

ties for individuals to travel between England and Wales, be they secular lords, bishops, monks or merchants.⁵

At the same time the creation of Norman lordships in Wales accentuated the political fragmentation of the country, injecting new ethnic and cultural divisions into what has been aptly described as a country 'of plural frontiers'.⁶ Of no region was this truer than Dyfed in south-west Wales, the birth-place of the churchman, scholar and author who is the subject of this paper: Giraldus Cambrensis or Gerald de Barri.⁷ Giraldus's maternal grandmother, Nest, was the daughter of the Welsh king of Dyfed, Rhys ap Tewdwr, killed by the Normans in 1093; Dyfed swiftly fell to the Normans and was divided into a number of small lordships. Among the early Norman conquerors in the region was Giraldus's maternal grandfather, Gerald of Windsor, castellan of Pembroke, who married Nest 'with the object of giving himself and his troops a firmer foothold in the country.'⁸ Giraldus's father, William de Barri, was a minor Norman lord whose castle lay at Manorbier. By ancestry, then, Giraldus was three-quarters Norman and one quarter Welsh, the product of intermarriage which was a fairly common characteristic in the Welsh March.⁹ This mixed ancestry was to play an important part in his career, for he was related, not only to leading Norman families in south-west Wales, but also to the native ruling house represented by the successors of his great-grandfather, Rhys ap Tewdwr. When Giraldus was born, c. 1146, this house was beginning to revive its power, notably at the expense of the Clare lords of Ceredigion and the Cliffords of Llandovery. Just over twenty years later, in 1169, many of Giraldus's relatives, including two of his elder brothers, seized the opportunity to seek new fortunes in Ireland by participating in the Anglo-Norman intervention prompted by the request for military help from the exiled king of Leinster, Diarmait Mac Murchada.¹⁰ Giraldus thus came from a region of shifting borders and also, more importantly, from a family well used to negotiating the frontiers between natives and incomers in south-west Wales.

⁵ See e.g. Ralph A. Griffiths, *Medieval Severnside: The Welsh Connection*, in: R. R. Davies et al. (eds.), *Welsh Society and Nationhood*, Cardiff 1984, pp. 70-89; Huw Pryce, *In Search of a Medieval Society: Deheubarth in the Writings of Gerald of Wales*, in: *Welsh History Review* 13 (1986-7) pp. 274-5.

⁶ Davies, *Conquest* (as n. 1) pp. 3-15; R. R. Davies, *Frontier Arrangements in Fragmented Societies: Ireland and Wales*, in: Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay (eds.), *Medieval Frontier Societies*, Oxford 1989, pp. 77-100 (quotation at p. 80).

⁷ On Dyfed, see Rowlands (as n. 1) and Pryce, *Deheubarth* (as n. 5). Of the extensive secondary literature on Gerald, see especially Michael Richter, *Giraldus Cambrensis*, 2nd edn, Aberystwyth 1976; Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales 1146-1223*, Oxford 1982.

⁸ Giraldus, *Opera* 6 p. 91.

⁹ A. J. Roderick, *Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066-1282*, in: *Welsh History Review* 4 (1968-9) pp. 4-8, 11-12.

¹⁰ Marie Therese Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship: Interactions in Ireland in the Late Twelfth Century*, Oxford 1989, pp. 140-53.