

to Latin he spoke French and probably English, but little Welsh.⁸⁴ At one point in his career he was employed as a royal servant whose task it was to promote the policies of the English crown in Wales and in other dominions of the Angevin kings. As an ecclesiastic he benefited initially from the control established by Canterbury over the Welsh dioceses, acting as the archbishop's legate in the diocese of St David's, even if for a brief period later, from 1199 to 1203, he sought to gain papal recognition of the status of St David's as the metropolitan see of an independent Welsh province. As his failure in the St David's case showed, his ecclesiastical ambitions in Wales could only be fulfilled with the consent of the crown and of Canterbury, such was their authority over the Welsh bishoprics, especially in south Wales.

Yet if Giraldus offers an example of a cross-border career in a colonialist context, he also reveals, uniquely perhaps, the tensions which could arise as a result of trying to pursue such a career. As he himself complained shortly after his departure from the court, he was too Welsh for the English, too English for the Welsh: 'both peoples regard me as a stranger and one not of their own . . . one nation suspects me, the other hates me'.⁸⁵ Giraldus belonged to an ethnically hybrid group which in its marriages and social links had effectively broken down some of the barriers separating native and settler societies in south-west Wales, at least at the aristocratic level. However, his position was further complicated by his excellent education and his commitment both to scholarship and to ecclesiastical reform. It was these elements which drew him closer to England than was the case with his lay kinsmen, or even his uncle, David fitz Gerald, bishop of St David's, who lacked Giraldus's scholarly bent and, far from promoting ecclesiastical reform, alienated church lands as dowries for his daughters.⁸⁶ This suggests in turn that to talk in terms of a career that traversed a geographical border is an oversimplification: it would be more accurate to regard Giraldus as a man who crossed cultural frontiers which corresponded, in part, to those dividing England and Wales. Above all else, Giraldus was a scholar and writer, most at home in the company of highly educated clerics like himself.⁸⁷ Thus what he most liked about England were the opportunities it provided to rub shoulders with men whose intellectual formation, like his, was deeply indebted to the learning of France. One of the things that was unusual about him, however, was that he chose to capitalize upon his own distinctive background and experience in works which sought to make Wales (and Ireland) familiar to an English audience.

Nevertheless, while Giraldus's most original writings were his books on Ireland and Wales, he also wrote about bishops, saints and political events in England. His

⁸⁴ Bartlett, Gerald (as n. 6) pp. 14-15; Michael Richter, *Studies in Medieval Language and Culture*, Blackrock, Co. Dublin 1995, pp. 137-8.

⁸⁵ Cited by Bartlett, Gerald (as n. 6) p. 17 from Giraldus, *Opera* 8 p. lviii. Cf. the comment on this passage in Wilhelm Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Schriften der MGH 2), Leipzig 1938, p. 144: 'Der Waliser Girald, der als Engländer aufgewachsen ist, findet nirgends mehr eine heimatliche Aufnahme.'

⁸⁶ Michael Richter, *A New Edition of the So-called Vita Daudidis Secundi*, in: *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 22 (1966-8) p. 248; cf. Pryce, *Deheubarth* (as n. 5) pp. 275-6.

⁸⁷ Thus, for example, Türk (as n. 19), p. 95; Walker, *Cultural Survival* (as n. 41) p. 48.