of books, he might have had sympathy with educated and scholarly young men led astray of the law through intellectual curiosity, perhaps glossing over the profit motive. It makes sense that he would have a similar interest in a young man like Elis Gruffydd, a soldier with keen interest and skill with language, who wanted to borrow and copy books of all kinds, as well as note his observations of the great events before him.

Elis first visited Calais when Sir Robert attended King Henry VIII at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, near Guines, in 1520. In addition to being a loyal servant to the king, Sir Robert also had a love of books, language skills, and a classical education, which must have given Elis many opportunities.<sup>41</sup> From 1523-1526, Sir Robert was lieutenant of the castle at Calais, then deputy and head of the entire administration of Calais from 1526-1531.<sup>42</sup> During these latter years, Elis served Sir Robert as his overseer at Wingfield Place on Old Fish Street in London, where he remained until 1530.<sup>43</sup> Calais

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<sup>40</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” ff. 472r, 476r.

<sup>41</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, Elis Gruffydd and Multiple Versions of Geoffrey’s *Historia*.

<sup>42</sup> Prys Morgan, “Elis Gruffydd of Gronant-Tudor Chronicler Extraordinary,” *Flintshire Historical Society* 25 (1971/1972): 12.

<sup>43</sup> Prys Morgan, “Elis Gruffydd of Gronant,” 12.

must have made an impression on Elis because in January 1530 he entered the king's service in the Garrison of Calais, where he remained for the rest of his life.<sup>44</sup> Sir Robert likely helped Elis get this spot in the Garrison; such salaried posts were desirable to English soldiers.<sup>45</sup> The needs of the court dictated the award of administrative positions in Calais under Henry VIII; by 1515, members of the royal household held all major offices.<sup>46</sup> Historian David Grummitt detailed that Wolsey was anxious to remove Francophiles from the privy chamber, and therefore sent Sir John Pecche to Calais. Sir Robert Wingfield, thus replaced, was free to return to London and counterbalance the influence of France.<sup>47</sup> By the time Elis began service in the Garrison of Calais, the city was the center and focus of Henry VIII's military attempt to reconquer France, and the glamour and wealth of the earlier Calais were fading.

During the early Tudor period, Calais was England's primary military base, and as elsewhere in the realm, Welshmen served the Tudors.<sup>48</sup> Historian Prys Morgan points out that the unique social and cultural makeup of Calais made the Welsh less noticeable, as well as less disliked by the English with whom they served; they were just one among many diverse racial elements.<sup>49</sup> Several Welshmen served the Tudors in Calais, for example, Sir Huw Conwy of Botryddan was Treasurer of Calais from 1492-1517.<sup>50</sup> He earned this lucrative post by loyal service to the Crown in England, but others received less distinguished administrative positions in Calais, like tax collectors, merchants, or

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<sup>44</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant," 14.

<sup>45</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant," 14.

<sup>46</sup> David Grummitt, *The Calais Garrison* (2008), 75n53.

<sup>47</sup> David Grummitt, *The Calais Garrison* (2008), 75n53.

<sup>48</sup> Prys Morgan, "The Welsh at Calais," *Welsh History Review*, no. 1 (January 1, 1964): 181.

<sup>49</sup> Prys Morgan, "The Welsh at Calais," 181.

<sup>50</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant," 11.

clergy. Some arrived as servants of great men, or even as porters or scullions during royal visits to the town.<sup>51</sup> Many Welshmen in Calais served as soldiers, either moving through the area during the many wars of the sixteenth century or serving the garrison in a more permanent fashion.

In Calais, Elis witnessed the major territorial, religious, and social changes of the period. He was aware that his native land was threatened, its language and legacy disappearing under the withering gaze of English rule. In this environment, Elis began his “Chronicle,” a history for the Welsh, in Welsh, in an effort to preserve their traditional identity. As with any military depot, Calais in the 1530s was rather rough, but it was not without culture and literate society. Elis began taking notes of his experiences at this time, which he later combined in his great “Chronicle.” He was in command of one of the bulwarks surrounding the swamps encircling Calais. Soldiers drained these marshes to provide good farmland under Wingfield’s command, which seemed a good idea until he realized that in doing so, he destroyed Calais’ natural defenses. Elis discussed how unhappy the soldiers serving with him were at the pointless work, as well as the greed and ineptitude of the officers in charge. He also stated that the soldiers’ needs were unmet, particularly their need for artillery, which turned out to be a major reason England lost Calais to France in 1558.<sup>52</sup> Elis provided intelligent commentary about his day-to-day experiences as a soldier in Calais. In addition to military discussion, Elis was always eager to supply good gossip about the various factions both in Calais and at court. He had

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<sup>51</sup> Prys Morgan, “The Welsh at Calais,” 182.

<sup>52</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” NLW 3054D, ff. 583r, 584r.



no qualms about requesting and sharing tales he had heard from fellow soldiers or servants, particularly those from Wales with whom he had a natural affinity.

In the “Chronicle” folios 522r-524v, Elis discussed the effect of reformist faith among the residents of Calais. A division emerged between the Catholic administration of the town and the Protestant garrison in the 1530s. In 1533, Lord Lisle became deputy of Calais; he was a conservative Catholic and enemy of both Sir Robert Wingfield and Thomas Cromwell. Elis claimed to be a Catholic in 1530, but admitted that he and many of his military brethren had become committed, perhaps even extreme, Protestants over the 1530s and 1540s. Elis stated he read Tyndale by 1530 and admired Cromwell, who defended the reformed Protestants at court. Calais as a staple port had been open to the influence of both French and German Protestants since the 1520s. These men and women were likely able to meet and share ideas and books freely, unlike in mainland England. Elis recorded that he read his Bible and attended Protestant services regularly.<sup>53</sup> Historian Prys Morgan thinks that Elis was the first Welsh Protestant who left a written record of his views on religion and the Reformation.<sup>54</sup> While experiencing great upheaval personally and professionally in Calais, Elis also wrote about the effect of the religious upheaval back home in Wales, where people could not enjoy the same freedom and multicultural exposure that Elis enjoyed in Calais.

Celtic scholar Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan argued that most books headed for England passed through Calais, particularly reformist Protestant texts, like the works of Martin Luther.<sup>55</sup> Elis mentioned not only accessing Sir Robert’s library, but also

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<sup>53</sup> Prys Morgan, “Elis Gruffydd of Gronant,” 15.

<sup>54</sup> Prys Morgan, “Elis Gruffydd of Gronant,” 16.

<sup>55</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, *Elis Gruffydd*, 4.

borrowing books on all manner of subjects, including chronicles, medical tracts, poetry, and romances from men of the town. Some had large libraries; for example, Lord Berners, an earlier deputy of Calais, had a collection of eighty books in Latin and French, though these lack an inventory.<sup>56</sup> This was quite an achievement for a private collector. By the early seventeenth century, Lambeth Palace library contained around 8,000 books, making it one of the largest libraries in England, and the University of Cambridge held about 1,000 volumes.<sup>57</sup>

Elis also discussed seeing old books in Calais in the hands of town elders.<sup>58</sup> Elis failed to mention when he first conceived the idea to write a chronicle, or how long he had been taking notes or collecting and compiling translations and native material he came across for use in the future. He was often very mysterious about his sources, both oral and written, but he certainly had the opportunity to see, read, and copy many books in Calais. Even when he mentioned his sources, tracing them can prove difficult. For example, in Cwrtmawr 1, his “Medical Text,” Elis described a series of remedies for stomachache that he had discovered in “old books” in Calais, one of which belonged to a burgher named Burden.<sup>59</sup> Though Elis had access to many books while in London, some of the printed ones he used were only published after he settled in Calais in 1530.

The cultural and social milieu of Calais from the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520 until the Fall of Calais to the French in 1558 provided Elis the opportunity to read widely, and meet and consort with a great variety of people from all over Europe. Calais

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<sup>56</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, *Elis Gruffydd*, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Springer, email to author, May 31, 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, *Elis Gruffydd*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> MS Cwrtmawr 1, National Library of Wales, f. 819.

was a great melting pot of religion, class, and society all linked through a dependence on trade and the military. A resident of Calais at this time might have engaged in questionable activities relatively freely, and people were unlikely to remark upon any strangeness, due to the transient nature of port society. Successful trade depended upon tolerance. Calais was the perfect place for Elis the refugee to preserve and compile the notes he had gathered over the years, in his forbidden native language, unnoticed in his rooms near the Garrison.

### Chapter 3: Elis and His World

The time and space in which Elis lived provided him with unique opportunities and challenges. He stood on the brink of modernity, the feudal system giving way to the rise of the nation-state. The printing press and book trade allowed him access to a broad range of information, and his location in a staple port guaranteed that new ideas would be available to him through print. He lived in a military outpost and trading hub, which likely gave him current information about important events, and his position allowed him to observe many of them. Europe in the sixteenth century was in the midst of the Protestant Reformation, one of the most divisive periods in its history. The administrative assimilation of Wales attempted by Henry VIII with the Acts of Union gave Elis a clear understanding of England's intention to disempower and replace his native language and culture, which likely drove him to write his "Chronicle" as resistance against the Crown.

Because he lived in a tumultuous time, at the intersection of the medieval and modern periods, Elis was a transitional figure, and he illustrated this in his text by using examples from each style of historical writing. He grew up in an oral tradition, learning poems and tales by heart, which he later retold in his writings; however, these texts evolved from a medieval-style collection to a critically analyzed chronicle as the man himself evolved. Elis collected and translated stories as a medieval author might, but the early modern influence disposed him to take a more active role in writing history. For example, even when recounting traditional Welsh tales, he analyzed them, comparing and providing variations, and commenting upon their likely veracity and value as sources.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd and Multiple Versions of Geoffrey's *Historia*." Digital Collection, University of Brest. Accessed January 1, 2017. [https://www.univ-brest.fr/digitalAssets/36/36990\\_Ceridwen-Lloyd-Morgan-com---crite-Aber.pdf](https://www.univ-brest.fr/digitalAssets/36/36990_Ceridwen-Lloyd-Morgan-com---crite-Aber.pdf).

This type of literary criticism was a practice of early modern historians, particularly those from France, who observed and provided commentary, as opposed to late medieval monastic scribes, who simply copied. In addition, authors of the Middle Ages typically wrote in Latin; Elis, like early modern writers influenced by the Renaissance, chose to use the vernacular. Medieval chroniclers were normally churchmen, but Elis was a layman; moving away from monastic authorship was a trend in the early modern period. Perhaps most important, he focused on causation in his “Chronicle,” which is a characteristic of sixteenth-century historians who were challenging the way medieval authors wrote history. Rather than just presenting an event, early modern writers were interested in analyzing the causes that led up to the event, critically examining sources, and using their skill as historians to provide insight rather than a string of copied notations.

This reflection of past and future in his work and life make Elis a fascinating character. In addition, he lived at a geographical hub between the continent and England, in Calais, a center of both trade and military focus. Exposure to new ideas helped Elis to develop as both a person and a writer. Among other things, this environment led to a crisis of faith, as Elis changed from Catholic to Protestant.

Elis viewed Henry VII as a savior of the Welsh people and a second Owain, but he left Wales to its own devices.<sup>2</sup> Henry VIII was a different sort of ruler, with a much more hands-on approach to the principality, as well as to the Christian faith. Elis observed the king’s initial staunch resistance to Protestantism, and likely saw many on

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<sup>2</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” NLW manuscripts 5276D and 3054D, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, ff. 285-288.

the Continent choose the reformist faith as a protest against their rulers. Perhaps his conversion had something to do with his own resistance, another way to assert his identity and independence from the strictures of the Crown. His religious transformation was contemporaneous with the enactment of the Acts of Union, so perhaps he thought that by resisting the prohibition on reformist faiths, he was also rebelling against the destruction of Welsh language and culture. Additionally, the Protestant resistance theory held that it was acceptable to rebel against an unjust ruler for a number of reasons, not just religious ones, so he may have felt that the policies of the English crown warranted resistance in many forms, including his change of faith and writing of his “Chronicle.”

Elis was aware of the threat his native land faced, both historical and contemporary, and he felt a duty to use the skills and knowledge he had to preserve that linguistic and literary tradition. Although the stories he recounted were medieval, his choice to use a vernacular language to write narrative history reflected an early-modern trend, again exemplifying his transitional state. Elis had learned these traditional legends, poems, and tales during his childhood, and he often added them into his narrative when appropriate. For example, he described a delightful story about the romance of Catherine of Valois (1401-1437), widow of Henry V, and Owen Tudor (c.1400-1461) who founded the Tudor dynasty.<sup>3</sup> He recounted the history of Jasper Tudor (1431-1495), uncle of Henry VII and architect of his rise, as well as of the bloody Battle of Towton in 1461.<sup>4</sup> In addition, he included the story of “The Princes in the Tower,” young sons and heirs of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville, who were allegedly imprisoned and murdered by

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<sup>3</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” ff. 305v-307v. This text may be found in Appendix A, document 3.

<sup>4</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” ff. 322v-324r. This text may be found in Appendix A, documents 4 and 5.

their uncle, Lord Protector Richard Duke of Gloucester around 1483.<sup>5</sup> A literary historian like Elis was the heir to the knowledge of the poet/prophets of Medieval Wales, and he would have felt a similar responsibility to maintain the information exactly as learned to continue the preservation of his native culture.

The earliest literary tradition in Wales was oral, the first orthography derived from Latin. It appeared in marginalia and glosses in the eighth century.<sup>6</sup> Trained poets were the traditional keepers of Welsh history, which they performed orally. In ancient and medieval Celtic societies, the bards corresponded to the priestly class in terms of the threefold division of Proto-Indo-European society as postulated by comparative philologist Georges Dumézil (1898-1986) in his books *Flamen-Brahman* in 1929, and *Mitra-Varuna* in 1940. Dumézil argued that Indo-European society reflected a tripartite ideology, or three castes, which included the priest, warrior, and commoner.<sup>7</sup> These distinctions were associated with respective functions: sovereignty, which was the realm of the priest who originated in the supernatural realm and could be both powerful and unpredictable. The warrior represented the power of brute force in a society, through war and the military. Finally, the commoners reflected the productive class, those who grew and harvested food, cared for animals, and created items. The priestly and warrior castes ruled the commoner caste. Dumézil found this tripartite ideology in many aspects of Indo-European society, particularly in social organization and mythmaking.

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<sup>5</sup> Elis Gruffydd, "Chronicle," ff. 339v-340r. This text may be found in Appendix A, document 6.

<sup>6</sup> Brynley F. Roberts, "Oral Tradition and Welsh Literature: A Description and Survey," *Oral Tradition* 3, no. 1-2 (1988): 61.

<sup>7</sup> J. Gonda, "Dumézil's Tripartite Ideology: Some Critical Observations," *Journal of Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (1974): 139.

In ancient and medieval Wales, the bards filled the priestly function, and their role was to memorize and memorialize the history of their tribes, cultures, and patrons. This historical and genealogical information was sacred. The Welsh literary tradition is among the oldest in Northern Europe, dating to at least the sixth century with the poetry of Aneirin and Taliesin (second half of the sixth century).<sup>8</sup> This earliest period of Welsh poetry was *Y Cynfeirdd* and contained the verse from the earliest sources up until the Norman Conquest in around 1100. These men trained in history as well as music and mastered the complicated meters required by Welsh poetry. Their contemporary performances were oral, and other poets memorized and performed their works. For example, in Aneirin's masterwork *Y Gododdin*, the introduction of the oldest extant copy (thirteenth century) states, "This is *Y Gododdin*: Aneirin sang it."<sup>9</sup> Although a scribe copied the poem hundreds of years after the historical Aneirin lived, the meter, language, and subjects belonged to his contemporary sixth century. In accordance with their function and training, bards repeated the poems verbatim until it became culturally acceptable to write them down.

The tenth-century *Laws of Hywel Dda* laid out the rights and duties of the bard, which guaranteed them both a harp and a position of honor at the royal courts. As in Ireland, Welsh poets trained at bardic schools, where they learned the history of Wales, the complicated traditional meters and songs, the genealogies, and tales. This information was confined to the poets, and completion of the training required complete memorization of this material before the bard was allowed to leave the school. This

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<sup>8</sup> Ifor Williams, "Aneirin" and "Taliesin", In *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, National Library of Wales, <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s-TALI-ESI-0575.html?query=taliesin&field=content>.

<sup>9</sup> Ifor Williams, *Canu Aneirin* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1938).



historic memory served a necessary and vital function in the structure of medieval Welsh society.<sup>10</sup>

Poetry at that time was a craft, and, like many medieval crafts, the skill was sometimes passed down from generation to generation, in the same way that lineage was important throughout Western Europe because it granted hereditary rights.<sup>11</sup> Evidence of bardic families is scarcer in Wales than in Ireland, but one can find hereditary Welsh poets, particularly in the early medieval period. J.E. Caerwyn Williams suggested that perhaps the development of the bardic schools in Wales lessened the role of families in the transmission of the craft.<sup>12</sup> However, he notes that in the thirteenth century *Llawysgrif Hendregadredd*, the difference between two contestants in a poetic contest was that one was descended from poetic stock.<sup>13</sup> The so-called seats or chairs were awarded to poets who won competitions; attaining a seat meant a poet was now permitted by law to take pupils and request payment from them, and are the ancestor of the *Eisteddfod* (Chairing) poetry competition which exists even today.

The earliest Welsh writers of traditional narrative history wrote in Latin and relied on remembered bardic performance to glean historical and genealogical data for their compositions.<sup>14</sup> For example, Giraldus Cambrensis (c.1146-c.1223), who wrote during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, listed the genealogies of the princes of north and south Wales, which he claimed to have received from Welsh poets and the

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<sup>10</sup> J.E. Caerwyn Williams, *Meilr Brydydd and Gruffydd ap Cynan: a Collaborative Biography* (Martlesham: Boydell Press), 165.

<sup>11</sup> J.E. Caerwyn Williams, *Meilr Brydydd*, 166.

<sup>12</sup> J.E. Caerwyn Williams, *Meilr Brydydd*, 166

<sup>13</sup> J.E. Caerwyn Williams, *Meilr Brydydd*, 166.

<sup>14</sup> Brynley F. Roberts, "Oral Tradition and Welsh Literature: A Description and Survey," *Oral Tradition* 3, no. 1-2 (1988): 67.

*datgeiniaid* (reciters) of their tales. Giraldus found that even the most common Welshman was proud of his genealogy and would recite it to the seventh generation to whoever would listen.<sup>15</sup> Even so, nobody infringed upon the powers and rights of the Welsh bards or poets. History was theirs to know and disperse, and people disrespected or pressured them to their cost.

As Dumézil stated, Welsh poets were powerful and unpredictable. They straddled the line between sacred and profane, this world and the otherworld.<sup>16</sup> They praised their patrons and heaped scorn upon their enemies in poetic form. The words themselves were so powerful that receiving satire from a poet was enough to cause physical harm and even death.<sup>17</sup> The power of poetic satire exists in both Ireland and Wales; in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Rosalind finds love poems left for her in the woods and remarks, "I was never so berhymed since Pythagoras' time that I was an Irish rat," recalling the popular English belief that Irish bards could rhyme rats to death. Shakespeare's contemporaries Phillip Sidney and Ben Jonson echoed this belief, also mentioning Irish verse killing rats.<sup>18</sup> Popular belief held that both Welsh and Irish poets had the gift of prophecy, and were even able to turn the tides of battle with their recitations and songs.<sup>19</sup>

This obligation allowed the Welsh identity and language to persevere through centuries of invasions, migrations, and colonization. From Roman times, the Celts had

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<sup>15</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, *Opera*, vi 167-8.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 21.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick K. Ford, *The Celtic Poets* (Belmont: Ford and Baile, 1999), xxviii.

<sup>18</sup> Patrick K. Ford, *The Celtic Poets*, xxix and <https://www.irishcentral.com/roots/history/in-shakespeares-time-irish-poetry-had-the-power-to-kill-rats>.

<sup>19</sup> Patrick K. Ford, *The Celtic Poets*, xxv. As early as the first century BCE, Greek Strabo wrote that Celtic priests were diviners, and Diodorus Siculus and Posidonius wrote similarly. They had otherworldly powers and were always on hand at battles to rally the forces.

been pushed northward and westward until they lived only in Brittany, Britain, and Ireland. By the sixth century, the Welsh dwelt in southwest Scotland (Strathclyde) and western Britain as the Germanic tribes invaded from the southeast. During the Norman incursions, the Welsh were pushed further west, past the Wye in the south, and they remained in that area through the Tudor period and beyond. Through all of this, the traditional memory of Wales as the rightful heir to the whole of Britain remained through the work of the poets and authors. Elis was not just a chronicler, he was a source of hope and inspiration that the Welsh had survived through oppressions before, and would again rule as the prophecies had promised.

While the Welsh were keeping their history and genealogy in the minds and mouths of the bards, other European countries developed a different way to keep their history: the chronicle. There are two types of chronicle, living and dead. A living chronicle continues to add contemporary details as time passes, such as annals. A dead chronicle lists past events up to the time of writing, and no further. For historians, a live chronicle is more valuable, as the information contained is more immediate. Chronicles are simply a chronological listing of historical events, without analysis. Traditionally, items listed have equal weight and are not included or excluded based upon the chronicler's preferences. A chronicle that encompasses the history of the world is a universal chronicle. The trustworthiness of any historical text depends on the reliability of its sources, whether discovered by observation, hearing or reading. The chronicle became an important way to record history and events during the Middle Ages and was usually written and maintained in religious houses, which often included scriptoria for the copying of religious manuscripts. As such, the abbeys and monasteries had access to

historical material as well as to learned clerics to copy them into chronicle form, usually using Latin. Their points of view were local and narrow since they copied only what they personally saw, read, and heard, without analysis or editing.

The *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle (300-1500 CE)* currently lists approximately 2500 texts, although these chronicles cover an extremely broad range geographically, temporally, and thematically.<sup>20</sup> Among them, several dozen texts document the history of England. Most substantial of these is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, written in Old English beginning in the ninth century and continuing to 1154.<sup>21</sup> Gildas (6th century) and Bede (8th century) wrote earlier Latin texts about Britain but these were not in chronicle form. Other important English chronicles were written by Henry of Huntingdon (*Historia Anglorum*, in Latin, ending upon the accession of Henry II in 1154); Giraldus Cambrensis (several, in Latin, twelfth century); Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon* (in Latin, fourteenth century). Other than the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, churchmen wrote most English chronicles in Latin, at the behest of a bishop or noble. The chronicle format required little historical analysis, and the bias of patronage is apparent in these texts.

Although Elis drew heavily on Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannia* in his recounting of the story of Arthur, he also utilized Welsh tradition in the narrative whenever possible, particularly comparatively.<sup>22</sup> In much of this part of the text, he carried on in the bardic tradition of preservation of native themes, archaic linguistic

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<sup>20</sup> Rosalind Brown-Grant, "The *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle* ed. Graeme Dunphy," *Modern Language Review* 107, no. 4 (2012): 1226-1228.

<sup>21</sup> *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: Introduction, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/medieval/angsaxintro.asp>.

<sup>22</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd Morgan. "Elis Gruffydd and Multiple Versions of Geoffrey's *Historia*."

and metrical forms, and prophetic visions. In particular, the theme of a *mab darogan* ran through the “Chronicle” from Arthur in the sixth century to Henry Tudor in the sixteenth. Elis used native sources wherever possible, which exemplified his effort to maintain Welsh tradition and language. In addition, rather than relying on the medieval chronicle tradition as his source, he gathered and critically analyzed different sources for the same period, providing commentary and insight about them, in an early modern manner.

His “Chronicle” preserved the oldest extant version of *Ystoria Taliesin*, the tale of a historical Welsh poet with a Celtic backstory of divine inspiration whom Elis links with the legendary Merlin, another historical poet subsumed by mythology and legend. He recounted that in Welsh tradition, Taliesin and Merlin were the same poet in different ages, and rationalized this for the modern audience by placing his version of *The Death of Merlin* immediately after his *Story of Taliesin* in the “Chronicle,” though they existed centuries apart in the timeline. Both tales owed a great deal to native oral tradition and showed the centrality of Welsh history to the Arthurian romances so popular in the Middle Ages.<sup>23</sup> Elis’s treatment of the Taliesin/Merlin stories is an example of his own transitional position between medieval and early modern narrative history. Although the stories are medieval in nature and source, his treatment of them is early modern. For example, rather than simply presenting the tales as remembered or written, he used historical criticism and judgment when he decided that the tales were two reflections of the same person and placed them together in his “Chronicle.” This allowed him to apply

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<sup>23</sup> Patrick K. Ford, “The Death of Merlin,” *Viator*, 7 (1976): 380.

his own rationale to the legends, and provide a sensible resolution to his developing modern mind. As a man in transition, both periods influenced him.

The earliest history from Wales is the *Annales Cambriae* (*Annals of Wales*) a simple timeline, written in Latin, which dates to the tenth century. It survived in twelfth and thirteenth-century copies, compiled at St. David's in Wales, and listed events in Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and England from 447-954 CE.<sup>24</sup> This text is the oldest chronicle of Welsh events available and is notable for containing two references to King Arthur. Next, the *Brut y Tywysogion* (*Chronicle of the Princes*) covered the period from 681-1282, the defeat of the last native Prince of Wales. The Latin original dates to the thirteenth century, but had not survived; three Welsh translations are extant, the most complete of which is contained in Peniarth MS 20. The original Latin annals were probably written at Strata Florida Abbey, near Aberystwyth, and then kept at the abbey of Llanbadarn Fawr. Finally, it returned to Strata Florida for scribes to copy it into Welsh.<sup>25</sup> This text began with the death of Cadwaladr in 682, and the early entries focused on natural events like disease, crop failures, and deaths. Later listings focused more on the rulers of the Welsh principalities and the events of the Church, but the point of view remains narrow, only rarely mentioning events in England or Ireland.

The viewpoint widens geographically with the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1095-c. 1155), who wrote the *Historia Regum Britanniae* in the mid-twelfth century. He wrote the history of Britain from the Trojan warrior Aeneas through the classical period

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<sup>24</sup> *The Annales Cambriae 447-954*, Fordham University Medieval Sourcebook, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/annalescambriae.asp>.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Remfry, *Annales Cambriae* (United Kingdom: Castle Studies Research and Publishing, 2007), 2.

up to the death of Cadwaladr. He included many tales about the Welsh, in particular, the pseudohistory surrounding King Arthur and the Matter of Britain, which authors later compiled into the European prose romances that became popular in the thirteenth century and beyond. Geoffrey claimed to have translated an ancient British book into Latin, but he likely used known Welsh sources, tales, and folklore as his sources.<sup>26</sup> Authors viewed the *Historia* uncritically for centuries, and historians of British history up to and including Raphael Holinshed (1529-1580) in the sixteenth century used the text as factual. Geoffrey's portrayal of Arthur and his court still has an important influence on popular culture.

Elis had a colleague and fellow chronicler stationed in his unit in Calais, Richard Turpyn (c.1506-c.1541), who called himself a Burgess of Calais. He worked as a constabulary at the Calais Garrison in 1530, at the same time that Elis was there.<sup>27</sup> Turpyn began his *Chronicle of Calais* with the year 1487, then 1489, then 1492 and so on until he reached the period of his own lifetime, where he included multiple entries per year. His entries were not descriptive and lack detail; for example, his entry for August 13, 1514, stated, "Peace was proclaimed betwyxt the kyngs of England and Fraunce."<sup>28</sup> This referred to the treaty negotiated by Wolsey in the War of the League of Cambrai signed between England and France on August 7, 1514. This lack of insight and comment was typical of Turpyn's chronicle, a reflection of the medieval past. Elis was different, adding commentary throughout his "Chronicle," and providing details and variations

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<sup>26</sup> Geoffrey Ashe, "'A Certain Very Ancient Book' Traces of an Arthurian Source in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*." *Speculum* 56, no. 2 (Summer, 1981): 304.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Turpyn, *The Chronicle of Calais: In the Reigns of Henry VII, and Henry VIII*, xiv.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Turpyn, *The Chronicle of Calais*, 16.

whenever possible in early-modern style. In addition, Turpyn's text only covered the years 1487-1540, fifty years in total, compared to Elis's universal history, and the *Chronicle of Calais* contained fifty-eight folios rather than the nearly 2500 folios that made up Elis's "Chronicle" text.<sup>29</sup>

Another contemporary was Edward Hall (1497-1547) who wrote *The Union of Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke*, known as *Hall's Chronicle*. He was the son of a wealthy Merchant of the Staple in London, attended Eton, then Cambridge, and graduated in 1518. He was a lawyer through the 1530s and was twice elected a Member of Parliament. His chronicle began in 1399, and described the turmoil during the Wars of the Roses, continuing until the death of Henry VIII in 1547. Hall was sympathetic to the Protestants and biased in favor of the English king. Like Elis, he served as an observer of the events of the time, and both refer to some common sources, including Froissart.<sup>30</sup> He intended his text to be printed since he left the manuscript with Richard Grafton (c.1506-1573), the king's printer.<sup>31</sup> His education and political aspirations likely colored his description and interpretation of events, and his plan for publication suggests that his intent was to please the Tudor king. Elis was a common soldier, and his choice to write in Welsh gave him the freedom to express himself without restraint. He had no plan to print his manuscript, which allowed him to work at his own pace and cover topics of interest to him.

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<sup>29</sup> Jeff Kattenhorn, Manuscripts and Maps, The British Library, email to the author, April 25, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Hall, *The Union of Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke* (London: J. Johnson et al., 1809), vi.

<sup>31</sup> "The Making of the *Chronicles*," *The Holinshed Project*, Oxford University, <http://www.cems.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/chronicles.shtml>.



Hall and Elis wrote with different tones. For example, at the Field of the Cloth of Gold near Calais in June 1520, Hall focused on the richness of the celebration: “so the two kynges with all louely honor met with bare heddes, and embrased other in suche fashion, that all that beheld them reioysed,”<sup>32</sup> to describe the meeting of the two kings. When recalling the banquet, he wrote,

To tell the riches of the clothes of estates, the basens and other vessels whiche was there occupied, I assure you my wit is insufficient, for there was nothing occupied that night, but all of gold. The Frech kyng was serued iii. courses, and his meat dressed after the Frech fashion, and the kyng of England had like courses after thenglishe fashion <sup>33</sup>

By contrast, Elis wrote with much more description and humor. In that same year, he joined Henry VIII in Kent to welcome Germaine de Foix (1488-1538), dowager queen of Aragon and wrote,

That day...the Queen of Aragon took leave of the king and the queens ... (and) it was not without justification that she took so long over her journey, for she really was able to ride only a very short way in a day, because she had gone so far in old age, and she was one of the fattest and fleshiest women I ever saw. Yet although the stoutness of the flesh spoilt her shape, it spoilt the colour of her skin not at all, and her skin was certainly more beautiful than the skin of any of the ladies there gathered. Furthermore, her hair was fair and long, her eyes large and blue, her face

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<sup>32</sup> Edward Hall, *The Union of Two Noble*, 791.

<sup>33</sup> Edward Hall, *The Union of Two Noble*, 793.

wide and muscular, her neck strong, with rolls of flesh round it... So in this manner as I have related, the Queen made her way-very slowly-to Sandwich.<sup>34</sup>

Elis's detailed and enjoyable description provided much greater insight into events than was the norm for English chroniclers of his period. This characterization might not have made it into printed or sanctioned histories, but it was an example of the sense of humor and writing skill Elis employed and developed while writing his "Chronicle," which is uncommon when compared to his contemporaries like Hall.

Written at the same time as Elis's "Chronicle", Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* is a natural text for comparison. Both authors wrote in a chronicle style and completed their texts within twenty-five years of one another. These were extremely ambitious projects; where Elis's Chronicle contained nearly 2500 large handwritten folios, Holinshed's contained 2835 printed small folio pages.<sup>35</sup> Both authors attempted to write universal, or world, histories, and wrote in the early modern style of narrative history.

The similarities, however, disappear upon closer review. Although the *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* bears Holinshed's name as author, printer and bookseller Reyner Wolfe (d. on or before 1574) first conceived the project and commissioned his assistant Holinshed to cover the portion relating to the British Isles. Various monarchs in the British Isles patronized Wolfe, so the text needed to be approved

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<sup>34</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant," Observation of Germaine de Foix, widowed queen of Aragon, 12 f. 422b. This text is available in Appendix A, document 7.

<sup>35</sup> "The Making of the *Chronicles*," *The Holinshed Project*.

by them as well as profitable. In total at least eight men wrote this *Chronicles*, with the help of numerous printers and publishers.<sup>36</sup> Once the text was complete, Londoner Henry Bynneman printed the first edition of the *Chronicles* in 1577, as he had obtained the privilege for “all Chronicles and histories whatsoever.”<sup>37</sup>

Holinshed’s text became a reference for the Elizabethan view of history from its publication. Elizabeth I’s (1533-1603) chief advisor and secretary of state, Lord Burghley (1520-1598), used it, as had poets Philip Sidney (1554-1586) and Edmond Spenser (1552-1599). William Shakespeare (1564-1616) used the *Chronicles* extensively when writing *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. Holinshed is known not only as a source for contemporary statesmen, courtiers, and writers but also as the pinnacle of Tudor historiography.<sup>38</sup>

By contrast, Elis had no patron for his project; no monarch or publisher had commissioned his “Chronicle.” There was little chance for his work to be printed; without patronage, the cost for such a large project was prohibitive. If he had intended his project to be widely read or commercially successful, he would have written it in something other than Middle Welsh. The first Welsh book, *Yn y Llyvr Hwnn*, was printed in London in 1546, written by Sir John Price of Brecon (1501-1555). In 1567, the first New Testament was translated into Welsh by William Salesbury (c.1520-c.1584), followed by the first printed Welsh Bible by William Morgan (1545-1604) in 1588. Elis

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<sup>36</sup> “The Making of the *Chronicles*,” *The Holinshed Project*.

<sup>37</sup> “The Making of the *Chronicles*,” *The Holinshed Project*.

<sup>38</sup> “The Making of the *Chronicles*,” *The Holinshed Project*.

completed his manuscript thirty-six years earlier, in 1552, and conceived of it decades before that. He surely never intended for it to be printed, profitable, or widely accessible.

Lacking a patron was freeing and allowed Elis to write what he wished and form his own opinions. Holinshed was writing for Elizabeth I and the Tudor dynasty; Elis was writing for himself and his community back home in Wales. That is not to say that Elis had no biases, he surely had them, but they were his own and not placed upon him by a noble patron. Holinshed's *Chronicles* was beset with problems of censorship, and many original passages to do with contemporary politics were stricken and replaced in the second edition.<sup>39</sup> Abraham Fleming (1552-1602), a committed Protestant clergyman, undertook the rewrites.<sup>40</sup> Elis never experienced censorship while producing his "Chronicle," and by using the Welsh language; he avoided the uncomfortable situation of anyone other than a Welshman reading his text. Whereas Holinshed wrote in English to appease and satisfy those in power, Elis wrote in Welsh to address the oppression of and discrimination against his native Welsh language and culture.

Elis also experienced a different education from Holinshed and his co-authors, who like many other writers of the period, were taught at a university. Elis likely received the type of schooling available at the time in rural Wales, primarily through religious organizations or tutors at home. Few schools existed for the masses before 1650, when the Commonwealth required a school in every Welsh urban center.<sup>41</sup> Wealthy gentry,

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<sup>39</sup> "The Making of the *Chronicles*," The Holinshed Project.

<sup>40</sup> "The Making of the *Chronicles*," The Holinshed Project.

<sup>41</sup> "Culture and Religion in Early Modern Wales (part 2)," *Waleshistory*, BBC, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/guide/ch14\\_part2\\_culture\\_and\\_religion.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/guide/ch14_part2_culture_and_religion.shtml).

often natives of England, sent their children to English public schools or hired private tutors, but as of 1603, only eighteen grammar schools existed in Welsh towns.<sup>42</sup>

After the Acts of Union removed Welsh as the language of law and administration, there was greater demand for the teaching of the English language. The vast majority of the population at that time was monoglot Welsh, so it was vital that the professional classes of lawyers, traders, and merchants learn English. Sixteenth-century Wales was overwhelmingly rural, with an estimated population of about 250,000, and until the Reformation, formal education was the purview of the Church. Schools were located in market towns with cathedrals or monasteries for the provision of both students and teachers.<sup>43</sup> Since he had to leave his homeland in search of work, his family was not likely able to afford formal education for him. Instead, he might have received education from a tutor in the home, perhaps an educated Mostyn cousin, in English and French to help with his career. He probably gained his knowledge of traditional literature and mythology at gatherings or evenings by the fire. This is markedly different from the university education many of his contemporary authors received, and contributed to Elis's numerous inclusions of traditional narrative into his texts.

Elis began his "Chronicle" with the Creation, continuing in a *Sex Aetatis Mundi* (*Six Ages of Man*) format, a method of Christian periodization initially outlined by Saint Augustine in c. 400 CE that was popular in the Middle Ages.<sup>44</sup> Although the

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<sup>42</sup> "Culture and Religion in Early Modern Wales (part 2)," *Waleshistory*.

<sup>43</sup> Gareth Elwyn Jones and Gordon Wynne Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 7.

<sup>44</sup> "Elis Gruffydd's Chronicle," National Library of Wales, <https://www.library.wales/discover/digital-gallery/manuscripts/early-modern-period/elis-gruffudds-chronicle/>.

periodization was medieval, Elis was influenced by the early-modern period in his use of the vernacular, his historical analysis, and his interest in causation. He divided the “Chronicle” into two parts; the first covered the period from Creation until the Norman Conquest, and the second from 1066 until the last entry in 1552. Elis spent a proportionally small amount of time on the first five ages, Creation to the birth of Christ, which represented only a quarter of the total folios and approximately one-half of the first section of the text. The majority of the “Chronicle” covered the sixth age or the Christian Age. Elis focused on the history of the British Isles and France throughout. Using Geoffrey of Monmouth and native tradition, Elis traced Welsh ancestry via King Arthur back to Brutus of the Roman Empire, whose grandfather was Aeneas of Troy. Legend stated that Brutus founded Britain, or Albion, around 1170 BCE.<sup>45</sup> In this way, Elis portrayed the Welsh as they saw themselves—the original Britons, who will one day regain their rule over the island.<sup>46</sup> After his victory at Bosworth Field in 1485, the Welsh viewed Henry VII as their kinsman who had returned to claim his throne in accordance with prophecy.

The theme of a hero returning to Wales in order to reconquer Britain has its roots deep in Welsh cultural and literary tradition. This messianic figure, the *mab darogan* (son who was promised,) began to appear in heroic poetry during the Saxon invasions. The first *mab darogan* was the quasi-historical sixth-century king Arthur (d.537-539?), who Nennius mentioned in the ninth century *Historia Brittonum* as fighting the Saxon

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<sup>45</sup> J. Gwynfor Jones, “The Welsh Gentry and the Image of the Cambro-Britain, c. 1603-1625,” *Welsh History Review* 20, no. 4 (December 1, 2001): 616.

<sup>46</sup> Nicolas Jacobs, “The ‘Stanzas of the Months’: Maxims from Late Medieval Wales,” *Medium Aevum* 70, no.2 (2001): 253.

invaders in 516 and 518, but had not appeared in earlier extant poems. A tenth-century Welsh poem called *Armes Prydein (The Prophecy of Britain)* described a future Celtic and Viking alliance, which might push the Anglo-Saxons out of Britain. This hearkened back to traditional Welsh heroes Cadwallon (d.634) and his son Cadwaladr (633-682), who reigned during the seventh century. The next were Llywelyn ab Iorwerth (c.1173-1240) and his grandson Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (c.1223-1282), who were named as sons of prophecy in several twelfth and thirteenth-century poems. In the fourteenth century, the *mab darogan* was Owain Lawgoch (c.1330-1378), whom poets prophesied was the liberator of France and conqueror of England. The next so named, Owain Glyndŵr (c.1359-c.1415) came close to freeing Wales and even conquered some of England during his revolt from 1400-1415. This concept was part of Elis's native tradition, which he utilized throughout his "Chronicle" when describing these historical figures. He consulted Welsh manuscripts as well as remembered popular tales, which he called *sathredic* (trampled). In addition to these accounts from home, Elis also included stories from France as well as England in his narrative.<sup>47</sup> His comparative use of multiple sources illustrated his development as a writer in the early-modern period, as opposed to the medieval practice of simply collecting and copying texts.

In the late fifteenth century, Henry Tudor (Henry VII) took up the mantle of the *mab darogan*, and the Welsh treated him as one of their own. Elis called him "a second Owain" in reference to the *mab darogan* prophecy.<sup>48</sup> They supported the new king and he rewarded them with places at his court. Henry VII did not interfere with the

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<sup>47</sup> Elis Gruffydd, "Chronicle," f. 280r.

<sup>48</sup> Elis Gruffydd, "Chronicle," f. 288r.

administration or law of Wales, which had been largely intact since the defeat of Llewelyn ap Gruffydd in 1282 and enactment of the Statute of Rhuddlan (1284) by Edward I.<sup>49</sup> In 1509, Henry VII died, leaving as his heir Henry VIII. Elis left Flintshire in around 1510 to join the Tudors in London, as had many Welshmen of his time, assuming that, as Henry VII was notably generous in employing his kinsmen from Wales, so too would be his son Henry VIII.<sup>50</sup> Official state documents named hundreds of Welsh as settlers in London during the early sixteenth century.<sup>51</sup>

Henry VIII took a different approach to governing Wales, and determined the Welsh needed a strong hand at the helm to control their rebellious natures.<sup>52</sup> This king effectuated policies that both disenfranchised and denigrated his Welsh subjects, culminating in the Acts of Union of 1534 and 1542. Although they saw his father as their own representative redressing their losses, they viewed Henry VIII as both villain and threat, due to these policies. Making matters worse, he feared a rebellious alliance between his Celtic subjects of Wales and Ireland, joined with Scotland, which made his actions against these nations even harsher, sparking more resistance.<sup>53</sup> Elis wrote amidst these conflicts and repressions, which likely affected his point of view when speaking with rebels in Calais, or reading illicit literature, making him receptive to the idea of writing resistance literature himself.

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<sup>49</sup> The Statute of Rhuddlan, among other things, provided the notion of common law to the Principality of Wales, although it left Welsh law and administration intact. It also allowed daughters to inherit when no male heir existed, and disallowed illegitimate children from inheriting.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Jones, "A Welsh Chronicler in Tudor England," *Welsh History Review* (January 1, 1960): 2.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Jones, "A Welsh Chronicler," 2-3.

<sup>52</sup> Rees Davies, "Wales: A Culture Preserved," BBC.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Marshall, "James ap Gruffydd ap Hywel and the International Opposition to Henry VIII," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 39, no. 3 (Fall, 2008): 687.



After the Acts of Union forbade the use of Welsh in law, education, or administration, English was required to attain governmental jobs or positions in the church or military or to improve social standing. Englishmen both berated and feared the native Welsh, and considered them rude and barbaric, so the superior English needed to civilize them through their language and mores. Dr. Geraint Jenkins wrote that “Crude and hostile caricatures of the bone-headed Welsh multiplied, and it was widely assumed that such a sleepy backwater stood in urgent need of a healthy dose of English Law.”<sup>54</sup> In the sixteenth century, English people generally thought that they were civilized and the Welsh were not. Even more dangerous to their faith in English civility was that it would degenerate through contact with the Welsh, who were by their nature criminals. The “Bill Concerning Councils in Wales” from the early 1530s stated that the Welsh in the Marcher lordships,

Doo (succor) theymselffes in theyr thefte and myschiffes have contrived amonges theym to prescribe that they ought not to com ne aunswer for non offence by any of theym comytted in the said countie (Solop) or in any where elles but only in theyr owne courtes there to take theyr tryall amonges theyr own frindes to be sure to escape unpunished in the same courtes/Where also noo evidences is exceptable brought by any fforeyne or straunger onlesse than he be of the same lordship where the felon inh(ab)itith though the evidence of an Englishman be never soo good and playne/By reason wherof your saide oratours ar(e) night and day robbed

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<sup>54</sup> Geraint H. Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 132.

and spoyled of theyr goodes withoute any reformacon or remedy had in that behalf by the saide tenants and inhabitants of lordship in the saide m(ar)ches/Where no good rule ne justice is kept to the undoing and empov(er)ishing of your saide oratours and to the p(er)illous ensample and audacitie to misdoers and theyr children hereafter to continue in their wikydnes and abhomyacon.<sup>55</sup>

The Welsh initially fought their oppressors. In The Statutes of Wales, the Act of 1534 claimed that the Welsh were full of discontent and turbulence at the presence of the English garrison, and continued to commit diverse “thefts, murders, rebellions, willful burning of houses, and other scelerous deeds, to the high displeasure of God, (and) disquiet of the King’s well-disposed subjects.”<sup>56</sup> English Bishop Rowland Lee despaired of the shiring of Wales as the region lacked enough decent and godly men to serve as justice, jury, or other administrative posts. By the 1530s, the English considered Welsh people stupid, criminal, violent, and barbaric, and this continued into the seventeenth century and beyond.

In 1603, George Owen of Henllys wrote *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, turning against his countrymen to curry favor with the English. He described his fellow Welshmen as “moors,” a lack of Englishness even more extreme than the Irish. He also claimed that, barring the anglicized, “the common people of this county, the Welshmen whom the rest call the mountain men (are) very mean and simple, short of growth, broad,

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<sup>55</sup> Michael A. Jones, “Bishop Rowland Lee and the Welsh Settlement of 1536,” *Welsh History Review* 20, no. 2 (2000): 236.

<sup>56</sup> Ivor Bowen, ed. *The Statutes of Wales* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), 26 Henry 8, c. 5.

and shrubby, unacceptable in sight for the personal service howsoever they prove in action.”<sup>57</sup>

In Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* (by 1611), the interaction between Rome and Britain is analogous to the relationship between England and Wales. English professor Ronald J. Boling argued that *Cymbeline*’s Welsh scenes trace the anglicizing process of the early modern period. He viewed the perception of native people as either potential rebels or pathetic provincials and illustrated numerous examples among sixteenth and seventeenth-century writers showing the Welsh to be both violent and threatening. In *1 Henry IV*, Westmorland told King Henry that Mortimer’s soldiers had been slaughtered by Glyndŵr’s army. The attendant Welshwomen then performed “Such beastly shameless transformation/...as may not be/Without much shame retold or spoken of.” Holinshed provides more detail in his *Chronicles*: the Welshwomen castrated the Englishmen’s corpses, stuffing the genitals into the dead men’s mouths “in such sort that the cullions hoong downe to their chins; and not so contented they did cut off their noses and thrust them into their tailes as they laie on the ground mangled and defaced.”<sup>58</sup> Boling also theorized that the famous song from *Cymbeline*, “Fear no more the heat of the sun... registers the destruction of native culture by foreign occupation.”

One of the most impressive things about Elis’s “Chronicle” was his use of numerous sources. Although he had access to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*, Elis provided more than a simple translation into the vernacular, as had most writers of his

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<sup>57</sup> George Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1994), 48.

<sup>58</sup> Rafael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, volume III, England (London: Johnson, Rivington, Payne, Wilkie and Robinson; Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme; Cadell and Davies; and Mawman, 1808), 34.

time (the *Prose Bruts*, Welsh *Brut y Brenhinedd*). Instead, he used a number of sources, which he compared and compiled into his “Chronicle.” Elis accessed texts in English, Latin, French, and Welsh, sometimes mentioning the author or the person from whom he obtained the use of the book. However, he rarely followed any of them exactly, and usually condensed or paraphrased information, sometimes from several sources, into his own manuscript. Even when the source was named, Elis tended not to translate sections wholesale; rather, he seemed to have made notes at the time of reading, which he used later to compile his “Chronicle.”<sup>59</sup> Some scholars have stated that it was often impossible to pinpoint a certain piece of text from a certain source, although sources more generally were found by using similar unusual accounts or names.<sup>60</sup>

In the “Chronicle,” Elis frequently referenced “some informed men,” “in the opinion of Englishmen,” “in an old book,” or gossip generally when he referred to his sources. He also enjoyed comparing them and provided variations of events when available.<sup>61</sup> Often, he looked for agreement between them and sometimes he just provided the variation. For example:

And there and then...as my author shows, disputes and strife arose...But other authors have shown that Arthur’s foster brother was in a playful contest and joust...but in truth I do not see that it matters in the least

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<sup>59</sup> Prys Morgan, “Elis Gruffydd of Gronant,” 16.

<sup>60</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd Morgan, *Elis Gruffydd and Multiple Versions of Geoffrey’s Historia*. A list of his probable sources is provided in Appendix B.

<sup>61</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd Morgan, *Elis Gruffydd and Multiple Versions of Geoffrey’s Historia*.

whether they were fighting or playing...for the accounts of all authors agree that his foster-brother asked Arthur to fetch his own sword.<sup>62</sup>

This method of critically analyzing sources was quite modern, and contrasts with the medieval format of the “Chronicle,” illustrating that Elis, like many in the sixteenth century, was at a crossroads between medieval and early modern thought and writing. Most medieval chronicles gave one version of an event as fact, but Elis allowed his readers to see his own developing critical thinking, by providing variations of events along with an analysis as to which he found more truthful or logical, or, as in this case, an assessment of whether the variations were important at all. Early modern historians took a more active role, focused on causation, rather than simply copying texts or observations passively. Like them, Elis evaluated and critiqued his sources as sixteenth-century historians did.

In another example, Elis gave the information he had but determined it to be impossible. When describing the prison of Merlin in folio 357r, he wrote that the “chamber had been heavenly wrought within so that they would need neither food nor drink but live there like angels throughout eternity.” However, in the next line he claimed, “indeed, this narrative is unlike the truth, for it stands neither to reason nor faith.”<sup>63</sup> In the medieval tradition, this description might have been faithfully copied by a scribe, but in the sixteenth century, Elis provided the information and commented upon it critically, reflecting both his medieval and early modern influences. He was developing a

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<sup>62</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd Morgan, *Elis Gruffydd and Multiple Versions of Geoffrey’s Historia*.

<sup>63</sup> Patrick K. Ford, “The Death of Merlin in the “Chronicle” of Elis Gruffydd,” *Viator* 7 (1976): 9-

modern historical consciousness, an important characteristic of historians of this period, providing insight about the changing influences to which he was exposed.

Although the source he most often mentioned by name in the whole “Chronicle” was Geoffrey of Monmouth, Elis originated much of the material he wrote about the period during which he lived. His firsthand observations and accounts made up a great deal of the latter half of the second part of his “Chronicle.” Details of his life came directly from him through this text, and his relationships with other soldiers and courtiers provided much of the remainder. Having written personal observations of a common member of the military was unusual in this period, although increasingly, laymen in Europe, particularly England, began to write history in the sixteenth century. He provided a front-line view of the goings-on during battles, events, and everyday life. In addition, living in Calais at a conduit of the European book trade, legal and illegal, gave Elis the opportunity to read texts and pamphlets about both history and current ways of thinking, including the anti-clerical authors who contributed to the development of Protestantism, and the use of resistance literature and religious conflict to rebel against Europe’s rulers.

Although he was only twenty when he left home, Elis’s “Chronicle” showed that he was well versed in Welsh traditional literature and culture prior to departing. Elis often referred to stories he remembered from home, and his knowledge of native stories and lore featured throughout the “Chronicle.” For example, his recounting of the Taliesin tale was the earliest and most descriptive version that exists. In addition, his story about rebel Owain Glyndŵr greeting the abbot of Valle Crucis with a mention that he was up early is legendary in Wales for the abbot’s response that “Owain had risen too early by a hundred

years,” in reference to the rise of Henry VII.<sup>64</sup> He carried this traditional knowledge with him on his travels throughout Europe, first as a soldier, then an administrator.

His first journey after joining the Tudor army in 1510 was to Venlo in Gelderland. Elis wrote that he went there in 1511 with Sir Edward Poyning (1459-1521) who commanded England’s Flemish division, and attacked Venlo as well as several small fortresses with the aid of a large Burgundian force. After a two-month campaign, the division returned to England losing only one hundred men to war and disease. Later in 1511, Elis served under Lord Darcy (c.1467-1537) at Cadiz, along with 1500 other crusaders, to assist King Ferdinand of Spain (1452-1516) in his attack against the Moors. Upon their arrival in Cadiz, Lord Darcy found that their help was not wanted, so they returned home to England. In 1512, Elis served in Navarre, which Spain had annexed.<sup>65</sup>

On August 16, 1513, the English army along with troops from the Holy Roman Empire defeated the French troops of Louis XII (1462-1515) in Therouanne. Elis was in the English force during this battle, known as The Battle of the Spurs for the speed with which the French cavalry retreated from the English and Imperial charge. After this victory, the armies besieged and overtook Tournay for England, where Elis likely met his future master, Sir Robert Wingfield (c.1464-1539). He next served the English army in France until 1518, when he joined the staff of Sir Robert. Elis likely began to keep notes of his observations and experiences at this time, as his descriptions become much more detailed from 1518 onward.

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<sup>64</sup> Prys Morgan, “Elis Gruffydd of Gronant,” 10.

<sup>65</sup> Text available in Appendix A, document 8.

Elis's master, Sir Robert Wingfield, was a diplomat, linguist, and scholar whose family had held their seat at Letheringham in Suffolk since the fourteenth century. His aunt, Anne, Lady Scrope of Bolton (d. 1548) whose husband, the 5th Lord Scrope (d. in or before 1494), had transferred his alliance from York to Tudor, raised Sir Robert.<sup>66</sup> Sir Robert followed his adoptive father's lead, and the men served together in France in 1492. He made a pilgrimage to Rome in March 1505, and later to Jerusalem. Henry VII knighted him and made him an usher of the chamber. From 1510-1526, Wingfield was involved almost exclusively in diplomacy and was known as a qualified linguist and classical scholar. From 1513, Sir Robert served in the Calais administration until his death on March 18, 1539. Though Wingfield had opposed Protestantism for most of his life, shortly before his death he wrote to Henry VIII praising the Reformation and expressed gratitude that he had received this religious clarity prior to his death.<sup>67</sup>

Soon after entering Sir Robert's service, Elis began to attend and write about diplomatic affairs that he observed or heard described. He traveled throughout Germany as Sir Robert's diplomatic envoy, and his "Chronicle" showed that he maintained a great interest in German affairs and had accessed many books published in Germany.<sup>68</sup> In May 1520, he joined Sir Robert, who attended Henry VIII during his welcome to Emperor Charles V (1500-1558) in Dover and detailed the celebration that followed. Later in 1520, Elis described in detail the events surrounding the meeting of Henry VII with Francis I (1494-1547) of France at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Sir Robert was among

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<sup>66</sup> The History of Parliament, "Wingfield, Sir Robert (c. 1470-1539), of London and Calais," <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/wingfield-sir-robert-1470-1539>.

<sup>67</sup> The History of Parliament, "Wingfield, Sir Robert."

<sup>68</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant," 12.



the noblemen invited to attend the French king, and Elis accompanied him on this royal visit. His description matched up to other accounts, yet provided unique detail. For example, he gave an unparalleled description of the French king:

They found him (Francis I) walking back and fore in his apartment in his short tunic and hose. ...So far as one could judge, the height ...of his body was as much as six feet or two yards. And the head was proportionate in size and covered with shining auburn hair neatly arranged. And the colour of the flesh of his face was blueish white, like the colour of milk-and-water in which there is but little milk and the water appears more prominent than the milk. The face was long, and upon it there was a fine long nose between eyes of mixed colour, and in the whites there were red flecks to be seen. On the face there was a beard of three months' growth, the colour of which was slightly darker than that of the hair of the head. And the neck was proportionately stout and long to support the head, which was of an excellent shape and appearance. And, in truth, the base of his neck was one of the broadest I ever saw. And in the opinion of some people the cut of his clothes made the base of his neck appear broader than it actually was. And, in truth, the shape and form of the body from the knees upwards were excellent, with hips and buttocks of moderate size to match the body. But the legs from the knees downward were very weak to match and answer to the other parts of the body; and in the legs, above the feet, there was a slight bandiness- -And indeed, to make an end to every such thing as appertained to his body, his speech was sweet and easy-

flowing; and yet when he conversed, he would often raise his eyes to the heavens and roll his eyes so that the whites were uppermost—a thing he used to do more often than was seemly to him.<sup>69</sup>

The picture of a sixteenth-century French king engaging in unseemly eye rolls is hilarious to the modern reader, and likely caused the same reaction with his contemporaries. As with his description of Germaine de Foix, Elis wrote with the freedom of an author unfettered by the duties of patronage with the knowledge that his words could only be read by his like-minded countrymen.

In 1523, Sir Roberts and Elis had joined the French Campaign, which *The Dictionary of National Biography* had not mentioned. Scholar Thomas Jones trusted Elis's account due to its detail and corroboration with other sources.<sup>70</sup> This campaign took him to the towns of Bray and Ancre, after first landing at Calais under Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk (1484-1545). Elis described that the troops had to camp outside of Calais for a month due to the plague, but eventually captured both towns. They moved on to Montdidier, where he recorded searching for booty in underground caves with fellow countryman Sion ap Dafydd ap Rhys.<sup>71</sup> Although they eventually found a rich trove of wine, pewter, salt and hides, Elis and his companion had no way to carry them.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Thomas Jones, "A Welsh Chronicler at the Tudor Court," *Welsh History Review* (January 1, 1960): 8.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Jones, "A Welsh Chronicler," 9.

<sup>71</sup> Text available in Appendix A, document 9.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Jones, "A Welsh Chronicler," 9.

He described the army moving from town to town across the French countryside with winter approaching, which made most of his fellow soldiers distraught. Elis had little patience for complaints or whining and stated that he was quite satisfied to spend the winter in France since there was plenty of firewood and straw for bedding.<sup>73</sup> As the weather worsened, Sir Robert ordered Elis up out of his cozy bed, where Elis describes being “snug as a little piglet,” in order to spy on the soldiers and seek talk of mutiny.<sup>74</sup> Several weeks later, with Christmas approaching, the campaign was ended, the captured towns lost, and the disheartened men returned to Calais, and eventually England.<sup>75</sup> This type of everyday commentary was a feature of early-modern historical writing, rather than the medieval tradition. As a soldier in the field, rather than a monk in the abbey, Elis described the day-to-day events of his life within his “Chronicle,” a point of view that reflects his development as a modern writer.

In 1526, Sir Robert became Deputy Governor of Calais, and Elis became his caretaker at Wingfield Palace, 1524-29 Old Fish Street near St. Paul’s. While in London, Elis read the books in Sir Robert’s well-stocked library, visited friends and colleagues, and attended various events, including trials in the Star Chamber. Also during this period, Elis compiled his first manuscript, known as Cardiff V, a medieval miscellany of Welsh poetry and prose containing 266 folios. This manuscript is interesting in several ways: first, he wrote it in a distinctly medieval style or format, which was out of fashion by this period. In addition, Cardiff V contained what Elis termed the *Hanes Taliesin*, a collection of poems credited to legendary figure Taliesin, which he later incorporated into the

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas Jones, “A Welsh Chronicler,” 9.

<sup>74</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” f 445v. Text available in Appendix A, document 10.

<sup>75</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” f 445v.

“Chronicle” as the prose/verse *Ystoria Taliesin*. Welsh scholar Jerry Hunter compared the two texts and found that the earlier *Hanes Taliesin* is closer to spoken Welsh, where the “Chronicle” verses are more literary and formal.<sup>76</sup> He also found that in the case of the same poem used in both manuscripts, the “Miscellany” version repeats a couplet, where the “Chronicle” version uses it only a single time, meaning that perhaps originally, the couplet served as a chorus in an oral version of the poem, but Elis omitted it in the more formal later version.<sup>77</sup> Elis certainly used oral tales in his “Chronicle,” but he also edited the poem to make it more fitting as a literary work.<sup>78</sup> The fact that Elis treated the same material differently depending on context is illustrative of his development as a writer, which Hunter noted even involved an evolution of his handwriting itself.<sup>79</sup> In the “Chronicle,” Elis set out to compose a serious and lasting work of history, which he sent home to his family. In a medieval-style compilation like the “Miscellany,” he saw his role as scribe, making his recollections permanent by writing them down. Since early poems had strict metrical conventions and were normally set to music, he copied this verse as he had likely heard it performed. As an early-modern historian, however, he edited this recollection, since a tome like the “Chronicle” was likely not going to be performed or even sung or read aloud. Instead, he amended the poem for use in his more modern history, which was meant to be a written record and resource.

Elis remained at this post in London until 1529, reading extensively and acting on behalf of Sir Robert in Kent and Suffolk. He recorded his visits to the Star Chamber and

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<sup>76</sup> Jerry Hunter, “Taliesin at the Court of Henry VIII,” *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 10 (2003): 44.

<sup>77</sup> Jerry Hunter, “Taliesin at the Court of Henry VIII,” 44.

<sup>78</sup> Jerry Hunter, “Taliesin at the Court of Henry VIII,” 44n13.

<sup>79</sup> Jerry Hunter, “Taliesin at the Court of Henry VIII,” 47.

apparently enjoyed watching Cardinal Wolsey lecture people who came before him in court. Elis particularly mentioned a quarrel between Lord Ferrers (1488-1558) and Rhys ap Gruffydd (1508-1531), the latter of whom received stern words before the court from Wolsey in 1529. Elis likely enjoyed his responsibilities and city life, but felt a bit homesick, thinking often of the stories and lore he had learned as a child at the fireside, possibly contributing to his initial manuscript, the “Miscellany.” This is likely the beginning of Elis’s realization that he might never return home and was an exile separated from his own traditional culture. He made efforts to chat with other Welsh servants when he could, and must have delighted in being able to speak his native language. The “Miscellany,” completed in 1527, showed Elis as a man on the precipice of a new age, one foot in his traditional past, and one foot moving forward into modernity, unaware of the cultural changes looming ahead: Protestantism and the Reformation, the Acts of Union, the use of English in Wales, and the rising popularity of the printing press.

In 1530, Elis, with the help of Sir Robert, obtained a coveted place in the Calais garrison. He had saved up forty marks with which he purchased military equipment for his new posting. With an annual salary of £8 9s 3d, saving up forty marks would have taken him years.<sup>80</sup> Crossing the English Channel has always been perilous, and his journey to Calais in 1530 was no different. His ship, which was carrying goods for the king’s works to Calais, hit a terrible storm. Elis described having to throw his precious equipment overboard and being lucky to arrive with his life.<sup>81</sup> Once he arrived, he settled

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<sup>80</sup> Prys Morgan, “Elis Gruffydd of Gronant,” 4.

<sup>81</sup> Prys Morgan, “Elis Gruffydd of Gronant,” 14.

into life in Calais, and like many Tudor soldiers in the garrison, he married a woman from Calais (named Elizabeth Manfielde) from whom he received some land outside the town.<sup>82</sup> Initially, his duties were opening and shutting the large gates near the Market Square, marching around the plaza, now called the Place d'Armes, and keeping an eye on the stone walls surrounding the city proper.<sup>83</sup> Calais at this time was the only English possession in France, both a frontier outpost and a gathering place for the Tudor wars against the French. Henry VIII was determined to reconquer France, and sent ships full of soldiers, munitions, and supplies for the war effort. Like any military town, Calais was full of both excitement and despair, but, despite being a stronghold, it was not bereft of literary culture. Sir Robert Wingfield was a scholar of note, and Lord Berners (1467-1533), who also worked in the administration, translated Froissart's *Chronicles* while posted there.<sup>84</sup> Once in Calais, Elis described how he "began to record world events, with particular reference to the realm of England, the king still persisting in his love for Anne Boleyn, who was very angry with the Cardinal of England Thomas Wolsey (c.1473-1530)."<sup>85</sup>

Henry VIII's desire to obtain an annulment from Catherine in order to marry Anne exacerbated his struggle against the Church, but throughout Europe, anti-clerical reformists were speaking and publishing against perceived excesses and inappropriate behaviors among Catholic clergy in the sixteenth century. Elis was present in London when the dispute over the divorce of Catherine peaked, and he wrote that many of her

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<sup>82</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd Morgan, *Elis Gruffydd and Multiple Versions of Geoffrey's Historia*.

<sup>83</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant," 14.

<sup>84</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant," 15.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Jones, "A Welsh Chronicler," 5.

servants were Welsh, and spoke of her broken heart and reliance on her Spanish friends.<sup>86</sup> He also experienced both sides of the reformist conflict while in Calais, and wrote of his evolving religious views in relation to books he read and people he met while serving in the garrison.

Elis traveled to his new post by boat in 1530. During his miserable and costly sea crossing, he claimed to be a Catholic and stated that he prayed to several saints for his safety during the trip. However, while he was in Calais, he began to read anti-clerical literature, and he admitted to reading Tyndale.<sup>87</sup> Elis described the religious conflict brewing between the administration and the garrison of the town itself. Catholic Sir Robert was Mayor of Calais at this time, and an open-minded man; the deputy was Lord Lisle (serving from 1533-1540), who was an extreme Catholic conservative and an avowed enemy of Thomas Cromwell (c.1485-1540) from his days at the Tudor court in England.<sup>88</sup>

Elis declared himself an admirer of Cromwell, and many in the garrison adopted the reformist Protestant faith. Calais itself had been open to anti-clerical French and German influence throughout the late 1520s and 1530s, and it served as a conduit for illicit reformist texts between European countries and England.<sup>89</sup> It was also a haven for free thinkers, who met to share books and ideas with relative ease. Elis described attending religious services faithfully, attending meetings at various houses around

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<sup>86</sup> W. Llewelyn Williams, "A Welsh Insurrection," *Y Cymmrodor* 16 (1902): 63.

<sup>87</sup> Elis Gruffydd, "Chronicle," f 472r.

<sup>88</sup> There is a discrepancy in the references to the position Deputy of Calais among the sources. Some show Lisle succeeding Lord Berners in 1533, others show Berners from 1520-1526, then Wingfield from 1526-1532, then Lisle. A third stated that Berners both preceded and followed Wingfield.

<sup>89</sup> Ceridwen Lloyd Morgan, Elis Gruffydd and Multiple Versions of Geoffrey's *Historia*.

Calais, and reading his Bible both carefully and often.<sup>90</sup> At some point in the 1530s, Elis became a Protestant and discussed the religious conflict he observed in the city.<sup>91</sup> He saw Cromwell as the only defender of the reformist faith against conservative Catholics like Lord Lisle. Elis wrote strongly against Lisle and his family; his commentary on his wife called both “amusing and totally libelous.”<sup>92</sup> When Lord Lisle was arrested for treason, Elis gave an almost gleeful account of Lady Lisle’s perfidy, claiming she bore responsibility for the downfall of her entire family by attempting to wed her daughter Mary to a Picardie squire.<sup>93</sup> He went on to describe how authorities took them from their home to various prisons and sold their treasures and clothes.

After serving at the gates, Elis moved into land operations in the Pale of Calais, first commanding one of the bulwarks that surrounded the city at Ballingham, then serving as the deputy of Olderkirk bulwark, and finally taking charge of royal works in the entire lowland area of the Pale. He described in detail the downtrodden soldiers and the greed of superior (English) officers who failed to convey to the king what they needed for success in Calais.<sup>94</sup> He spoke of the need for new equipment and even

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<sup>90</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” ff. 583r, 584.

<sup>91</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” ff. 522r-524v. I am using the word Protestant to describe the shift in Elis’s behavior, from attending Mass and seeking the intercession of saints as a Catholic in 1530 to attending Protestant meetings and reading the Bible later in the decade. Also, his tone varies when describing the religious factions in Calais and back in Wales; Elis implies that at some point, the “them” in a discussion turned from Protestant to Catholic. Additionally, his mentor Sir Robert Wingfield was a devout Catholic until the end of his life in 1539, which might have prevented Elis from making a huge announcement about the evolution of his beliefs. Perhaps he underwent this change of heart along with Sir Robert.

<sup>92</sup> Muriel St. Clare Byrne, editor, *The Lisle Letters: an Abridgement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 400.

<sup>93</sup> Muriel St. Clare Byrne, editor, *The Lisle Letters*, 401.

<sup>94</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” ff. 583r-584.



suggested new artillery, which might have saved Calais from being lost forever two decades later.<sup>95</sup>

In the 1540s, the city fell further into disrepair, as England's wars continued. From 1543-1550, England fought almost constant battles on the continent, eventually capturing Boulogne. Calais served as the military headquarters and spent the allocated funds on supplying the army rather than maintaining or improving the fortifications of the town. Everyone in the Garrison focused on moving equipment, food, and supplies to the armies in the field. Elis worked at many different jobs and was with the army when they captured Boulogne. Both Calais and Boulogne were crowded, full of soldiers and the people associated with them. Injury, malnutrition, and illness coupled with the dense population resulted in outbreaks of plague and other diseases.<sup>96</sup> Elis described in detail the filth, unburied corpses, animal carcasses, and waste piled up around the city of Calais. He fell ill for many weeks, and his cousin died of illness under his care.<sup>97</sup>

While convalescing, Elis began to copy medical works into Welsh and mentioned borrowing the *Compot of Ptolemy* from a gentleman in town. He wrote, "Here follow a number of medicinal remedies for stomachache which I found written in old books in Calais, like a book belonging to a burgher Master Bwrddwn."<sup>98</sup> He finished this text in 1548 and then started transcribing the notes he had been keeping for years into his "Chronicle," using the many sources he had seen over his time in the city.

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<sup>95</sup> Elis Gruffydd," Chronicle," ff. 583r-584.

<sup>96</sup> This text may be found in Appendix A, document 11.

<sup>97</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant," 14, quoting Mrs. M. Tibbott.

<sup>98</sup> MS Cwrtmawr 1, f. 819.

During his life, Elis traveled as both a soldier and an administrator, experiencing firsthand many important historical events, like the Field of Cloth of Gold, proceedings in the Star Chamber, and the coronation of Anne Boleyn. He wrote down what he saw and heard; among the Welsh in service to the Tudors, gossip flew like the wind. He read and took notes from reformist texts, as well as attended meetings with various freethinkers of the town. Communicating in Welsh was like using a secret code; it provided privacy from prying English ears and ensured that only those who shared that cultural identity could understand.

Calais was a geographic and cultural crossroads, and a center of trade and migration, sitting between Flemish, Germanic, and French culture, a conduit for books in MS or in print.<sup>99</sup> This gave Elis opportunities and experiences he could never have gotten had he remained back home in Wales, or even in the British Isles. In addition to books, the city also attracted freethinkers providing for early development and acceptance of new, reformist thinking, and literature. Calais also served as the English military headquarters for the wars in Europe, which gave Elis opportunities to meet merchants, soldiers, diplomats, and administrators.

Elis also stood at a crossroads between medieval and modern, and expressed aspects of both in his life and his Chronicle. He carried the responsibility of the ancient poet, whose duty was to maintain the noble history and culture of Wales through language, both oral and written. As a man on the brink of the modern world, however, he carried out this duty through the modern chronicle format, using analysis and critical

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<sup>99</sup> Susan Rose, *Calais: An English Town*, 142.

thinking to compare his sources and comment upon them. He freed himself from the traditional biases of patronage and commission, instead using language to rebel against historical oppression and degradation.

#### Chapter 4: Elis's Preservation of Welsh Identity

Elis used his native language for privacy, education, edification, and preservation in an effort to protect and maintain his cultural identity. With this motivation, he wrote his "Chronicle" as an act of rebellion against the attempted assimilation of Wales by England during the sixteenth century. In earlier centuries, the Welsh had resisted numerous cultural and political invasions with their culture and traditions remaining intact, largely due to the use of language to remember their history through poetry. They used their literary tradition to preserve their identity, as Elis had in his "Chronicle." With his grounding in native oral tradition and poetry, he likely considered the use of his language a large part of his own, as well as his community's, identity. From the bardic period, oral tradition and poetry were the vehicles for religion, history, culture, folklore, genealogy, and language to be communicated in Wales. Since Welsh was reserved to native speakers, its use established a connection to that community, which included awareness of the history and lore of the people. Despite having deep roots in Welsh tradition, Elis lived most of his life as an exile in England, which gave him a cosmopolitan worldview to mesh with his traditional upbringing. Additionally, the question of identity based upon shared language and culture began to grow into a concept of political identity, with the development of the nation-state and modern nationalism. Elis also used his language as a way to maintain his community identity in his fast-changing world.

Writing in Welsh enabled him to not only continue the preservation of his native tongue but also assure himself relative secrecy, which allowed him to write freely. Englishmen had long distanced themselves from Wales and the native culture, well before the Acts of Union took effect in the mid-sixteenth century. Because of their status

as a vanquished people, the history of Wales is a history of loss. From those early days, the Welsh used their language to preserve and maintain their cultural identity. Because they used a Celtic language, it was not easy for Romance or Germanic speakers to understand it, and since the early literary tradition was oral, invaders might find it difficult to learn the language from written sources. For this reason, it was only when Welsh stories and lore began to appear in Latin texts like those of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Giraldus Cambrensis that the wider world became aware of the native literary tradition, like the legends of King Arthur, Merlin, and Taliesin. Even before the Acts of Union, the Anglo-French considered Welsh a second-class language, spoken only by those unable to obtain a proper education and communicate in languages that were seen as more scholarly.

By its nature, the Welsh language was both isolating and exclusionary, making it a perfect choice for clandestine communication. In addition, living in Calais exposed Elis to the use of foreign languages to conceal propaganda in material destined for English audiences, which may have disposed him to use his own language for secrecy as well. His decision to use his native tongue in the “Chronicle” served as a device to let him write privately, as his words, if seen, could only be read by someone who shared his cultural identity. This, along with his lack of a patron or editor, allowed him to write what he wished, in the way he wished, and express his viewpoints far more freely than his contemporary chroniclers had when writing in English, French, German, or Latin.

There were many times when Elis counted on his native language to allow him to write honestly in his texts. For example, he wrote of an English Captain Hussey whom he once served under while a soldier as “a fat-bellied lump of a man, big in body and in

authority, lacking in sense and a coward at heart to lead men of war in a place where there was danger of the enemy.”<sup>1</sup> He was unlikely to use those words to describe a superior officer if everyone could read them. The tradition of using Welsh to convey cultural information orally and privately is ancient, dating to bardic times, known in the medieval period as *cyfarwyddyd* (body of learning, knowledge) and was first attested in a ninth-century document.<sup>2</sup> Far more than a legal designation, it was a complex body of information necessary for cultural survival, or as Dr. Patrick Sims-Williams stated, a “cultural orientation.”<sup>3</sup> The bards considered writing this information to be dangerous, as may be seen in the requirements for memorization in the bardic schools.<sup>4</sup> Although laws and documents were committed to writing early on (like the Laws of Hywel Dda), poems from this oral tradition were not written down until the thirteenth century, and even then, rarely does more than a single copy survive.<sup>5</sup> In this way, Elis preserved the earliest extant copy of the traditional Taliesin tale, dating to the sixth century, in his sixteenth-century “Chronicle.” If writing was dangerous, how much more so might printing? Since he saw himself as a representative of the bardic tradition, Elis was likely aware that this knowledge was for his community alone, and would have avoided mass printing.

In addition to utilizing Welsh to write clandestinely, Elis also used it in order to provide necessary information to his people from the incredible access he had to books and knowledge in Calais. Taken alongside his other manuscripts, the “Miscellany” and

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Jones, “A Welsh Chronicler in Tudor England,” *Welsh History Review* (January 1960): 5.

<sup>2</sup> Brynley F. Roberts, “Oral Tradition and Welsh Literature: A Description and Survey,” *Oral Tradition* 3/1-2: 62.

<sup>3</sup> Roberts, “Oral Tradition,” 62.

<sup>4</sup> See page 55.

<sup>5</sup> Roberts, “Oral Tradition,” 65.

the “Medical Texts,” Elis made an effort to translate into Welsh documents he thought could be important, as well as to preserve in writing the oral tradition he knew from his youth. Since he completed the “Miscellany” in 1527, before the first Act of Union in 1536, his inspiration was not the Tudors’ legal and administrative denigration of Welsh language and culture. Rather, he wove together memories of his youth, poems, and stories, perhaps motivated by feelings of homesickness while exiled in London at Sir Robert’s home. Although he wrote in his “Chronicle” of the many events he attended and observed while there, often with great enjoyment, his mind nonetheless was also occupied with his native identity. For example, he recalled how he befriended other Welshmen in service to various dignitaries at the court, and traded gossip. This first text is also the most medieval and straightforward in theme; a compilation of traditional material that he presented without analysis. Elis likely wrote this manuscript for entertainment purposes, as he did not evaluate or comment upon his sources. This type of writing was popular in the late medieval and early modern period, and reflected him as a new author who grew up in an oral tradition.

He completed his second collection, of medical writing, in 1548, long after both Acts of Union had expunged Welsh as a language of law and learning. This work focused entirely on translations of the latest available health and astrological information, likely motivated by the plague and disease in Calais at the time, which struck both Elis and his cousin, who died in his home under his care. His sources included *The Vertuose Boke of Distyllacyon of the Waters of all Maner of Herbes* (1527), *Compost Tholomews* (*Compost of Ptolemy*) (1530), *The Castle of Helth* (1539), and *The Regiment of Life* (1544), all

translated into Welsh, and presumably sent back home as the “Chronicle” was.<sup>6</sup> He compiled this anthology with more critical purpose than his first text, gathering and comparing material in order to meet a goal of providing up-to-date medical data. By this time, Elis knew that his native culture and language were under attack by the English Crown. Since he had access to books and information unheard of in Wales, he likely translated these important works so that his family back home could have access to modern health information. He mentioned borrowing these books from fellow residents of Calais and seeing many old books there.<sup>7</sup> Elis was part of a group of educated men interested in new information and ideas who exchanged books freely, which gave him access to not only health information but also the kind of reformist literature that led to his conversion to Protestantism.

Immediately after completing his “Medical Text,” Elis began work on his “Chronicle” in 1548-49, though he had been collecting and compiling texts he viewed since he began working for Sir Robert in 1518. At this same time, he appeared to begin noting his own experiences and observations as well, as the “Chronicle” became much more detailed and less dependent on other sources after that time. From his earlier texts, Elis was certainly interested in reading, translating, and writing from his early days, and the motivations for both the “Miscellany” and the “Medical Text” seem clear, but what made this “soldier of Calais” decide to take on a project of this scale, a universal history containing nearly 2500 folios?<sup>8</sup> He was a working man, a member of the Calais garrison;

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<sup>6</sup> John Humphreys Davies, *Llawysgrif Elis Gruffydd*, File 1D, 1540s, The National Library of Wales.

<sup>7</sup> MS Cwrtmawr 1, f 836, transcription and translation by Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, in “Elis Gruffydd and Multiple Versions of Geoffrey’s *Historia*.”

<sup>8</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” NLW manuscripts 5276D and 3054D. National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, f. 2r.



he had no wealthy patron; he was not university-trained, nor a cleric; he was not wealthy, nor did he have a library of his own. Despite all of these factors, Elis completed this massive undertaking, in his rooms near the Calais gates. Perhaps the plague motivated him to write more than just his “Medical Text.” Living through this plague pandemic, which devastated his adopted home as well as friends and family may have inspired him to write his “Chronicle,” perhaps deciding that God had spared him for that purpose. Reformation leader Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) survived an outbreak of plague in Zurich (1519), and argued that his recovery was a sign from God that he was meant to continue his project to reform church practice in the Swiss cantons.<sup>9</sup> Possibly Elis viewed this as additional motivation to complete his history.

He conceived of his “Chronicle” as a way to preserve the history and culture of the people of Wales, in their forbidden native language, as his own act of rebellion. He also had a personal motivation for writing it: his hope to regain his rightful inheritance. While Elis was in Calais, he lost the land he inherited from Sion ap Dafydd, and in 1533-38, and petitioned the court of Chancery for its return.<sup>10</sup> In his preface, written just prior to sending the “Chronicle” manuscripts back home in 1552, he wrote of the dispossession of twenty acres of land he had inherited and stated that he hoped his work might encourage his family to seek redress in the courts for the wrong that was done to him by Piers Muttwn and his heirs.<sup>11</sup> He stated he was not able to attend personally, as he lacked the funds to travel or to grease the palms of the English courts as one had to do.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Springer, email to the author, June 5, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> A. Lewis, ed., *Early Chancery Proceedings Concerning Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1937), 123-4.

<sup>11</sup> This text is available in Appendix A, document 11.

<sup>12</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” f 2r.

This was a distinct poke at the replacement of traditional Welsh courts and administration with English ones during the Acts of Union (1536-43), one of many pro-Wales statements or viewpoints Elis expressed in the “Chronicle,” and it is an example of the displacement he and other Welsh people felt during the sixteenth century. In many ways, Wales was the first English colony, and it suffered in many of the same ways that later colonized regions had. As an exile, his viewpoint was likely more broad than if he had remained at home, and the availability of books and information from the often-rebellious residents of Calais surely expanded his mind. Elis sought to give his people a history to be proud of, written in a language as old as any in Europe, with a literary tradition that had existed since the classical period.

The Welsh had a reputation for being proud of their noble background as well as their literature. As far back as the twelfth century, Giraldus Cambrensis observed that contemporary Welshmen,

Boast and most confidently predict-and it is remarkable how all the people hold this hope-that their compatriots will soon return to the island [from Brittany]: and, according to the prophecies of their Merlin, both the nation and the name of the foreigners will perish, and the Britons will exult in their ancient name and status in the island.<sup>13</sup>

This opinion was not lost by the sixteenth century, when Humphrey Lhuyd wrote,

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<sup>13</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, *Opera* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), vi, 216.

They [the Welsh] be some deal impatient of labour and over much boasting of the nobility of their stock, applying themselves rather to the service of noblemen than giving themselves to the learning of handicrafts...so that you shall find but few noblemen in England but that the greater part of their retinues are Welshmen born—<sup>14</sup>

These excerpts illustrate that the Welsh took great pride in their genealogy and heritage through the medieval and early modern periods. They considered themselves the rightful heirs of the British Isles, and the English merely the latest in a series of oppressors. In accordance with prophecy, they were fated to regain their rightful place in the world, as recorded by both the bards and Elis's "Chronicle."

Celticist Amy Mulligan supported this view in her discussion of the portrayal of Taliesin in the "Chronicle" as a parallel to the biblical narrative of the prophet in "Moses, Taliesin, and the Welsh Chosen People: Elis Gruffydd's Construction of a Biblical, British Past for Reformation Wales."<sup>15</sup> She wrote that "Elis...frame[d] a specific vision of the Welsh present and future, one which constituted a response to Tudor England's alienation of Welsh language and culture through disempowering and disenfranchising policies."<sup>16</sup> As Moses had for the Jews, Elis attempted to create and legitimize a "chosen people" narrative for the Welsh, providing them an identity that refused to be marginalized or belittled by the English. In the same way that modern post-colonial

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<sup>14</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant-Tudor Chronicler Extraordinary," *Flintshire Historical Society* 25 (1971-72): 11.

<sup>15</sup> Amy Mulligan, "Moses, Taliesin, and the Welsh Chosen People: Elis Gruffydd's Construction of a Biblical, British Past for Reformation Wales," *Studies in Philology* 113, no. 4 (2016).

<sup>16</sup> Amy Mulligan, "Moses, Taliesin, and the," 765.

writers include their people in the important events and achievements of the world, Elis gave the Welsh back a history that involved dominance and prestige. His Wales was at the center of world events, and his native literary tradition was the origin of the romances so popular in the medieval and early modern periods. His people were the legitimate rulers of Britain, and he gave them hope that they were destined to regain their rightful place in the world. In the same way that Elis wished to reclaim his land inheritance, he hoped for the Welsh people to reclaim theirs. As much as he was exiled in England, so were his people back at home, without ever taking a voyage. In this vein, Jerry Hunter stated that Elis wrote a “reconstructed and revalorized past...-meant to edify, glorify and educate a very different group of people than those for whom the English regicentric chronicles were intended.”<sup>17</sup>

In addition, Hunter pointed out that the words *brut* and *brud* are lexically identical, both derived from the legendary ruler of Britain, Brutus.<sup>18</sup> The term *Brut* is used for the literature that described the ascension and loss of the kingdom of Britain by the Welsh and their ancestors. Examples include *Brut y Brenhinedd* or *Brut y Tywysogion*, translated from Geoffrey’s *Historia* in the thirteenth century. These *bruts* were the narrative history preserved by “humanist historiographers” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>19</sup> *Brud* is the term used for traditional prophetic texts, usually poems, that recalled the nobility of these ancient people, and predicted that they might one day return to their deserved power and glory. An example of this would be the *mab*

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<sup>17</sup> Jerry Hunter, *The 'Chronicle' of Elis Gruffydd*, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures, 1995, 236.

<sup>18</sup> Jerry Hunter, “The Literary Nation: Textual Constructions of Welsh Nationhood c.1282-1997,” *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 18/19 (1998/1999): 83.

<sup>19</sup> Jerry Hunter, “The Literary Nation,” 83.

*darogan* prophecies discussed above. Hunter argued that, since these terms were lexically the same until much later, they should be used to represent a unified history including a prophetic future.<sup>20</sup> The *brut/brud* was an important way for the Welsh to claim and maintain their identity as a people, and a noble and chosen people at that. Authors not only wrote this literature in Welsh, but they also utilized traditional meters associated with the ancient concept of bards. It was a narrative of pride and hope for a subjugated people, and therefore vital to maintaining their identity. Scribes frequently copied this material, and Elis used it extensively in his “Chronicle” up to the contemporary period, as part of his effort to preserve Welsh culture, and to resist English attempts to degrade it.

His edification also fed into the narrative he constructed about the eventual victory over England, which had been prophesied for centuries, a version of history in which the Welsh reclaimed their deserved former glory. When he arrived in Calais on January 27, 1530, Elis noted that he was to spend the greater part of his life there "seeing many things which deserved to be noted down in writing."<sup>21</sup> He not only sought to edify his native language and culture but also wanted to relate that he, a Welshman, was party to the most important world events. In addition to his observations and experiences, his residence in the trade center of Calais afforded him access to the latest information through books and pamphlets, especially those written by reformists. Living in Calais provided him with the chance to read widely and compare his texts, as an early modern historian would do. His example as an informed current author was evidence of the status of his countrymen, and the value of their cultural identity, regardless of how their English

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<sup>20</sup> Jerry Hunter, “The Literary Nation,” 84.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Jones, “A Welsh Chronicler,” 14.

overlords might try to degrade them. Elis's concept of identity was first and foremost as a Welshman, based upon linguistic ties and historical memory. Although Wales had no political identity in the sixteenth century, the community maintained this bond from the medieval to the early-modern period. Elis solidified this expression of identity through the language, culture and history expressed in his "Chronicle."

Although Elis was an economic rather than religious exile, he underwent a spiritual transformation while in Calais, one of many themes in his "Chronicle." When he decided to take on this task of writing a universal history for his people, the scope and subject made it of necessity an important document for the literature of Wales. Written thirty years before the Welsh translation of the Bible in 1588, it was the longest work created in Welsh at that time. Professor Joan-Lluis Marfany stated, "It is generally believed that modern revivals of European so-called minority languages-and more generally of suppressed nationalities-always begin as literary movements."<sup>22</sup> By writing this tome in Welsh, Elis validated the language as being the intellectual equivalent of the other languages of narrative history, like Latin or English, and reclaimed the written literary tradition of Wales. In addition, he reflected his placement in time and space as a medieval man on the brink of the early modern world. Rather than simply copying his sources, he collected, compared, and analyzed them before compiling them, along with his own knowledge and experience, into a complete history for the people of Wales.

Despite the hope of being a civilizing influence upon Wales, England nonetheless feared the people individually for their propensity to steal and murder, and collectively

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<sup>22</sup> Joan-Lluis Marfany, "Minority Languages and Literary Revivals," *Past and Present* 184 (2004): 137.

for their collective desire to rebel. During the 1530s, as reformist thinking became more popular, religious and political exiles began to leave England. Elis described a trial he observed in the Star Chamber between Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers (1488-1558) and Rhys ap Gruffydd (1508-1531), heir to the wealthy Sir Rhys ap Thomas who fought at Henry VII's side at Bosworth. When Rhys ap Thomas died (1525), Henry VIII gave his titles and lands to Ferrers rather than his heir, Rhys ap Gruffydd, causing a conflict that escalated for several years. Rhys and his retainers threatened Ferrers with a knife, and authorities imprisoned them at Carmarthen Castle. His wife gathered supporters, lay siege to the castle, and threatened Ferrers herself, among other rebellions. Rhys transferred to a prison in London to remove him from his Welsh supporters in 1531, at which time the king asserted that Rhys was planning to overthrow him and become Prince of Wales, as well as plotting with James V of Scotland to take over the whole of Britain in accordance with the prophecy of the *mab darogan*. Rhys was a devout Catholic, and so opposed both the Reformation and Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn.<sup>23</sup> The king executed Rhys in 1531 for treason, but historian Ralph Griffiths wrote that this was a purely judicial murder based on politics and personal feelings.<sup>24</sup> The threat of rebellion helped to solidify English anti-Welsh feeling and united them against a common enemy just prior to the first Act of Union. Additionally, the death of Rhys disempowered an influential Welsh family that was also Catholic and opposed to his plan to reject Rome and set Catherine and the heir Princess Mary aside.

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<sup>23</sup> R.A. Griffiths, *Rhys ap Thomas and his Family* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), 110-11.

<sup>24</sup> R.A. Griffiths, *Rhys ap Thomas*, 72.

Among Welsh exiles, some were both religious and political, like James ap Gruffydd ap Hywel (c. 1490-c. 1555). He was a modest landowner whose brother in law was Sir Rhys ap Thomas, whose possessions ended up with Lord Ferrers. When arresting Sir Rhys' grandson and heir for treason, the Crown also arrested James, promising his release if he would testify against the accused. He refused, was fined a vast sum of money, and escaped to Ireland. He planned to sail to Scotland to work towards a Celtic union to fight against England.<sup>25</sup> Over the next few years, the Crown chased him all over Europe; the Netherlands, Germany, and France. His companion was rebel Henry Philips; while in Antwerp, he nefariously befriended William Tyndale, then turned him over to the Crown.<sup>26</sup>

Also in the 1530s, Savoyard Eustace Chapuys (c. 1490-1553) was ambassador to England serving Charles V (1500-1558) of the Holy Roman Empire. Although the Empire united with England in several battles against their common enemy, the French, the Catholic Charles V was also the nephew of Henry VIII's queen Catherine of Aragon. He vehemently rejected the prospect of her annulment and Henry's remarriage to Anne Boleyn, as well as the possibility of an England untethered from Rome. Therefore, Chapuys was very interested in the situation in Wales and the possibility of sowing discord between that nation and its English overlord. He wrote to Charles V in November 1534 about "the disposition of the people of Wales," who he thought were "very angry at the ill-treatment of the Queen and Princess, and also at what is done against the faith, for

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<sup>25</sup> Peter Marshall, "James ap Gruffydd ap Hywel and the International Opposition to Henry VIII," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 39, no. 3 (Fall, 2008): 687.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Marshall, "James ap Gruffydd," 695.



they have always been good Christians.”<sup>27</sup> He also advised that there had been perilously treasonous reactions to the execution of Rhys ap Gruffydd and that matters had degenerated so badly that if the Emperor were to send even a small force “everyone would declare himself for you.”<sup>28</sup>

During the 1530s, Henry VIII exerted his influence over the Welsh through changes in law, the redrawing of borders, and demeaning the language and culture. He also removed the native people, replacing them with ethnic English or English language speakers, separating the settlements into Englishries and Welshries. This designation originally appeared during Norman times, as the Marcher lords surrounded their castles with regions settled by immigrants. Clause 56 of Magna Carta (1215) stated, “English law shall apply to holdings of land in England, Welsh law to those in Wales, and the law of the Marches to those in the Marches. The Welsh shall treat us and ours in the same way.”<sup>29</sup> King Henry extended this policy by displacing the natives and replacing them with Englishmen by the townful. His policy to disempower Wales, which continued to the Acts of Union, had filtered down to the popular culture, which supported this disenfranchisement through literature and fomenting fear of rebellion.

Being at the center of English military action in Calais, Elis was surely aware of these developments and was himself deeply involved in reformist and anti-clerical activities during the 1530s and 1540s, eventually becoming a Protestant himself.<sup>30</sup> He would have known that the Crown sought Tyndale and James ap Gruffydd for heresy and

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<sup>27</sup> Peter Marshall, “James ap Gruffydd,” 690.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Marshall, “James ap Gruffydd,” 690.

<sup>29</sup> “The Text of Magna Carta,” Fordham University Sourcebooks, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/magnacarta.asp>.

<sup>30</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” ff. 472r-473r.

treason, as he attended some portion of the trial between Lord Ferrers and Rhys ap Gruffydd in the Star Chamber while in London.<sup>31</sup> Elis, as a member of the king's garrison, could not have voiced publically any resistance views he held, whether religious or political, though he often mentioned gossiping with other Welshmen in service in both London and Calais. His "Chronicle" gave him the chance to speak freely, so rare among authors of this period. Choosing to write in his native tongue was of itself an act of rebellion, and gave legitimacy and status to his language and culture, in addition to keeping the contents private. This choice also boldly displayed Elis's Welsh identity, as another in a long string of literary rebels defying attempts at assimilation through linguistic and cultural identity in both the oral tradition of Wales and the sixteenth-century growth of resistance writing.

Elis not only provided legitimacy and hope for his native language and culture as an act of rebellion, but he also brought a unique point of view to his "Chronicle" because he was an exile. Separated from his homeland, he might have been particularly concerned with identity, both his own and his nations. The search for the beginning of Welsh nationalism has been a topic of interest for some modern scholars. In 1993, Historian J.E. Caerwyn Williams published "Cenedlaetholdeb yng Nghymru'r Oesoedd Canol" in which he stated that he found an early form of nationalism in medieval Wales.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, R.M. Jones wrote in 1998 that the first nationalism among all European literature was found in the same period.<sup>33</sup> Sociologist Liah Greenfeld placed the origin of nationalism later in the

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<sup>31</sup> J. Gwenogvryn Evans, *Reports on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language* 1 (1898), ii-v.

<sup>32</sup> J.E. Caerwyn Williams, "Cenedlaetholdeb yng Nghymru'r Oesoedd Canol," *Cof Cenedl* 8 (1993): 3-4

<sup>33</sup> R. M. Jones, *Ysbryd y Cwlwm Y Ddelwedd o'r Genedl yn ein Llenyddiaeth* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), 32.

early modern period, in Henry VIII's England.<sup>34</sup> These statements flew in the face of the popular thought that nationalism is a modern institution, posited by sociologists like Emile Durkheim (1885-1917) and Max Weber (1864-1920), and further expressed by social anthropologist Ernest Gellner (1925-1995). This school of thought argued that traditional societies lack the necessary modernization to develop nationalism, namely an industrial economy, and a possibly charismatic leader able to unite the people and maintain authority. The modernists found the beginning of nationalism in the French Revolution, continuing into the nineteenth century, though Medievalists have long doubted that claim. Like them, Williams, Jones, and Greenfeld defined nationalism differently, as as a feeling or bond within a community growing out of national identity, based on shared language, history, and custom. In this way, the development of nationalism, or promoting the interest of one state over others, does not require modernity and industrialization. Nationality, on the other hand, describes common membership in and identification with a nation-state, which is a modern political entity.

Jerry Hunter discussed the development of Welsh identity and nationality in his article "The Literary Nation: Textual Constructions of Welsh Nationhood c. 1282 to 1997." He used the example of a poem written in the fifteenth century by Siôn Cent, addressed directly to *Y Cymru* (the Welsh,) describing the loss of Welsh independence after the defeat of Llewelyn in 1282, which had continued until his lifetime. He wrote:

*Pennaf nasiwn, gwon gwmpas,*

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<sup>34</sup> Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 47.

*Erioed fuom ni o ras.*

(The principal nation, as I know well,

We have always had the grace to be.)<sup>35</sup>

Hunter viewed these lines, along with the rest of the poem, as a claim that the Welsh were the first nation to occupy the Isle of Britain, which gave them a claim to the land regardless of the many times they were removed from it.<sup>36</sup> Despite this narrative of loss, the poet repeated this hopeful refrain about future victory and redress: *gobeithiaw a ddaw ydd wyf* (I hope that it will come.)<sup>37</sup> Hunter argued that the poet is referring to Welsh nationhood.<sup>38</sup> He drew a line, however, between a feeling of national identity or unity and “full-blown nationalism” as envisioned by Gellner.<sup>39</sup>

Nationalism can be an abstract term, as historian Benedict Anderson discussed in his important book *Imagined Communities* (1983).<sup>40</sup> Anderson contended that individuals must imagine national feeling; members of even the tiniest nation would likely find it impossible to know one another personally or literally. Instead, people must envision this political relationship, since despite never meeting in person, they share a concept of their nation or community and the bonds that hold them together to the exclusion of other nations. For the Welsh, the bonds were linguistic and cultural rather than political. No matter how often borders changed or they experienced relocation and colonization, they

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<sup>35</sup> T.G. Hunter, “The Literary Nation,” 74.

<sup>36</sup> T.G. Hunter, “The Literary Nation,” 74.

<sup>37</sup> T.G. Hunter, “The Literary Nation,” 75.

<sup>38</sup> T.G. Hunter, “The Literary Nation,” 75.

<sup>39</sup> T.G. Hunter, “The Literary Nation,” 77.

<sup>40</sup> Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso Books, 2006.)

maintained a concept of communal identity particular to them alone.<sup>41</sup> Siôn Cent and Elis Gruffydd expressed this in their use of language and traditional themes, like the *mab darogan*, shared folk knowledge, and bardic tradition. Despite repeated loss, Welsh writers constructed a shared narrative of hope and redress for their people as a form of resistance.

Elis came from a long tradition of cultural survival through literary defiance, but with the availability of the printing press and reformist ideas, many Europeans used writing to combat perceived wrongs perpetrated among rulers and the Church. Philosophers and humanists discussed religious doctrine, politics, and solutions to abuses of power.<sup>42</sup> The motivation for the growth of this type of literature was different, however, as it was for change rather than cultural survival. The easy spread of information via printing allowed authors to write texts for mass consumption, especially things like pamphlets, which might be easily and surreptitiously shared, particularly in trade centers like Calais. Living in this environment likely motivated Elis, although there was little chance of his “Chronicle” ever reaching a large audience. Even so, its existence provided the validation of Welsh identity that he was working for, against England’s attempt to remove it.

The “Chronicle” is best viewed as an example of resistance literature. Post-colonialist scholars Franz Fanon (1925-1961) and Barbara Harlow (1948- ) have argued

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<sup>41</sup> Despite geographical relocations, the Welsh communal identity did to some extent require physical proximity. For example, to maintain a private oral tradition, members of the community must be able to share information orally. Also, in Elis’s case, he sought out fellow Welshmen wherever he resided, in London, Calais, or soldiering in the field.

<sup>42</sup> For example, Desiderius Erasmus, Martin Luther, Michel de Montaigne, Niccolo Macchiavelli, and later Francis Bacon.

that a literature of resistance revolves around struggle and revolution against Western imperialist discourse that has subjugated the third world.<sup>43</sup> Prior to this, Protestant resistance theory existed during Elis's time, and despite its name, it was not limited to religion. This policy provided for resistance to a ruler if he or she were unjust, and could range from civil disobedience to outright rebellion. For example, Scottish exile John Knox (c.1513-1572) wrote that the rule of a woman was repugnant and should be resisted, a direct attack on Mary Stuart.<sup>44</sup>

Under Henry VIII, Elis was a witness as the crown sought to disempower Wales, along with Scotland, Ireland, France, and the Boulonnais, through a series of wars and administrative actions. The same tactics were utilized in each situation and are notable because they were used against people the English deemed to be their own subjects. English surveyors redrew the maps of each region and imposed an English system of shires upon them.<sup>45</sup> They removed and replaced native administration. They depopulated the regions of their original inhabitants, barring their reentry, and resettling the areas with English citizens. They restricted legal access. The king met native resistance with a scorched-earth policy of rape, violence, destruction, starvation, and relocation. Some have argued that England had not used these types of tactics against other Europeans, but post-colonialists Edward Said and Shankar Roman have theorized that the violence done under Henry VIII was extreme, and also based on an idea of racial inferiority as a pretext for removal or extermination.<sup>46</sup> Historian Neil Murphy argued that they used these same

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<sup>43</sup> Patricia B. Arinto, "Women and the Revolution: The Poetry of Resistance of Latin American Women Writers," *Review of Women's Studies* 2, no. 2 (1992): 59.

<sup>44</sup> John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 1558.

<sup>45</sup> Murphy, Neil. "Violence, Colonization and Henry VIII's Conquest of France 1544-1546." *Past and Present* 233, no. 1 (2016): 46.

<sup>46</sup> Murphy, Neil. "Violence, Colonization and," 17.

tactics against the native population of the New World, citing the characterization of the indigenous people as wild, and the use of violence, removal and repopulation to create ethnically English colonies.<sup>47</sup>

In 1544, Elis was among the soldiers who participated in the siege of Montreuil, watching the refugees walk past him, fainting from cold and hunger.<sup>48</sup> He claimed they sought refuge in “the ruins of a church and village which we had burnt a short time before. Many both old and young died there of cold.”<sup>49</sup> He also wrote that the horrible state of the refugees “would make the hardest heart melt from pity.”<sup>50</sup> When he rode through Neufchatel, he saw that all the villagers were ill and starving, with a look of death in their faces. The situation soon became worse, as the army spread the plague across the region, eventually bringing it back to Calais. Elis was in his fifties at this time, an old man to be out soldiering in the field. Although he was part of the English army, he clearly disapproved of the way the refugees were treated, removed from their land and livelihoods, sick, and hungry, dying where they fell. He likely identified with them as a fellow exile. Even though he left Wales before the Acts of Union, he was raised on stories of oppression, disrespect, and violence. He reignited this historical memory in his “Chronicle,” and his efforts to supply his native community with hope for the future emerges from similar motives as his empathy for the refugees at Neufchatel. Elis not only identified as Welsh, but also as exile, refugee, and rebel.

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<sup>47</sup> Murphy, Neil. “Violence, Colonization and,” 15-16.

<sup>48</sup> This text is available in Appendix A, document 12.

<sup>49</sup> M. Bryn Davies, “Boulogne and Calais from 1545 to 1550,” *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Fouad I University*, xii (1950): 67.

<sup>50</sup> Elis Gruffydd, “Chronicle,” f. 644r.

In 1942, Mao Zedong stated that all works of literature and art are political in that they are “products of the reflection in the human brain of the life of a given society.”<sup>51</sup> Every aspect of Elis’s “Chronicle” reflected his life and tradition, from the choice of language, topics and themes, bias, and to format, and these areas related to the politics of his time. He chose to write in Welsh both for privacy and to edify and validate the language and culture. He wrote about England and Wales as separate nations up to the death of the last native Prince of Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd in 1282. He used Welsh oral tradition to place his native people among the Classical civilizations and asserted their traditional rule over the isle of Britain. Elis gave examples of the negative prejudices and pejoratives applied to his native people and described his observation of similar behavior among the English and French.<sup>52</sup> His “Chronicle” reflects his position at the crossroads between the medieval and early modern worlds. Most of all, throughout this text, Elis gave his people validation of their nobility, ancestry, literary tradition, and eventual promised return to prominence.

Writing the “Chronicle” allowed Elis to document the existence of, and a future for, a Welsh identity, for both himself and his community. Although he was an exile, he maintained the qualities that he shared with his countrymen, and the act of writing the communal knowledge in their common language defined and guaranteed their existence as a people. Living in London and Calais surely influenced Elis’s development as both a writer and a person; he showed signs of growing modernity in both areas. With age and experience, he expanded his identity to include other aspects of his life as an exile and

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<sup>51</sup> Mao Zedong, “Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art.” *Modern Literature from China*, Walter and Ruth Meserve, eds., (New York: New York University Press), 297.

<sup>52</sup> See Appendix A, document 13.



resistance writer, and this greater complexity informed the writing of his “Chronicle.” Understanding the various ways Elis identified himself reveals layers of interpretation, and vast opportunities for further study.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Elis provided a window into his world with his “Chronicle.” This text is important because it provided the point of view of a Welshman at the Tudor court in London, on the front line of the wars in Europe, and in the military and trade center of Calais. He wrote his truthful and unedited observations of the environment, opinions, and events of the time. He was a figure at a major crossroads on the brink of the modern world. His work was innovative for the time, in format, length, and themes.

The sixteenth century was one of the most turbulent and conflicted eras in European history. It was the Age of Exploration, extending trade and exchange of information, developing a money economy and increased prosperity. It also marked the beginning of the development of the modern nation-state. The innovation of the printing press produced more than twenty million printed volumes by 1500, and in the year 1550 alone, some three million books were produced in Western Europe.<sup>1</sup> The sixteenth century was also a period of almost-constant war throughout Europe, including wars of religion and dynastic struggles. The Protestant Reformation splintered Europe on every level: religious, cultural, political, and intellectual.

England was deeply involved in all of these developments as, by extension, was Wales. During the 1520s and 1530s, Henry VIII sought to assimilate and repopulate Wales through the Acts of Union and other administrative actions, to win wars and territories in Europe, as well as to become head of the Church of England. Soldier and

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<sup>1</sup> Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800* (London: Verso, 1976), 248-49 and Max Roser, “Books,” World in Data, accessed June 5, 2018, <https://ourworldindata.org/books>.

chronicler Elis Gruffydd lived through the first tumultuous half of the century, first in Wales, then London and Europe, and finally for two decades at the military and trade center of Calais. As he reached old age, Elis combined all of the notes and transcriptions he had made over the years into his masterpiece, the 2500-folio “Chronicle of the Six Ages,” written entirely in Welsh. He wrote this text as an act of rebellion, to edify, preserve, and glorify his native language and culture for future generations.

Scholars have done very little work on sixteenth-century Welsh literature in general, or on Elis’s “Chronicle” in particular. The vast majority of this text remains unpublished. This alone makes it interesting and unusual. Most of the interest in this work has focused on the prophetic poems (*cywyddau brud, mab darogan*) and the Arthurian material he preserved, but even that scholarship is sparse. Elis’s eyewitness accounts of the important events he witnessed, as well as the informative gossip and hearsay, are almost completely unknown amongst sixteenth-century historians, yet are of undoubted importance and value for a number of reasons. First, during Elis’s life, Wales was a conquered land, degraded and disempowered by its overlord, England. As a Welshman, his point of view was unique and necessary to understanding the relationship between the two countries at this vital time.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, Elis used the Welsh language for his project, which had been forbidden by law and degraded as a second-class tongue used by people whom the English perceived as uneducated barbarians or thieves. By doing so, he validated his native tongue as one worthy of scholarship, literature, and poetry, legitimizing its

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<sup>2</sup> For an example of his unique view of the relationship, see Appendix A, document 13.

position as one of the ancient cultures of Europe. He advocated for the people's claim to ancient nobility and reinforced their hope of future redress through his choice of language and themes. The scope of the manuscript alone gave it stature and importance, as the longest work in Welsh until Morgan translated the Bible in 1588.

The "Chronicle" is also important because it straddled the medieval and modern periods, in format, theme, and style. Elis demonstrated his evolution as a writer of history in this work, and his ability to claim new knowledge and forms for the language and people of Wales. He sent all of his works home for the benefit of his family and friends (and perhaps an incitement to work on his behalf to settle a land claim). From his early collections and compendia, he grew into a critical thinker who analyzed and judged his sources, rather than just copying them like a scribe. He brought his own thoughts and experience to this work, which provided insight into what life was like for an exile serving the king's army in Calais.

Elis Gruffydd's "Chronicle," a historical construction for his native land, validated the nobility and importance of the Welsh people since Creation. By choosing to write in Welsh, he also edified the language and endorsed its use in significant literary projects. Although he wrote in the sixteenth century, this work stands alongside other more modern authors of resistance, like Franz Fanon, Edward Saïd, and Gayatri Spivak.<sup>3</sup> Like them, Elis wrote as a post-colonialist, separated from his homeland through economic exile, a chronicle for the survival of his native language and culture. His work, one of the first of this kind, might inform modern scholars about the relationship between

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<sup>3</sup> Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), Edward Saïd, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979), Gayatri Spivak and Ranajit Guha, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Wales and England during this period and open up new lines of inquiry into the ways that oppressed and marginalized people resisted assimilation through literature.

Elis's descriptions of the English army's tactics and treatment of its so-called rebellious countrymen in Wales, Ireland, France, and Scotland gave scholars a unique and personal observation of both the administration and military of Henry VIII. Prys Morgan called the "Chronicle" a "worm's eye view," far from the pomp of the Tudor court.<sup>4</sup> This is valuable not only for the study of the ties between England and Wales, but also the relationship between England and the wider world. The Welsh were able to resist assimilation for hundreds of years by means of their isolating geography, poverty, lack of available crops and livestock to raid, well-established language and tradition, and sheer rebelliousness. Other regions were less able to resist the strategies developed while attempting to absorb the territory of Wales. However, the type of resistance literature that Elis wrote as an exile in Calais was comparable to the literature written by marginalized and disempowered people throughout the world. As an early example of this genre of writing, Elis's work would likely be informative to scholars in multiple disciplines.

Since the "Chronicle" remains mostly unpublished, with some sections published only in Welsh, working with this text will provide innovative material on a very important and influential period of history. Elis's contemporary writing covered themes including the Reformation, the book trade, contraband shipping of written materials, war strategy, trade, economics, geography, military development, as well as his observations of trials, battles, travels, and events. His earlier texts provide unique and important

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<sup>4</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant-Tudor Chronicler Extraordinary," *Flintshire Historical Society* 25 (1971-72): 13.

versions of some of the most important medieval literature of the time, including the earliest extant copy of the *Ystoria Taliesin*.

Moving beyond a literal reading of the “Chronicle,” Elis’s editorial and linguistic choices represented his desire to resist assimilation by preserving his native traditions. He selected works to compile that carried cultural references like the *mab darogan* in order to give his people a reason resist efforts to disempower and disenfranchise them. He wrote to give an oppressed and marginalized people a history to be proud of and hope for the future. He used Welsh to edify and continue it, despite prohibition from the Tudor court. He is part of a long tradition of literary history that has allowed the Welsh to hold on to their language and culture despite numerous assaults and oppressions.

More broadly, few historians have worked with this text directly, without relying on a translation, an additional layer of possible bias that might be removed by reading the text in Middle Welsh. The rare mention of Elis in modern scholarship has usually been a translated line or two taken out of context. Most of his translators have been literary or linguistic scholars, seeking preserved motifs or declensions. A historian brings a completely different lens to the “Chronicle,” a vital one, since understanding the contemporary section of the “Chronicle” will benefit from historical knowledge of the era, and the application of historical practices. Even the parts of the “Chronicle” that Elis wrote from remembered stories or texts that he read would benefit from a historical point of view, as the choices he made regarding his compilation and language were almost certainly based on his motivation and environment at the time of writing. Well-known sixteenth-century specialists have often been unaware of the existence of the “Chronicle,” so making it available to the discipline of history will be an innovative contribution,

which may lead to further scholarship, particularly when it is read as resistance literature. Elis's "Chronicle" tells us a great deal about Welsh opposition to Henry VIII's policies in the British Isles. He also showed the effect of both the medieval and early modern periods as well as the influence of Welsh oral tradition and his adopted home in Calais on his life and writing. Most important, Elis maintained and solidified his identity by completing this massive project in his native language, fighting against the assimilation threatened by the English crown during the sixteenth century.

## Appendix A

### Transcriptions/Translations from the “Chronicle”<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Case against Piers Mytton, f 2<sup>2</sup>

And for my work, I do not wish for anything save your kindness and your good word. And thinking of the violence and wrong that Piers Muttwn did me deceptively under the guise of the law, and of the wrong that his heirs are doing to me still, and likely to go on doing, because I am unable to come to the country to carry on litigation under a law that is, as far as I hear, gone to perdition in Wales and England save to those who might be rich enough to gild the lawyers’ hands—a thing I am not able to do. For this reason, I appeal to you to set aright my wrong, you and Mr. Piers Mostyn, between you. For he is, as my countrymen inform me, able to do a lot to help in this matter to cause me to get justice.<sup>3</sup>

#### 2. Farming changes, f. 451v<sup>4</sup>

Also at this time, it was said that a well arose in Derbyshire full of beer, which if one can believe the stories of men one thinks are truthful, carried yeast on its surface, which the poor people from far and near came to fetch. This was a wonder and a miracle, and it was more than a wonder, if the tale could be believed, for there was a great dearth of the

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<sup>1</sup> For continuity, the author has begun each excerpt with an indent.

<sup>2</sup> Prys Morgan, “Elis Gruffydd of Gronant-Tudor Chronieler Extraordinary.” *Flintshire Historical Society* 25 (1971-72): 17.

<sup>3</sup> Mostyn was High Sheriff of Flintshire.

<sup>4</sup> Prys Morgan, “Elis Gruffydd of Gronant,” 19-20.



wherewithal for bread and drink in that part of England, and especially so in North Wales, within Caernarvonshire and Denbighshire, Penllyn and Edeirnion, and up to Arduwy. From these places, people were going as far as Derby and Nottingham, yes, as far as Lincolnshire, from places where corn was so rare that there was no grain at all to be bought, only pease or beans and a little barley. This dearth made the men of the Welsh mountains turn husbandmen, better than any of their forefathers had been, in those areas of Wales, and in those country areas anyone who had any power in him, gave his whole energy to plough his land, to sow oats and rye, from which they got great succor and help in a short time. So it is right for me to speak of that well I mention about, about which all sorts of stories came to the king's court through various people.

### **3. The Meeting of Katherine and Owain Tudur; 305v — 307v<sup>5</sup>**

Ynn ol proses hrai o lyure Lloygyr ac opiniwn y Saesson ni oddeuai y kyngor o Loegyrr j'r vrenhines Gattrin briodi neb yn Lloegyrr ac jr ydoedd hi ynn i chwynychu. O'r achos j bu hi ynn weddw serttein o amser. Ynn yr amser ir ydoedd ysgwier o Wynnedd yn wasnaethwyr ac ynn sewer i ennau y vreninhines, yr hwn a oedd ynn karu vn o law vorynion y vrenhines. Yr hon a ganuu y matter. Ac ar ddiwyrnod garllaw llys y vrenhines ynn amser haaf i digwyddodd j'r asgwier hwn vynnd i nouio i avon a oedd yn llithro gan ysdlys mur y llys, y neb a ganuu llaw

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<sup>5</sup> T. Gerald Hunter, "The Chronicle of Elis Gruffydd," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures, 1995.

vorwyn y vrennhines ynn vuan. Yr hon a ddanges y matter j'r vrenhines, yr hon a ddoeth j ffennesdyr i ed E]rych ar y gwyr yn nouio. Ymysc yr hrain i gwelai y vrenhines vn o'r gwyr ynn hragori i gymedeithon o degwch knawd. O'r achos I gouynnodd y vrenhines i'r llaw vorwynn pwy ydoedd y gwr knawdwyn a oedd ymysc y llaill yn yr avon. Yr hon a ddangoses iddi hi mae y Kymro Ywain j sewer hi ydoedd ef. "Aha 111 hebyr y vrenhinnes, "weld akw wr ysydd ynn ych karu chwi ynn vawr." "Yn wir," heber y verch vonheddig, "velly i mae ef yn dywedud, ac yn wir ni chaaf i vynnied j le ynn y byd o'ch golwg chwi ar ni bo ef ynn vy ngorllwyn j." "Wele," hebyr y vrenhinnes, "gad i jme vynnied noswaith yn dy rriith di ynn lie i boch i yn aruer o gyuaruod, a myui a wnaif iddo ef nad amyro ef arnat ti o hynny allan." Ac o vewn ychydig o amser ynn ol hyn i gwnaeth y llaw vorwyn oed ar gyuaruod ac Ywain mewn galarei garllaw sdauell y vrenhines, j'r hon j dangoses y llaw vorwyn gwbwl o'r kyurang a oedd hryngthi hi ac Ywain. A'r vrennhines a gymerth archenad i llaw vorwyn ac ynn y tywyll yhi a aeth i'r galarey ynn y man jr ydoedd Ywain yn disgwyl j gariad. Yn lie yr hon i kymerth ef y vrenhines erbynn j mynnwgyl i ymkanu hroddi kussann y'w genau hi, yr hon a droes i grudd att j enau ef. Ac ynn ol vdduntt twy ymddiuan serttein o eiriau bob un a'I gilidd, yvo a ganuu oleuad yn dyuod megis ped uiasai y vrenhins ynn dyuod y'w shiambyr. O'r achos j keishiodd ef roddi kusan y'w min hi wrth ymadel, yr hon a droes i grudd atto ef ynn yr vn modd. O'r achos j tybiodd ef nad yhi a oedd i gariad ef. O'r achos yvo a vrathodd i grudd hi a'i ddannedd megis

ac j gallai ef wybod a gweled ynn ysbys pwy a oedd ynn wattwar ef ynn y modd hwnw. Ar yr hyn jr ymadewis Ywain a'r vrenhines o arsswyd y goleuad. Ynn ol yr hyn jr aeth y vrenhines y'w shiambyr yr19 ac Ywain y'w letty. A thrannoeth j gorchmynodd y vrenhines y'w shiambyrlen orchymyn Ywain i vod yn sewr iddi hi ar ginnio y dethwn hwnw, yr hyn a gyulownodd. Ac ynn ol i Ywain osod y bwyd ar y bwrdd ynn i ordyr megis ac jr ydoedd j swydd ef y'w wneuthud, yvo a droes j wyneb at y renhinhines, yr hon a oedd yn amolchi j vynned y'w chinio. Yn yr amser ir adrychodd hi ynn ffyrnig ar Ywain, drwy rodidi j bys ar i grudd ar yr hwn i gwelai ef [306v] blasdyr. O'r achos j gosdyngodd ef i ben drwy adde ynn I galon mae y vrenhines a vrathassai ef i grudd y nnos ynn y blaen. O'r aochos, ynn ol opiniwn hrai o llyure, ir amkanod ef gymerud j varch a marchogaeth y'w wlad hrag ovon y vrenhines- Yr hon yn ol opiniwn hrai o'r bobyl a ddanuones geniaid ynn i ol ef, yr hwn a'i kauas ef ynn i letty ynn tynu j bwttias am i goese i ymkanv kymerud i shiwrnai parth a Chymru. Yr hwnw a orchmynodd jddo ef dyuod garbron y vrenhinenes. Yr honn, ynn ol opiniwn hrai eraill o'r bobyl a ddanuonasai orchymyn ar y porthorion ar gadw Ywain o vewn pyrth y llys. Onnid ni wna matter pa un o'r ddau vodd dykpwyd yvo garbronn y vrennhines, yr hon o vewn ychydig o amser ynn ol a wnaeth gymaint ohonaw ef<sup>2°</sup> ac jddi ymkanuv j briodi ef. O'r achos yn ol opiniwn y bobyl yhi a ddanuones vn o'I herawds i Gymru i ymouun pa wr j gennedlaeth ef. Yr hwn a ddoeth i dy i uam ef ynn ddissymwth, ac yhi yn eise wrth y tan ac ynn bwytta i chi[n]io oddi

ar j gliniau a'i harffed. A'r neb ac ymhlith boneddigion y wladd ir amouynodd yr herawdd am iach Ywain. Yr hon a ddeliurwyd iddo ef mewn esgriuen ar hon. Jr amchwelodd ef att y vrenhines, j'r hon i dangoses ef y tu tecka, megis ac j mae gwyr o'i keluyddydd wynt dyngedig, drwy ddangos j'r vranhines y modd j kowsai ef vam Ywain, ynn eisde wrth daan ynn i fflaas ac ynn bwytta j chino oddi ar ddau dresdel, yr hrain ni roddai hi y gwaetha ohonaun twy jr kaant o vorckiau, drwy ddangos iddi hi j achau ef o du taad ac o du mam ynn y modd hwn:

Eywain vab Mredudd vab Tudur vab Gronnw vab Tudur vab Gronnw vab Gwenlliann verch yr Arglwydd Rys vab Gewenllian verch Ruffudd vab Kynnan vab Jaaggo vab Idwala voel vab Annarawd vab Hrodri Mawr vab Essyll merch Gynnan Dindaythwy. A mam Ywain oedd Vargred verch Domas vab Llywelyn vab Ywain vab Mredudd vab Gwladus verch Riwallon vab Yngharrad verch Vredudd vab Howel Dda vab Kadell vab Hrodri Mawr vab Essylld merch Gynnan Dindaethwy vab Hrodri Molwynnog vab Idwal Iwrth vab Kydwaladyr Vendigaid y brenin diwaetha o'r Byttainaid. Ac ni bu haiach o ennyd ynnol hyn nes j'r vrenhines briodi Ywain yn ddirgel.

According to some of the books of England and the opinion of the Englishmen, the Council of England would not allow Queen Katherine to marry anyone in England whom she desired- Because of this, she was a widow for a certain amount of time. At this time there was a squire from Gwynedd [working as] a servant and a table attendant to the queen who

was in love with one of the queen's handmaidens. She took note of the matter. And one day, in the summertime, near the queen's court, it happened that this squire went swimming in a river which wound by the side of the court's wall. The queen's handmaid noticed this immediately. She related the matter to the queen, who came to the window to look upon the men swimming. Amongst these, she saw one of the men who stood out from among his companions because of the fairness of his body. Because of this, the queen asked her handmaid who was the white-bodied man who was amongst the others in the river. She related to her that he was the Welshman, Owain, her table attendant. "Aha," said the queen, "there is a man who loves you greatly." "Truly," said the noblewoman, "so he says, and truly I can not go anywhere in the world out of your sight where he would not be lying in wait for me." "Look," said the queen, "one evening let me go disguised as you to the place where you would usually meet, and I will make sure that he will never trouble you any more." And within a short time after this, the handmaid made a tryst to meet Owain in a gallery next to the room of the queen, to whom the handmaid related all of the adventures which had taken place between Owain and herself. And the queen took her handmaid's clothing and she went in the darkness to the gallery where Owain was awaiting his lover. Instead of her, he took the queen by her neck, with the intention of giving her a kiss on the mouth, [but] she turned her cheek to his mouth. And after they conversed, each one [speaking] certain words with the other, he noticed a light

coming as if the queen were coming to her room. Because of this, he tried to give her a kiss on the lips as he departed. She turned her cheek to him in the same manner. Because of this, he supposed that it was not she who was his lover. Because of this, he bit her cheek with his teeth so that he could know and see for sure who was mocking him in that manner. Upon that Owain departed from the queen for fear of the light. After this, the queen went to her chamber and Owain [went] to his lodgings. And the next morning the queen ordered her chamberlain to order Owain to be her table attendant during dinner that day. This was carried out. And after Owain set the food on the table in order, as it was his job to do, he turned his face to the queen, who was washing to go to her dinner. She then looked at Owain angrily, placing her finger on her cheek, upon which he saw a bandage. Because of this, he lowered his head, admitting in his heart that it was the queen whose cheek he had bitten the night before. Because of this, according to the opinion of some books, he planned to take his horse and ride to his country, for fear of the queen. She, according to the opinion of some of the people, sent a messenger after him, who found him in his lodgings pulling his boots over his legs, intending to journey to Wales. He ordered him to come before the queen. She, according to the opinion of some of the other people, had sent an order to the gatekeepers to keep Owain inside the gates of the court. However, it does not matter which of the two ways he was brought before the queen, [for] within a short time she had made such a fuss over him that she decided to marry

him. Because of this, according to the opinion of the people, she sent one of her heralds to Wales to enquire after his lineage. He came to the house of [Owain's] mother quickly, and she [was] sitting by the fire eating her dinner from her knees and her lap. And in the midst of the nobles of the country the herald enquired about Owain's pedigree. She delivered it to him in writing at this. He returned to the queen, to whom he showed the fairest side, as men of their art are fated to do, relating to her how he had found Owain's mother, sitting by the fire in her house and eating her dinner from two trestles, the worst of which she would not let go for one hundred marks, while showing her his pedigrees on the side of his father and the side of his mother in this manner: Owain son of Maredudd son of Tudur son of Gronw son of Tudur son of Gronw son of Gwenllian daughter of the Lord Rhys son of Gwenllian daughter of Gruffudd son of Cynan son of Iago son of Idwal Foel son of Anarawd son of Rhodri Mawr son of Essyllt daughter of Cynan Dindaethwy. And Owain's mother was Margred daughter of Tomas son of Llywelyn son of Owain son of Maredudd son of Gwladus daughter of Rhiwallon son of Angharad daughter of Maredudd son of Howel Dda son of Cadell son of Rhodri Mawr son of Esyllt daughter of Cynan Dindaethwy son of Rhodri Molwynnog son of Idwal Iwrth son of Cadwaladr Fendigaid, the last king of the Britons. And it was not long after this that the queen married Owain secretly.

#### 4. Story of Jasper Tudor told to him by his ancestors, f 323v<sup>6</sup>

At this time Jasper son of Ywain ap Maredudd ap Tudur by Queen Katrin wife of Henry of Monmouth, and earl of Pembroke, I heard my ancestors say, took a boat from a gentleman living at Mostyn in Whitford parish, Flintshire, at a place called Picton Pool, where the Earl had to carry a bundle of pease pods on his back as he went abroad, for fear that someone should spot him-for there were plenty to spy on him in those parts. Yet he got on board the boat and thence went to Brittany, more through the craft of the Earl than by the craft of the boatmen of Picton.

#### 5. The Battle of Towton; 322v - 324r<sup>7</sup>

Ac ett[o] ir hynn i mae hrai o'r llyure ynn dangos ynn eglur na laas onnid xl mil o bawb val i gilidd o bob vn o'r ddwyblaid. Ac ynn wir nid oedd ryueddod ynn y byd ir bod larder vawr o gylannedd ar y maes hwn kannis i mae'r kronicks ynn dangos bod dialedd Duw mor drwm ymysc pobyl y dyrnnas a gwneuthud kalonne y taadau mor galed ac mor esdronaid ac mor greulonn ac i'r tadau ymladd ynn erbynn i meibion ac j'r meibion ym [323 r] laad ynn ebyn i tadau. Je, ac i mae'r ysdori ynn dangos ir byrhau y chweddyl vod poob graadd kyrennydd ynn ymaladd ar y maes hwn pawb yn erbynn j gilidd. Ac wrth y modd i klywais i sertein o wyr krededun ymi dywedud bod llawer bickre greulonn hrwn[g] gwyr y gwladoedd ar y ffyrdd ynn kerdd[ed] ne ynn marchogaeth tu a'r maes hw

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<sup>6</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant," 19.

<sup>7</sup> T.Gerald Hunter, "The Chronicle of Elis Gruffydd."



pan ddigwyddai i wyr o boob un o'r ddwyblaid gyuaruod ar ben fordd ne mewn tref. Ynn siwrnai i digwyddodd i wr o blaid y brenin Hari golli i vinttai ynn mynned tu a'r maes. Ynn ol yr hrain j marchoges y gwr ynn brysur. Ynn yr amser i digwyddodd iddo ef gyhuaruod a serttein o bobyl o blaid y gwr ir oyddeint twy ynn i alw y brenin Edwart. Yr hrain oblegid i ganuod ef ynn marchogaeth mor brysur a'e sdoppiodd y ffor[dd] ac a ovynnodd iddo ef ynn ol serttein o ymddiuanon erail o blaid pwy ir yddoedd ef ynn marchaeth tu a'r maes. Y neb atebodd ac a ddyuod mae o blaid y brenin Haarri. O'r achs i trewis y gwyr arnno ef ac a'i duliodd ef ynn ffesd, drwy erchi jddo ef gymerud hynny jr mwyn j veisdyr. Ac ynn ol yntwy a'i gollyngasantt ef i varchogaeth ynn ol I gwmpeini. Ynn y ffrwsd j digwyddodd iddo ef gyuaruod a diadell o blaid y brenin Hari, neithyr yvo a dugasai mae o blaid brenin Edwart ir oeddeunt twy. Yr hrain a esdopies y ffordd ac a'I holies ef ynn yr vnn modd. Ynn yr amser i dyuod ef mae o blaid y brenin Edwart ir ydoedd ef ynn marchogaeth tu a'r maes. O'r achos ynnwy a'i ffusdiasaint ef yn ddwys ac a'I gollyngassant ef i varchogaeth ynn ol i gymedogion. Neithyr kyn kaffel ohonnaw ef j goddiwes wynt yvo a gyuaru a'r trydydd kwmpaini. Yr hrain a'i holies ef ynn yr vn modd, neithyr yvo a luniodd ateb kyurwysach vddunt twy ir kaddw j benn a ' I esgwydde ynn ddiysig nag a wnaethai ef i'r ddau gwmpeini eraill ac a ddyuod mae gwr oedd ef i ynghanog o ddiawl, drwy ddangos vdunt twy y moodd i kwsai ef i ffusstio ynn dda irmwynn pob un o'r ddau vrenin y brenin Hari a'r brenin Edwart. Oherwydd masswedd y chwedyl i

chwarddodd y bobyl drwy erchi iddo ef varchogaeth ynn ffest i geisio i veisdyr heb wnneuthud iddo ef axngenn anniwed. O'r achos i diolches ef i'r bobyl ynn vawr drwy ddywedud ynn y modd hwn: "Ynn wir Dduw, i mae imi lawer mwy o achos i garru ynghanogg o ddiawl nog yr vnn o'r ddau vrenin oherwydd myvi a geuais mwy o fauyr ir i vwyn ef no [323v] g ir mwn yr vn o'r ddau vrenin, yr hyn ysydd dosturi a ffruddder mawr Duw a'I dycko j ben da ynn amser.

And yet despite this, some of the books say clearly that only 40,000 men were killed altogether on the two sides. But truly, it is no wonder in the world that there was a great larder of corpses on this battle-field, because the chronicles indicate that the revenge of God was so heavy amongst the people of the kingdom as to make the hearts of fathers so hard and so alien and so cruel that fathers fought against their sons and sons fought against their fathers. Indeed, the history shows, to shorten the tale that every type of kin was fighting on this field, everyone against each other. And in this fashion, I heard certain credible men say that there was many a cruel encounter between men of the lands on the roads walking or riding towards this battle-field when men of each of the two sides met on the road or in a town. During the travel, it happened that a man of king Harri's party lost his troop going to the field. He rode quickly after them. At this time he happened to meet with certain people from the party of the other man whom they were calling the king Edward. These people, because they saw him riding so quickly, stopped him on the road and

asked him, after certain other discussions, for whose side was he riding to the field. He answered and said that it was for the side of King Harri. For that reason the men beat him and thrashed him soundly, telling him to take that for his master. And afterward, they set him to ride after his company. During his hasty ride, he happened to meet with a herd of king Harri's men, but he thought that they belonged to King Edward's side. These men blocked the road and questioned him in the same fashion. This time he said that he was riding to the field for King Edward. Because of that, they thrashed him soundly and set him to ride back to his companions. But before he overtook them, he met with yet a third company. These men questioned him in the same fashion, but he formed a more clever answer to them than he had made to the two other companies. In order to keep his head and shoulders unbruised, he said that he served a beggarly devil, and he explained to them how he had been thrashed well for the sake of each one of the two kings, the king Harri and the King Edward. Because of the story's levity, the people laughed and beseeched him to ride quickly to seek his master without doing any harm to him. For this he thanked them greatly, saying as follows: "By God's truth, I have much more reason to love a beggarly devil than either of the two kings, for I've had more favor for his sake than for the sake of either of the two kings, which is a pity and a great sadness. May God bring it to a fitting end in time.

## 6. The murder of the young king and his brother; 339v - 340r<sup>8</sup>

Ac [ 339v] o vewn ychydig o ddiwyrnodiau ynn ol hynn drwy druth y Duwk of Bwckingaam j gwnaeth maer Kaerludd gymanua aa gwys mawr ar y dinaswyr j ddyuod ar serttein o ddydd ac o awr j'r dadleudy a hennwir ynn Saysonayg the Jeild Haul. Ynn y lie a'r man j gwnaeth y Duwk of Buckingham araith hir drwy eiriau gwenwynig garbron yr holl dyrua o ddinaswyr i ddangos bod teittyl y prottegtor ynn well no flant y brenin Edwart. Neith[yr] val kynt, ni roddes nemor o'r dinaswyr vawr goel ar chwedyl y Duwk o Vwgginggam, yr hynn a ganuu ef ynn ebrwydd. O'r achos j dangoses ef i'r prottegtor nad oedd iddo ef vodd ynn y byd j ddwyn j amkan ynn amgylch tra uai meibion y brenin Edwart yn vyw. Ac ynn ol hynn jr ordeiniodd y protector serthein o wyr annwireedd o'i wsnaethwyr ef i vod ynn geidwed ohonnaunt twy. At yr hrain j danuones y protector j lythyr ynn ddirgel I orchymyn vddeunt twy ddiuetha y brenin a'i vrawd erbyn serttain ddydd dan boenn j heinioes, yr hyn a wnaethant twy. Onid pa ffuryf a ffa uodd i dienyddasant twy y brenin a'I vrawd j mae soon ac ymrauel mawr ymysc y bobyl pawb ynn I opiniwn a'i chwedyl ganttho, kanis hraii a ddengys i opiniwn ac a dywaid ynn gryf ac yn gadarn mae i mygv wynt aa wnaethbwyd hrwng dau wely pluf. O'r man j diengis y Duwk o Jork ac a foes dan y gwely. Yr hyn a ganuu gwaas anhrugarog, y neb a hennwid Shion Adychdyn, yr hwn a ddug ruthyr ac a dynnodd yr engil oddi dan y gwely erbyn i draed ac ar nail law yvo a ddaliodd wynneb

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<sup>8</sup> T. Gerald Hunter, "The Chronicle of Elis Gruffydd."

a gennau yr angel tu a'r llawr ac a'i gyllell ynn y llaw arall yvo a dores  
vreuant yr angel diargoedd. Ac ynn y modd hwn j diennyddwyd y brenin  
Edwart y Pumed a'i vrawd. Ac ynn wir hryueddod mawr ydiw alleel o  
ddynnion ar a uai ynn kreddu i'r Taad ac j'r Mab ac j'r Ysbryd Glaan  
wneuthud gweithred mor greulon ac mor anhrugarog a hon. Neithyr os  
opiniwn y bobyl a goelir hraid a oedd vddunt twy wneuthud y kyuriw  
gyulauan a dangos j kyrf wynt ynn veirw erbyn y bore drannoeth i'r  
protector ne odde maruolaeth i hunnaint. O'r achos hrag ovyn am j hoedyl  
i goruu arnunt twy gyulownni ywyllys y protector anhrugarog. Yr hwn  
ynn ol opiniwn y bobyl a orchmynnodd y'w wasnaethwyr rodde korf y  
brenin a'i vrawn mewn koffyr o haiarn a'i harwedd wynt j'r mor a'i suddo  
wynt. Yr hyn a wnaethant twy y gisd a arweddwyd mewn hwi a oedd yn  
hwylio parth a Fflandrys, dros vwrdd yr hron j bwriwyd [340r] y gisd a'r  
ddau gorf ynddi yn y mor ynn y lie a elwir y Black Dippys. Yr hynn oil a  
vu ddiarwybod j'r morwyr. A'r achos penna ar a vu i wneuthud i bobyl y  
dyrnas gredu bod y chwedyl hwn ynn wir a vu oherwydd ac o achos nad  
oedd neb o vewn y twr ynn medru dywedud na dangos gladdu dim  
ohonnaunt twy o vewn kaerrav y twr, o vewn yr hwn ni vedrwyd byth  
gaffel yr un o'r ddau na'i kyrf na'i hesgyrn wynt. Nethyr etto ir hynn j mae  
oppiniwn arall ynn dangos ac ynn dywedud mae vn o'r gwyr a oedd yn  
disgwyl ar y brenin ynn i garchar a roddes waeth ne greglais vchelgroch  
drwy grio o hyd j leef "Tresswn, tresswn!" Y geiriau a yrodd ovynn mawr  
ar y brenin jevanck a'i vrawd, yr hrain a ovynodd gyngor j vn o'r keidweid

pa beth a gynghorai ef vddunt twy j wneuthud hrag ovon bod neb ynn ymkannv dyuod j wneuthud brad vddunt twy. Yr hwn a erchis vddunt twy vynnied j gisd vawr, yr hon a oedd yn gorwedd ynn agered ar ysdlys y ty, drwy addo j hesgusodi wynt a dywedud nad oedd dim ohonnaunt twy oddi uewn y shiambyr o ddoe vradychwyr ynn y byd j ouunn amdanauntt twy. Y geiriau a wnaethi j'r brenin ac y'w vrawd ffo j'r gisd, yr hon a gaiodd y keidweid yn fesi ac a'i bwriasant hi mewn pwell dwuyn, yr hwn a ddaruoeedd vddunt twy i gloddio o'r gwaithi odde dan ysdaer ddirgel o'r ysdauell. Ynn y man j kladdasant twy y gisd a'r brenin a'i vrawd ynthi ynn vyw. Yr hon o vewn serttein bychan o amser ynn ol a gyuoded o'r man hwn ac a'I hrodd mewn llong oddi ar uwrdd yr hon j bwriwyd yhi yn y mor, megis ac j mae hynn o laur ynn i ddangos ynn y blaen.

And within a few days after this, by means of the Duke of Buckingham's trickery, the mayor of London called an assembly, issuing a great summons to the citizens to come upon a certain day and hour to the meeting hall which is called The Guild Hall in English. Then and there, by means of venomous words, the Duke of Buckingham made a long speech before the entire crowd of citizens to demonstrate that the title of the Protector was better than that of the children of King Edward. However, as before, hardly any of the citizens placed much belief in the Duke of Buckingham's story, which he swiftly perceived. Because of that, he demonstrated to the Protector that he had no way in the world of bringing his aspiration to fruition as long as the sons of King Edward were alive.

And after this, the Protector ordered certain deceitful men from amongst his servants to be their keepers. To these men, the Protector sent his letter secretly to order them to destroy the king and his brother before a certain day under pain of death. This they did. But as to the manner and the way in which they murdered the king and his brother, there is much talk and contention amongst the people, everyone with his own opinion and his own story, for some declare their opinion and maintain forcefully and with confidence that they were smothered between two feather beds, from whence the Duke of York escaped and fled under the bed. This was noticed by a cruel servant, who was called John Adington, who charged over and pulled the angel out from under the bed by his feet, and with one hand held him face-down on the floor and, with his knife in the other [hand], he cut the throat of the guiltless angel. And in this manner, King Edward V and his brother were murdered. And truly it is a great wonder that men who believe in the father, the son and the holy spirit would be able to do a deed so cruel and so merciless as this. Although, if the opinion of the people is believed, they had to commit that murder and show their dead bodies to the protector by the next morning to the protector or suffer death themselves. Because of that, for fear of their lives, they had to fulfill the will of the merciless protector. Who, according to the opinion of the people, ordered his servants to place the bodies of the king and his brother into a chest of iron and take them to sea and sink them. This they did, [using] a chest which was taken in a hoy which was sailing towards

Flanders, over the side of which the chest, with the two bodies in it, was thrown into the sea at the place which is called The Black Deeps. All of this was unknown to the seamen. And the main argument which made the people of the realm believe that this story was true was that no one within the tower could say or show that they had been buried anywhere within the keeps of the tower, in which not one of the two, neither their bodies nor their bones, was ever found. However, despite this there is another opinion, which shows and says that one of the men who was waiting upon the king in his prison gave a scream or a loud hoarse cry, crying at the top of his voice, "treason, treason!" The words put great fear into the young king and his brother, who asked advice from one of the keepers, [and inquired] what he would advise them to do, for fear that someone was intending to come and commit treason against them. This man beseeched them to go into a great chest, which was lying open at the side of the building, all the while promising to cover for them and say that neither of them was within the room if any traitors of any kind should come to ask about them. The words caused the king and his brother to flee into the chest, which the keeper shut tightly and threw into a deep pit which they had dug out of the foundation underneath a secret stair [leading] from the chamber. In this place, they buried the chest with the king and his brother alive inside it. Within a certain short amount of time afterward, this [chest] was brought up from this place and put into a ship, from which it was thrown overboard into the sea, as this work shows before.



**7. Observation of Germaine de Foix, widowed queen of Aragon, f.  
422v<sup>9</sup>**

That day, about seven in the evening, the Queen of Aragon took leave of the king and the queens to make her way to Sandwich, where the Emperor's fleet was waiting, and indeed to God, it was not without justification that she took so long over her journey, for she really was able to ride only a very short way in a day, because she had gone so far in old age, and she was one of the fattest and fleshiest women I ever saw. Yet although the stoutness of the flesh spoilt her shape, it spoilt the colour of her skin not at all, and her skin was certainly more beautiful than the skin of any of the ladies there gathered. Furthermore, her hair was fair and long, her eyes large and blue, her face wide and muscular, her neck strong, with rolls of flesh around it, and although the length and strength of her body were so ill-distributed, and fat stole the height of the body, her body was of moderate length. So in this manner, as I have related, the Queen made her way-very slowly-to Sandwich.

**8. In Elis's old age, his description of what war used to be like, f**

**689v<sup>10</sup>**

When a veteran began to talk of the friendship and the comradeship and the good order that there was amongst soldiers and men of war in the time of the wars in Spain, Gelderland, Tournay, and

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<sup>9</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant," 12.

<sup>10</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant," 11.

Therouanne, and the two expeditions under the Duke of Norfolk at the siege of Hesdin, and the Duke of Suffolk at Montdidier, then those squires and rascals, arrogant, vain, reckless, ignorant in their behavior would taunt him thus: ‘Aha, Sirs! Now must we listen to an old man of the king’s, with a red nose. Bring him a stool to sit on, and a mugful of beer warmed up and a piece of burnt bread to clear his throat, so that he can talk of his exploits at Therouanne and Tournay and up to this very day.’

### **9. Montdidier f. 445v<sup>11</sup>**

A man could pass from one corner of the town to the other, from cave to cave—a fact well-known to me, Elis Gruffudd, and to Sion ap Dafydd and Rhys ap Gruffudd from the township of Gronant in Flintshire in North Wales, for they were there. And they took a wax taper from a chapel in the town and went through the embers that were burning in the hall of one of the houses that had been set on fire the previous night, to the mouth of a cave which they saw leading into the earth, with the object of finding wealth within it, thinking that no one had ventured to go that way, which was true. And after entering the top floor which was beneath a (unclear), there was nothing there but two or three vessels full of wine. And from there they found a broad stairway leading lower: they followed it until they came to the bottom of the cave...; then moving from cave to cave underground they came to the other corner of the town. There at that

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Jones, “A Welsh Chronicler in Tudor England.” *Welsh History Review* (January 1, 1960): 9.

time, they saw much worldly wealth if only there had been means of taking it from that place: wine, honey, leather, pewter vessels, and bars of salt.

#### **10. Montdidier f 445v<sup>12</sup>**

At this time the grey-bearded winter began to show his face through the cold, black, frost-wind, in short days and long nights, which made the weakling soldiers, weak with colds, complain and groan one to another. Some said it was not necessary for them to be lying there on the ground in the shelter of banks and hedges, dying of cold. Another said he wanted to be home with his nose in his wife's bottom, whose bottom, said he, was more warmly placed than he could now place his head.

#### **11. Introduction and Contents; 2r - 4v (The first folio of Mostyn 158 is lost)<sup>13</sup>**

—ac ynn abyl J gyuatteb poob gair ynn i senttens drwy boob kyluyddydd a seiens ar a dreithir ar tauod drwy lethyreu ymhoob Jaith ar y sydd ynn arueredig o'i dywedud yny hran yma or byd. A[c] yn enwedig i'r kyuriw wyr ac y sydd y[n] hyuddyl ag ynn wybod[us] ynn y Lading ar Gymraeg. Neithyr etto Jr hynn, Jr ydwyf J yn kyuadde ynno vy hun nad ydwyf i ynn y matter hwn yma onid yn yr un modd o gyfflybiaeth ac y mae yr ysbardun J wneuthud i'r march gerdded hredege ne duthio yn gynnt

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<sup>12</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd of Gronant," 13

<sup>13</sup> T. Gerald Hunter, "The Chronicle of Elis Gruffydd."

yni vlaen, ne yntte yn gyffelib J agallen J'r gwyr gwybodol dysgedig i hogi  
 i kyllyll J olymu I penne J ysgrienv yn gysdal i lyuynhau ac J berffeithiav  
 vngorchwyl J, yr hwn a ddaruu J mi J vrannarv yn gwysau mawr balkiog  
 tragwthun i kysswllld. Ynn yr hynn nid wyf i ynn kymerud arnaf10  
 amgennach no gwr symol disas diddysg anwybodol a vai ynn kymerud  
 arno vod yn benn llongwr J lywio ac J gyurwyddo longiaad o wyr o vliant  
 ac annhryddedd dros vor llydann, J wlad ynn yr hon ni biasai neb o  
 honnaunt twy Jr raoed ynn y blaen. Ynn yr vn modd J daruu J mi annturio  
 dwynn llawer o bethau nodedig o ysdoriay ardderchion dyledog o bartthe'r  
 dwyrain, o'r hrain ni bv gyswyn amdanaunt o vewn Kymru yraysg y  
 kyffredin Jr moed ynn y blaen. Ac am vy llauur nid wyf J ynn damuno  
 dim, onid ych kredigrwydd a'ch gair da chwi, A meddwl am y trais a'r kam  
 a ddaruu i Beirs Mwttn i wneuthud a myui ynn dwyllodrus dan eulun  
 kyuraith, a'r kam J mae i ttiueddion ef yn i wneuthud a myui yn wastadol,  
 ac ynn debig y'w wneuthud oherwydd nad wyf J ynn abyl i ddyuod J'r wlad  
 i ddilin y gyuraith, yr honn gan na glowaf J y sydd gwedi mynned ar  
 gyuyrgoll ynGhymru a Lloeigyr, onid i'r sawl a vo kyuoedthog J evro  
 dwyllo y gwyr o gyuraith, yr hynn nid ydwyf i yn abyl y'w wneuthud. Or  
 achos myui adolygaf i chwi rodde ych llauu[r J gleishio vnnioni vnygham i  
 hryngoch chwi a Mr. Peers Mostu[2v]n, y neb, megis ac J mae gwyr y  
 wlad yn dangos J mi, a all wneuthud llawer o help ynn y matter hwn tuac  
 att beri J mi gaffael vnyghyuiownder. Ac yn wir, ped uiasai vatter a  
 viassai vwy no'r eiddof I hrwng yr un ohonoch chwi ych deuoedd nag J wr

o vewn Sir y Fflint a'r gwr penna o vewn kyuoeth y brenin ynn y tu yma i'r mor, myui a vynnasvm gaffel i chwi ateb krynno, Je, a'ch kyuiounder amdano. Neithyr val kyntt, nid gwiw J mi soonn mwy ynn y matter, a chymerud vyngham ynn oddeus megis yn gosb am vynghamwedde a gaddel i Duw dreuynu'r matter, yr hwnn a ddial vyngham J ar i blant ef a'i wyrionn oni bydd vddunt ar gymerud y diueirwch a gwneuthud Jawn amdanno ynn y byd hwn. Hyn a ddaruu J mi i sgriuentv hrag mynned y matter dros gof ynn Llanhassaph.”

—and be sufficient to correspond with each word in its sentence by means of every art and science which is related orally by [reading?] letters in every language which is usually spoken in this part of the world. And especially for such men as are eloquent and learned in Latin and in Welsh. However, despite this, I admit myself that in this matter I am but the same — by way of simile — as the spur is for making the horse walk or trot on faster, or similar to a whetstone for knowledgeable learned men to use in sharpening their knives in order to sharpen the tips [of their quills] so that they can write so well as to sharpen and perfect my labor. I have made this fallow [and left it as] large messy furrows, awkwardly connected. In this I do not pretend to be anything more than a simple, rustic, uneducated, unknowledgeable man who would pretend to be a head shipman steering and guiding a ship full of men of fine substance and honor across a wide sea to a land in which none of them had ever been before. In the same manner, I have ventured to bring many notable things from excellent

illustrious histories of the Eastern Regions, about which there was never consent amongst the common people in Wales ever before. And for my labor I wish nothing but your kindness and your good word, and [that you] consider the violence and the wrong which Piers Mostyn happened to do to me, deceitfully under the appearance of law, and the wrong which his heirs are doing me perpetually, and are likely to [continue to] do because I am not able to come to [that] land to pursue the law, which, as I hear, has gone completely astray in Wales and England, except for the one who might be wealthy enough to gild the hand of the lawmen, which is something I am not able to do. Because of this, I beseech you to devote your labors in an attempt to rectify my wrong between yourselves and Mr. Piers Mostyn, who, as men of the country show me, can be of much help in this matter as far as ensuring that I receive my justice goes. And truly, if there were something which would be greater than my [present problem] between any one of you two, or any man within Flintshire, and the most important man within the king's realm on this side of the sea, I would desire to obtain a quick answer for you, yes, and justice for you concerning it. But as before, it is not fitting for me to discuss the matter anymore, [but rather I should] accept my wrong patiently as a punishment for my transgressions, allowing God to arrange the matter, who will avenge my wrong upon his children and his grandchildren, unless they repent and make up for it in this world. I wrote this in order that the "matter" not be forgotten in Llanassaph.

**Elis's goal, preface<sup>14</sup>**

In this I do not consider myself to be anything more than a simple, though not superficial, but unlearned and unknowledgeable man, who has taken it upon himself to be chief mariner to steer and help on their way a shipload of men of splendor and prestige across a wide stretch of sea, to a land where none of them has ever been before.

**12. Siege of Boulogne ff. 642-645.<sup>15</sup>**

Now the English had destroyed all the provisions sent to Le Portel and stored in Etaples, the French king could not hold the bailey [i.e., Chatillon] by Boulogne unless it was supplied, so he raised 10,000 men horse and foot, most of whom, especially the footmen, were Almain, to escort the provisions for which the French soldiers had been clamoring, for they were in great need. News of this came to the Earl of Surrey, who could have sent for the soldiers in Calais and Guines, who were doing nothing, but this his pride would not allow him to do, for he wanted the glory for himself alone. When the time came, he called the soldiers suddenly, without warning, and without giving any reason, which could have raised their hearts that had fallen from sadness and pity at their great poverty. This was for lack of food which was eatable and which would have strengthened them, and for lack of money to buy such food, for there

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<sup>14</sup> Prys Morgan, "Elis Gruffudd of Gronant, 18.

<sup>15</sup> M. Bryn Davies, "Surrey at Boulogne," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1960), 339-

was not a penny in the pockets of the common soldiers, because the English had not been paid for nine months. Therefore, they had to take what they could from the king's storehouses, where it had been kept too long. The bread was hard and baked with corn and meal that had lost its taste and savour, and the salt beef stank when it was lifted out of the brine. The butter was of many colors and the cheese dry and hard, and this was the best they could get from the king's stores, which made most of the soldiers miserable and reckless. The captains and those who were getting double pay were very happy and lecherous, and this caused much hatred and envy between them and the common soldiers. However, all obeyed the orders of the chief captain, some to guard the town, others to take the field. On Thursday morning, Sir Rafe Ellerkar took the cavalry to reconnoiter the French and charged fiercely on the French horsemen, killed the waggoners and destroyed the food. By nine o'clock, the footmen were coming out from Boulogne to the field. The marshal [Sir Rafe Ellerkar] saw the French host advancing in full battle order, 7,000 footmen in one "battle" for fear of whom the English cavalry had to retreat toward the Earl of Surrey and the footmen. Among them were many obstinate men who did not want to fight, and were very sluggish in advancing to meet the enemy, for they were following their captain like geese in single file following the gander, so that when the head of the column was on the field, the tail was still in the town more than two miles away. When the marshal met the Earl he explained to him fully why they could not fight



the Frenchmen for lack of footmen, and urged him to keep to the trench, which the French had dug the year before. But the Earl would not listen to him and wanted nothing better than to turn on them and fight, but not like a saintly godly soldier, who would put his trust and hope in God and look to victory more from the intervention of God than from the strength of brutish men, as testified by John and Judas Maccabaeus, and many other devout soldiers as recorded in the Holy Scriptures. No, the Earl paid no heed either to the hand of God and his favors, nor to the unwillingness and lassitude of his soldiers, but in the pride of his folly gave orders to destroy the stores, which were going to the bailey nearby. This the calvary did like daring men, which discomfited the French host so much that many on that wing turned to flee. During this panic, the French destroyed much of the provisions with their own hands. At this time the French footmen, most of whom were veterans from Germany, advanced on the English. The Earl arranged his people to receive them. But he did not do it like a kindly well-intentioned captain, who kept God in his mind, to comfort the soldiers with kindly, tender, godly words, and called on God to strengthen the hearts and hands of his soldiers so as to get the upper hand more through the grace of God than his own efforts. This was very far from the Earl's mind, who, though he was a good scholar, had never followed such teachings, because the practice of the captains of this time and generation was to upbraid the soldiers with vain, contemptuous words. And this was what the Earl and the captains did now in beating and shoving the

common soldiers forward. One of them called on the Earl to hold his hand and allow them to meet their enemies uninjured, he and his fat captains and the foreigners with double pay, as he could see the ravage they were making better than the common soldiers, and he told him frankly that they were advancing more rapidly than was justified by their pay or their rations. This caused a lot of talk among the English, so that the Earl ordered the captains to go forward. In the shock the handgunners on each side fired together and after firing, had to load their guns to fire again. The ignorant cowardly as well as those who had never before seen two armies in the course of joining battle, so they turned and began to flee. This greatly encouraged the enemy and made them as cruel as wolves among sheep. So the French won the victory over the English and killed 22 of the best and bravest captains of Boulogne in a mass at the same place. For this and other reasons the footmen had to retreat, because of the onslaught of the enemy and to get back to safety before night fell, and the tide came up the river. They went toward Pont de Bricques where there was not much room for men to cross together so that many of the footmen were forced off the bridge and drowned, while flying in fear of the French army, which was pursuing and killing without quarter. The Earl cried loudly on the people to turn and fight in order to face the attack, but they would not listen and only retreated faster. This made the Earl cry out and lament like a man in a frenzy, and he begged Sir John Bridges and some of the gentlemen who were with him to stick their swords through his guts and

make him forget the day. One of the common soldiers who was running at the heels of the Earl's horse heard this, and told him to turn on his enemies, who would finish him off fast enough, as they were doing to all they overtook. After all the survivors of the English army had crossed the bridge, they went on to Boulogne, which they reached about nine o'clock at night like defeated men one after the other. As soon as the Earl and his Council reached the town and had taken off their arms and armor, they assembled at the council house to draw up letters with the approval of the whole Council informing the King and his Council of this unhappy expedition. Most sensible men thought it happened because of the lack of any sense of the virtue in praying to God and trusting in him for the victory, but chiefly because of the Earl their leader, whose head and heart were swollen with pride, arrogance and empty confidence in his own unreasoning bravery. And when they saw that the responsibility lay heavily on the Earl for his lack of patience, and in order to shift the blame from him and his gentlemen, they sent for the captains who had escaped, and who were in the minority because as aforesaid 22 of them were killed in the same place, which led to the loss of many more soldiers for lack of officers. But the Council interrogated those who had escaped very diligently to find out who was the first to turn his back and flee. One was found and they asked him why he had turned to fly before the two armies had exchanged a blow. He tried to excuse himself by saying that he had turned his back because he saw those behind turning their backs on him.

The Earl caused him to be hung the next morning with two or three of the poor soldiers, more for telling the truth about their captains than for anything they had done against the king. So the English had to be content and put up with that but the exact number who were killed the Council could not say.

### **13. The Camp at Bray<sup>16</sup>**

So the soldiers began to talk and to say that, if they were not allowed to come into the town in time to stay there for the night, they would swear to retrace their steps to the place where they had had shelter the night before. Some Welshmen from South Wales, who were under Lord Ferrers, among whom were many unruly men, heard this; and they took the matter so seriously that they sent around the word to shout all together 'Let us go home! Let us go home!' which they all did, whilst beginning to turn back. Lord Ferrers and the captains of that end of the host saw this and had trouble enough to pacify the unruly ones. Word about this went quickly to the Duke of Suffolk at the other end of the host, which was on the other side of the river, where the camp and tents had been pitched for the night. This was explained to him in the worst possible way by saying that it was the Welshmen who were turning their faces towards England and maintaining that they would not cross the River Somme. This news greatly alarmed those men who were on the southern

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Jones, "A Welsh Chronicler in Tudor England," 7-8.

bank of the river, and one and all they blamed the Welshmen, although in actual fact there were twice as many Englishmen as of Welshmen who wanted to turn towards home. But as the proverb says, 'The dog that one wants killed is the one that kills the sheep.' At this time there was plenty of talk in the council: for some wanted to hang all the Welshmen who were there, others wanted to kill every one of them. But as it happened, the matter was hushed up and they entered the town.

## Appendix B

### Elis's Manuscripts and Known Sources<sup>1</sup>

#### Cardiff MS 5, "Miscellany"

His first manuscript, a Welsh miscellany of poetry and prose, 266 folios written in London in 1527

Likely copied from memory and using texts from Sir Robert Wingfield's library

#### Cwrtmawr I, "Medical Texts"

His second manuscript, comprising health and astrological literature compiled from books he borrowed in Calais, completed in 1547

Brunschwig, Hieronymus. *The Vertuose Boke of Distyllacyon of the Waters of all Maner of Herbes*. London: Laurens Andrewe, 1527.

Elyot, Sir Thomas. *The Castle of Helth*. London: Thomas Berthelet, 1541.

Goeurot, Jean. *The Regiment of Life*. London: Edwarde Whytchurche. 1544.

Gutun Owain. *Y Pedwar Brenin ar Hugain*. NLW MS Llanstephan 28, 1455-56.

Ptolemy. *Compost of Ptholomeus*. London: Robert Wyer, 1530? (Possibly leant to him by John Hussey, who may be the Captain Hussey with whom he served.)

**NLW MSS 5276D and 3054D (*olim* Mostyn 158), Elis's "Chronicle" in two parts**

#### Latin

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<sup>1</sup> With the assistance of Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, "Elis Gruffydd and Multiple Versions of Geoffrey's *Historia*," and Thomas Jones, "A Welsh Chronicler in Tudor England," *Welsh History Review* (January 1, 1960), 1-17.

Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1095-c. 1155) *Historia Regum Britania* c. 1136 (source most frequently named)

Guido de Cologne. *Historia Destructionis Troiae* (1287)

John Trevisa's (1342-1402) version of Ranulf Higden's (c. 1280-1364) *Polychronicon* (1384)

### **English**

William Caxton (c. 1422-c. 1491) *Chronicles of England* (1480, though an English *Prose Brut* continued until 1461).

Robert Fabian (died c. 1512) *New Chronicles of England and France* (1504). (Printed in 1516, though Elis probably used the 1533 printing as it gave Fabian's name, and was closer to this than Higden throughout)

John Rastell (c. 1475-1536) *The Pastyme of People* (1529-30, partly based on Fabian)

### **Welsh**

*Brut y Tywysogion* 682-1332 (by the fourteenth century)

*Brut y Brenhinedd* (by the thirteenth century)

*Darogan yr Olew Bendigaid* (15<sup>th</sup> century)

Gutun Owain. *Y Pedwar Brenin ar Hugain*. NLW MS Llanstephan 28, (1455-56)

### **Anglo-Norman/French**

Froissart, Jean (c. 1337-c. 1405) *Chronicles* (1326-1400)

Wace (c. 1110-c. 1174) *Roman de Brut* (c. 1155)

*Les Proesses et Vaillances du preux et vaillant Hercules* (1511)

### **German**

Melanchthon, Philip (1497-1560) *Augsburg Confession* (1530)

Carion, Johann (1499 -1537) universal history (1532) translated into Latin by Bonnus (1537)



## Appendix C

### Publications of “Chronicle” material<sup>1</sup>

- Davies, Jonathan and M. Bryn Davies (translator). *An Ill Jurney for the Englshe-men: Elis Gruffydd and the 1523 Campaign of the Duke of Suffolk*. London: Pike and Shot Society, 2006.
- Davies, Jonathan and M. Bryn Davies. *Elis Gruffydd and the 1544 ‘Enterprises’ of Paris and Boulogne*. London: Pike and Shot Society, 2003.
- Davies, M. Bryn. “Surrey at Boulogne.” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1960): 339-348.
- Flower, Robin. “The Nine Answers: Welsh text of *Y Naw Rhinwedd* from Cardiff MS. 5, with the Irish, English and Latin versions.” *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* (1922): 133-139.
- Ford, Patrick K. *The Celtic Poets*. Belmont: Ford and Baile Publishing, 1999.
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- Hunter, Jerry. *Soffestri'r Saeson*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000.
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- Hunter, T. Gerald. “The Chronicle of Elis Gruffydd.” Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures, 1995.
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- Jones, Thomas. “A Welsh Chronicler in Tudor England.” *Welsh History Review* (January 1, 1960): 1-17.
- Jones, Thomas. “Gwraig Maelgwn Gwynedd a’r Fodrwy.” *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 18 (1958): 55-58.

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<sup>1</sup> This list was compiled with the assistance of discussions with Dr. Patrick K. Ford.

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