

Where the Long Way Ends: Descriptions of the Mediterranean Sea and Holy Land and the Criticism of Crusading at the Court of Henry II of England (1154-1189)

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The purpose of this essay is to explore Gerald of Wales's *Topographia Hibernica* and Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium*, to assess how the authors treated and described the Mediterranean space, with particular reference to the Holy Land. The selected texts are often cited as typical of the style of literary production that took place at the court of Henry II of England (1154-1189) and of the strong correspondence that existed between the policies of the English king and the works of his courtiers. The first version of the *Topographia Hibernica* was written between 1186-1188 and is the first treatise on Ireland composed by a non-Irish author. The *De Nugis Curialium*, a collection of satirical invectives, folktales, and personal experiences, was written during the latter half of the twelfth century. In their respective texts, Gerald of Wales and Walter Map focus primarily on topics regarding the British Isles. Noticeably, however, both writers make relevant digressions in order to report information about Sicily, Greece and the Holy Land, and that both authors witnessed the arrival of the patriarch of Jerusalem in London. The present article has two goals: first, bearing in mind Henry II's reluctance as a response to possible crusade, the aim of this analysis is to see if and how the descriptions of the Mediterranean space coincided with Henry II's reluctance to travel to Jerusalem. The second aim is to show how such descriptions accorded with the structure of both works and, in particular, how they might serve the authors' specific interests beyond their adherence to Henry II's policies.

Keywords: Crusades, Anglo-Norman, Henry II, courtly literature, Walter Map, Gerald of Wales

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From the northern European perspective, the Crusades were not only points of contact with Eastern and Islamic cultures, but also with a more broadly intended Mediterranean space. The Normans, who had conquered the kingdoms of England and Sicily and became consistent actors in European politics during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, actively participated in the crusading movement.¹ More specifically, the Anglo-Norman kingdom became part of greater Crusade narratives about the long Mediterranean journey to Jerusalem and the fight in defence of the Holy Land. The Anglo-Norman participation in the First Crusade saw Duke Robert Curthose (1087-1134), the eldest son of King William the Conqueror (1066-1087), as one of its leaders; the Second Crusade saw, as a collateral effect, the involvement of the Anglo-Norman nobility in the Siege of Lisbon of 1147, reported in the *De expugnatione Lyxbonensi*; while the Third Crusade created the image of the crusader king par excellence: Richard I of England.² In the story of the Anglo-Norman, and later English, participation in the Crusades, the absence of King Henry II, whose father was a crusader himself, whose cousin was the king of Jerusalem, and whose reluctance to ship to the Holy Land most likely postponed the Third Crusade, is noticeable. The ambiguous political stance of Henry II toward the Crusades might have determined the cultural production coming out of his court. Comparing the literary interests indicated by Anglo-Norman and English authors before and after his reign reveals that the royal court of Henry II was quite silent about the issue.³ As Henry II's court is considered one of the most prolific cultural centres of twelfth-century Europe, this study aims to determine how Henry II's scepticism influenced the works of two of his courtiers: Gerald of Wales (1146-1223) and Walter Map (c. 1130-c. 1210). I will critically examine the description of the Mediterranean space given by these authors, while contextualising their opinions within the political scene of Henry II's reign and the authors' personal goals.

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- 1 Hurlock and Oldfield (eds.), *Crusading and Pilgrimage*. During the twelfth century, the Norman kingdom of Sicily showed little interest in the Holy Land; see Russo, *Bad Crusaders?*.
 - 2 Aird, Robert 'Curthose', *Duke of Normandy*, 153-190; Villegas-Aristizábal, *Revisiting the Anglo-Norman crusaders' failed attempt*; Gillingham, *Richard I*, 155-221; Nelson (ed.), *Richard Coeur de Lion*.
 - 3 By contrast, the works of William of Malmesbury and Orderic Vitalis show a complete awareness of Norman participation in the Crusades; see Grabois, *Description of Jerusalem by William of Malmesbury*; Roach, *Orderic Vitalis and the First Crusade*.

A Gentle Rebuttal, Henry II and the Crusades

Between the expedition that stopped in Lisbon in 1147 and the crusading adventures of Richard I in 1190 came the reign of Henry II (1154-1189) and the fall of Jerusalem (1187) – a period considered to be a watershed in the political and institutional history of the Anglo-Norman kingdom.⁴ When Henry II was crowned king of England, England and Normandy became part of a larger and more heterogeneous political and territorial entity. Henry II was the son of the count of Anjou Geoffrey and Matilda the Empress, and therefore the grandson of Henry I Beauclerc. After a long war with Stephen of Blois, he was named heir to the English throne in 1153. His long rule (1154-1189) transformed the English kingdom into a part of a heterogeneous territorial and political structure, the Angevin/Plantagenet space, which assumed a central role in western history between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and for the successive political and institutional evolution of the kingdom of England.⁵ A peculiarity of Henry II's reign was the large cultural and administrative production of his court. The members of the *curia regis* were the protagonists and witnesses to his long reign, producing many documents related to administration and a great number of literary works. Historical studies have shown great interest in Henry II's court, not least due to the attention that the courtiers themselves exhibited in describing their commitment to the royal business. Walter Map, Gerald of Wales, John of Salisbury, Richard fitzNigel, Roger of Howden, Peter of Blois and Stephen of Fougères are just some of the names of the authors who wrote about the court of Henry II.⁶ This abundance of contemporary sources and research allows us to investigate many aspects of Henry II's reign, including his involvement in the Crusades, or rather his reluctance to participate in them.⁷

Although he never saw the Holy Land, Henry II was directly connected to and involved in the fate of the crusader kingdoms. The first Plantagenet king of England was related to the kings of Jerusalem: Henry II's grandfather, Fulk of Anjou, was himself king of Jerusalem (1131-1143). Fulk had transferred his French titles and inheritance to his son Geoffrey before going to the Holy Land and marrying Melisende, the heiress to the kingdom of Jerusalem. Thus, Geoffrey of Anjou, Henry's father, was half-brother to Baldwin III (1143-1162) and Amalric I (1162-1174), kings of Jerusalem. Consequently, Henry II himself was cousin to Baldwin IV of Jerusalem (king from 1174 to 1185) and his sisters, Sibylla (1186-1190) and Isabella (1190-1204), both queens of Jerusalem.

4 See Warren, *Henry II*; Harper-Bill and Vincent (eds.), *Henry II: New Interpretations*; White, *Restoration and Reform*; Amt, *Accession of Henry II in England*.

5 Aurell, *L'Empire des Plantagenêt*; Gillingham, *Angevin Empire*. I prefer the more neutral expression of »space«, a perspective that challenges the centrality of the royal court and the total adherence of royal courtiers to their king's ambitions and goals; see De Falco, *Una riflessione storiografica*.

6 Aurell, *La Cour Plantagenêt*; Kennedy and Meecham-Jones (eds.), *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*.

7 Henry II's ambiguity towards the Crusade is well known; see Mayer, *Henry II of England*.

The first time Henry II exacted a crusading tax was in 1166 when, moved by the requests of Pope Alexander III (1159-1181), both the kings of England and France chose to levy five-year taxes for crusading activities.⁸ In 1177, as part of the Treaty of Ivry, both Henry II and Louis VII (1137-1180) pledged to go on a crusade, a promise that Henry II had made previously in 1170 and in 1172 as part of the Compromise of Avranches and that was intended as penitence for the murderer of Thomas Becket.⁹ In 1185, as a response to Patriarch Heraclius' plea for assistance, Henry promised new crusading funds. The patriarch of Jerusalem had travelled west to appeal for the help of both the kings of England and France, Henry II and Philip II (1179-1223), even offering them the keys to the Holy Sepulchre. His purpose was to come back with more than just an army, it was to come back with a prince capable of succeeding Baldwin V.¹⁰ As a cousin to the king of Jerusalem, Henry II was the principal candidate. However, not only did Henry II fail to answer the appeal, but he also avoided the possibility of one of his sons going in his place. He sent his youngest and landless son John to Ireland instead.¹¹ Only in 1188, after the fall of Jerusalem, did Henry II finally consent to go on crusade. However, his death a short time later, in 1189, prevented him from ever truly fulfilling his vow. The Third Crusade saw both the kings of England and France sailing in 1190 to reach the Holy Land, but this was a new generation of rulers, the kings at this time being Philip II and Richard I (1189-1199).¹² Henry II's involvement in the Crusades was therefore limited to financial support, however substantial. The king of England always preferred to deal with the problems inherent to his territories, the enemies inside and outside his kingdom, and the consolidation of his authority within the Plantagenet space. His reluctance and continued procrastination regarding fulfilling his vow reveals the image of a king who had little to no interest in the events relating to the Holy Land. The reign of Henry II marked a pause in the involvement of England in the affairs of the kingdom of Jerusalem, where many of his predecessors and his successors were leading figures.

8 The revenue from such collections was to be transferred straight to Jerusalem. Yet, the funds, after being raised, were deposited at Tours and waited there while the two kings discussed whose ambassadors should follow them to the Holy Land.

9 The English king's promises were more likely formulated to achieve a sort of peace with the papacy and other political opponents; he did not take the cross. On the taxes, see Round, *Saladin Tithe*; Constable, *Financing of the crusades*; Cazel, *Tax of 1185*. For the Crusade as an act of penitence for the murder of Becket, see Duggan, *Ne in dubium*; Forey, *Henry II's crusading penances*.

10 Henry II's cousin Baldwin IV, the king of Jerusalem, was dying of leprosy and Baldwin V, his young nephew with whom he shared the crown and co-ruled, was also suffering from an illness. Baldwin IV's sister Sybilla was next in line to take the throne, but her husband Guy de Lusignan had acquired a significant number of enemies, which put the would-be king and queen in too precarious a position to safely guarantee the stability of the kingdom. See Hamilton, *Leper King*.

11 The story is reported in William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, 3.13-15, ed. Howlett, vol. 1, 246-254; Ralph de Diceto, *Ymagines Historiarum*, A.D. 1185, ed. Stubbs, vol. 2, 32-34.

12 See Hosler, *Henry II*, 166-170, Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 57-85.

Sketching the Mediterranean Sea, Thinking of Home: Gerald of Wales's Topographia Hibernica and Walter Map's De Nugis Curialium

The aforementioned abundance of cultural production in the court of Henry II allows us to compare the reluctance of the English king with the accounts penned by his courtiers in their own literary works. This contribution will analyse the texts of Gerald of Wales and Walter Map, who described the Mediterranean and the Holy Land in significant examples of this cultural production. The selection of these two authors, despite there being many others, stems from their being considered archetypical examples of Henry II's courtiers and from their direct experiences with the matter of the Crusades. In 1188, when Henry II took the cross, Gerald of Wales preached the Crusade alongside Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury (1185-1190), and himself vowed to sail for Jerusalem.¹³ Walter Map saw and reported the arrival of the patriarch of Jerusalem in England and Henry II's monetary response to his request for support.¹⁴

Gerald of Wales's *Topographia Hibernica* is the first text I will consider in my analysis. The first version of the *Topographia Hibernica* was written between 1186 and 1188, making it the only work Gerald of Wales composed during Henry II's lifetime and presented to his court. It is for this reason that I chose to analyse the *Topographia Hibernica*, although Gerald of Wales also offered brief sketches of the Holy Land and the Near East in other successive works.¹⁵ To understand Gerald's first work, it is important to take into account the Anglo-Irish political situation in the middle of the twelfth century. Gerald of Wales wrote the *Topographia Hibernica* in the aftermath of the conquest of Ireland.¹⁶ The story of the invasion begins some years earlier in 1166 when a group of Cambro-Norman adventurers agreed to help the exiled king of Leinster, Diarmait Mac Murchada (1126-1171). Within a year Diarmait had his throne back, his power restored in Dublin, and his allies, headed by the earl of Pembroke Richard de Clare (1148-1176), began settling in Ireland. At this point, Henry II, who had refused to support Diarmait, anticipated the danger that a settlement in Ireland could cause.¹⁷ The conquest of Ireland could possibly lead to the birth of another unreliable signory under his formal dominion, as in the case of duchies of Aquitaine and Brittany. So, Henry II crossed the Irish Sea with an army during the winter of 1171. When the English king arrived in Dublin, the Irish kings and the heads of Irish religious institutions paid homage to him. Henry II called a truce: half of the island became part of the English king's dominions and the other half remained under Irish rule; later, in 1177, Henry II named his son John (known as Lackland) Lord of Ireland.¹⁸

13 For the recruitment in Wales, see Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 58-91.

14 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 5.6, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 482: *proposui cum oportunitatem habuero loca santa Christique atque sepulcrum visitare, sed pro modo meo donec id fieri posset et succurram [...] sexaginta milia marcarum illuc per ipsum et meos hac vice transmittam.*

15 He did talk of or briefly refer to the history of Jerusalem and coeval struggles in the *Expugnatio Hibernica*, the *Itinerarium Cambriae*, the *De Gemma Ecclesiastica*, the *Speculum Ecclesiae* and the *De Principis Instructione*, all edited in the GCO. None of these works were completed during the reign of Henry II, and the *Topographia Hibernica* is the only one devoting more than a few lines to the matter.

16 See Davies, *Domination and Conquest*; Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin kingship*; Smith, *Britain and Ireland*.

17 Hays and Jones, *Policy on the run*, 298-302.

18 Duffy, *Henry II and England's insular neighbours*.

At this point, the story of the *Topographia Hibernica* began. Gerald of Wales, at the time a courtier of Henry II, was sent on behalf of John on his first journey to Ireland. Henry II chose him due to his family's ties with part of the nobility settled in Ireland with the first wave of the Cambro-Norman invasion. Gerald was part of the kin-group known as Geraldines, who were the first to land in Ireland and took on a role in the following centuries as some of the main actors of Irish history.¹⁹ Gerald's career was that of a churchman: he was archdeacon of Aberhonddu (Brecon, in Wales) and later bishop-elect of St. David's (in Wales). He was also a prolific author, and his masterpiece is the *Topographia Hibernica*, the first account of Ireland and its early history written by a non-Irish author.²⁰ Besides being a prolific author, Gerald of Wales was an attentive one, and changed themes, styles, and arguments when he needed to address a different public. After the death of Henry II, Gerald of Wales continued to revise the *Topographia Hibernica*, presented the *Expugnatio Hibernica* to Richard I, wrote a life of the bishop of Lincoln Remigius while a guest of Lincoln Cathedral and far from royal circles, and completed the *De Jure et Statu Menevensis Ecclesiae* when striving to be elected bishop of St. David's.²¹ The *Topographia Hibernica* is arranged in three parts, the first concerning the description of the natural features and characteristics of the island, the second revealing its wonders and miracles, and the third part focusing on its inhabitants and their history, from ancient days to the arrival of Henry II.²²

In this work dedicated to Ireland, the references to the Mediterranean and the Holy Land are present within the *First Distinctio* and are used by Gerald to make a comparison between the extreme eastern and western borders of the world. The *First Distinctio* describes Ireland's geographical position, establishing how far the isle is from Britain and the European continent, showing its geomorphological and climatic characteristics and offering a list of its animals. His approach to the natural characteristics of the island emerged as a result of the teachings and naturalistic reflections of the twelfth century and particularly of the lessons advanced by the Parisian schools, where Gerald was educated.²³ In explaining the climatic and geographical peculiarities of the Irish island, Gerald recalls its liminality and isolation:

Terra nimirum mari immenso et ex omni latere ventis exposita, nullam penitus partibus ex illis seu propinquam seu remotam solidi obstaculi defensionem habet. (This land is surrounded on all sides by the vast sea and open to the winds not having in those parts any concrete shelter and protection, either distant or near.)²⁴

19 Pryce, Giraldu and the Geraldines.

20 Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*; Henley and McMullen (eds), *Gerald of Wales: new perspectives*.

21 The timeline of the different versions of the *Topographia Hibernica*, also concerning their relation to other works and to the death of Henry II, is given in Sargent, *Visions and Revisions*, 13-32.

22 The latest studies on the *Topographia Hibernica* are: Rooney, *Manuscripts*; David, *Looking East and West*; Ní Bheaglaoi, *Two topographies of Gerald of Wales?*; Sargent, *Visions and Revisions*.

23 Barry, *A wild goose chase*; Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World*, 46-70. Gerald of Wales was also the author of a now lost cosmography and other treatises concerning the nature of the world.

24 Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, 1.6, ed. Dimock, 27.

The geographical liminality of Ireland warrants the presence of all sorts of naturalistic *prodigia* such as the incredible beasts that inhabited the isle and other bizarre natural characteristics.²⁵ In explaining those strange events, Gerald of Wales reports that similar things occurred in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, specifically in southern Italy. He reports the cicadas' ability to sing after being beheaded in Puglia and, in the *Second Distinctio*, the existence of a spring in Sicily where waters became agitated if anyone dressed in red approached them.²⁶

Overall, the compendium of literary descriptions and frames used by Gerald throughout his text effectively lend themselves to the development of a certain image of Ireland as an island on the western borders of the known world, an extreme border region at the edges of the unfathomable ocean.²⁷ Ireland was placed in direct comparison with oriental shores, whose wonders were, as Le Goff suggests, the oneiric horizon of the medieval West.²⁸ In this way, Gerald of Wales populated Ireland with barbarian inhabitants, hybrid animals and monstrous creatures.²⁹ The chapters from I.34 to I.40 have iconic titles and tell of the most incredible dangers of the East.³⁰ The source of all poisons is positioned in the East, but Gerald has more to say about these lands. He enumerates their deadly dangers, the beasts that inhabit them (dragons, snakes whose bite melts the flesh, scorpions), and their horrible inhabitants, treacherous and wicked men. Gerald's university education probably gave him an awareness of more novel geographical work, such as Honorius Augustodunensis's *Imago mundi*, as well as the authoritative texts of Solinus and Isidore.³¹ By relying on these authors and their accounts on the marvels of the East, Gerald explains how by advancing to the Eastern shores the likelihood of encountering dangers and monsters gradually intensifies. From this perspective, Gerald's reports on the Mediterranean space and the Holy Land show this progression from the safest nature (Ireland) to the most brutal one (the extreme East).

25 Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 104-127; Ritchey; Rethinking the twelfth-century discovery of nature; Cohen, Hybrids, monsters, borderlands.

26 Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, 1.21 and 2.8, ed. Dimock, 53-54 and 90.

27 Byrne, *Otherworlds*, 167-180.

28 Le Goff, *L'Occident médiéval*, 298.

29 Mittman, *The other close at hand*.

30 Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica, Incipiunt Capitula*, ed. Dimock, 11 [XXXIV.] *De comparatione orientis et occidentis*/[XXXV.] *Quod omnia elementa in oriente pestifera.* / [XXXVI.] *De venenorum ibidem malitia, et aeris inclementia.* / [XXXVII.] *De aeris nostri clementia incomparabili.* / [XXXVIII.] *De laudabilibus hic quarundam rerum defectibus.* / [XXXIX.] *Quod fons venenorum in oriente.* / [XL.] *Quod occidentalia commoda sunt orientalibus praeferenda.*

31 Rooney, *Gerald of Wales and the tradition*; Flint, *Honorius Augustodunensis*.

Travelling to the East was not a good idea, and even the Near East was dangerous.³² The only explicit passage about the Holy Land in the *Topographia Hibernica* exemplifies this through the tale of a British man. Gerald of Wales tells the story of a pilgrim who travelled to Jerusalem just to die a horrible death from the bite of a tiny snake that turned his flesh into black mud.³³ Chapter I.36, which tells this story, is part of a detailed list of Eastern dangers and thus makes it clear that the East to which Gerald refers does include the Holy Land.³⁴ One could object that the East was famous for its richness and exotic pleasures and that the vision proposed by the *Topographia Hibernica* focused on the worst part of the medieval eastern imagery. Gerald knew that, and he wrote:

Sed dicas; lapidibus pretiosis, et radicibus virtuosis oriens praecellit. Provido gestum est naturae consilio, ut ubi multa mala, ibi et malorum remedia pullularent. Cogunt enim multas invenire medicinas multorum experimenta morborum. Hic vero ubi rarissima pericula, et rariora remedia. (But you will say: »The East is distinguished for precious stones and medicinal roots.« It is, indeed, a wise supply of nature, that where evils abound, there remedies for the evils should flourish. Where many diseases are so common, they require medicines to be discovered for their cure; but here, where the dangers are so rare, the remedies are even more scarce.)³⁵

Certain observations and impressions can be gleaned from the imagery employed by Gerald of Wales to describe the Mediterranean space. Southern Italy is already seen as an exotic place – a place far, far away and full of wonder. However, this description does not reveal anything new about the south of Italy, which at the time was part of a well-known Norman kingdom that had close relations with the English one. The descriptions of the wonders of Sicily are warnings for those who were directed to the Eastern corner of the world where cicadas were replaced by dragons and snakes. The final comparison between Ireland and the Holy Land is clear: Gerald did not see why or how he would prefer such a distant and dangerous journey and advised against it. Instead, he proposed to continue his quest to discover the wonders of the island so much closer to the English kingdom. This venture had the potential to be safer, cheaper, and lead to more profitable lands.

32 Gerald of Wales's East is indefinite, but I believe that the author was not referring to India, as he did not report any of the semi-human races that were thought to inhabit the antipodes. On the contrary, Gerald implicitly addressed the similarities between the Irish and Saracen societies; see Byrne, *Otherworlds*, 174-175. The only geographical reference to Asia in the *Topographia Hibernica* is the planned conquest of Asia by the king of England Henry II. This was a reference to Henry II's never fulfilled crusading vow and clarifies how Gerald of Wales's interest in the East is limited to the Mediterranean space and the Holy Land; see Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, 3.48, ed. Dimock, 190.

33 *Contigit temporibus nostris quemdam de Britanniae partibus Ierosolymam, ut assolet, peregre transvectum, cum annam equis apponendam manu forte purgaret, a vermiculo ibidem latitante in digito percussam esse; statimque totum corpus ejus, cum carnibus et ossibus, in massam quamdam informem et quasi piceam est resolutum*, Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, 1.36, ed. Dimock, 69-70.

34 See notes 31 and 33.

35 Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, 1.40, ed. Dimock, 73.

By looking at the life of Gerald of Wales, we can confirm how the approach to certain themes and the ways they were handled were directly related to the political choices of Henry II and the environment of the royal court. When Henry II took the cross in 1188, Gerald of Wales actively participated in the Crusade, both by preaching and by writing a detailed account of the experience in his *Itinerarium Cambriae*.³⁶ A changed attitude to the Crusade was justified by Henry II's decision but also by the different contexts in which his work would have been read. Gerald of Wales wrote the *Itinerarium* during the early nineties of the 12th century when the new king of England Richard I was leading the Third Crusade.³⁷ Gerald found himself in an environment that viewed the journey to the Holy Land favourably and chose to remind his readers how much he had spent to make it possible. Thus, the description of the eastern lands provided in the *Topographia Hibernica* is consistent with the more general goal of legitimising the intervention of the Plantagenet king in Ireland. Moreover, the example of the *Itinerarium Cambriae* showed how Gerald of Wales was very conscious of the chosen themes and the target audience of his works.³⁸

In order to interpret the analysis that has unfolded thus far in the light of the utilitarian nature of Gerald of Wales's work, I will now turn my attention to Irish history and the kin group of the Geraldines in the second half of the twelfth century. Henry II's intervention in Ireland had created a frontier appearing in many ways similar to that of the Welsh Marches,³⁹ the difference being that Henry II conferred extensive powers on men he trusted and who were active in Ireland as royal officials. Henry II's policies and the indifference of John deprived the early conquerors of the possibility of autonomous organisation, but left a power vacuum filled by the royal officials, who took advantage of the circumstance.⁴⁰ Considering the modes of intervention used by the English kings in Ireland, the presence of the parental group of the Geraldines, and the belonging of these last to the group of the first conquerors, it is possible to explain how the *Topographia Hibernica* may be useful to Gerald's and his kinship's ambitions. Gerald of Wales himself clarified in a later work that the *Topographia Hibernica*'s first two versions were conceived as part of a larger project including another of his works, the *Expugnatio Hibernica* – the history of the conquest of Ireland until 1189.⁴¹ Gerald composed these two works to persuade the English rulers to intervene in Ireland.⁴²

36 Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Cambriae*, ed. Dimock.

37 See Sargent, *Visions and Revisions*, 115-118; Henley, Quotation, revision, and narrative structure.

38 See Sargent, *Visions and Revisions*.

39 Liebermann, *Medieval March of Wales*.

40 Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship*; Smith, *Colonisation and Conquest in Medieval Ireland*.

41 Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. Scott and Martin.

42 Gerald of Wales, *De Rebus a se gestis*, 13, ed. Brewer, 65: *Videns ergo quod comes ibi nil proficeret, sed de die in diem deteriorem per ejus adventum terra statum haberet; considerans etiam multa ibidem nova et notabilia, aliis aliena regnis et prorsus incognita; ut vel ipse quaestum aliquem vel conquaestum suo saltem labore faceret; primum Topographiae suae, deinde Expugnationis Hibernicae materiam ibi colligere studio grandi et diligentius inquisitione curavit.*

Thus, as a result, the *Topographia Hibernica* is an expression of the wishes of the Geraldines, brought to the attention of the *curia regis* by one of its members. Gerald of Wales did not compose the *Topographia Hibernica* to justify the expansionism of the English crown but to inspire the kings of England to move towards such an effort in the hope that royal intervention would restrain the power of royal officials and support the demands of the early Cambro-Norman conquerors. The use of Eastern scenes is thus relative to this personal goal of the author and the general goal of the work. Gerald of Wales used the comparison of an enterprise that Henry II did not like, the Crusade, confident that he would find a favourable environment for such a description and use it to propose a conquest that would probably favour his own family.

The other author, Walter Map, was a royal cleric and also had an ecclesiastical career. He was a canon of Hereford, archdeacon of Oxford, in the diocese of Lincoln, and finally bishop-elect of Hereford. The only work of his that survives – contained in a single and late manuscript – is the *De Nugis Curialium*, written in the second half of the twelfth century, originally between 1172 and 1189 (at least). This temporal uncertainty is due to the confusing structure of the text and the adjustments made by the author during the creation of the work and by later copyists. The debate about the puzzling composition of the *De Nugis Curialium* has engaged scholars for a long time.⁴³ Following Joshua Byron Smith's latest study on the text, I consider the *De Nugis Curialium* as a work »frozen in revision«: Walter Map was still reviewing his text in the last decade of the twelfth century, adjusting stories and sketches previously written during his stay at Henry II's court.⁴⁴ Moreover, I think that Walter Map was reviewing his text to use it in the different political situations occasioned by the death of Henry II, just as Gerald of Wales did. The differences are that Walter Map never finished his work and that he probably addressed his words to a public of former members of Henry II's entourage. The *De Nugis Curialium* introduces itself as a collection of anecdotes and stories in which the author, drawing on his personal experiences at court in a kaleidoscope of styles and themes intended to amuse the courtiers, touches on almost all of the themes near and dear to the Plantagenet court. Specifically, the *De Nugis Curialium* is famous for its folkloristic stories and satirical attacks. While scanning this text for traces of the long journey from England to the Holy Land, it immediately appears full of legends and myths. For example, Sicily, located in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, is the place where a merman is fished out in the time of King William II's reign (1171-1183). This aquatic man was the famous Nicola Pesce who became the subject of the now-classical legend in southern Italy thanks to Walter Map, who was the first to articulate the tale in writing.⁴⁵ The wonders of Sicily were part of a

43 See, Hinton, Walter Map's *De nugis curialium*; Rigg, Review of *De nugis curialium*; *Courtiers' Trifles*. Walter Map, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors.

44 See, Smith, *Walter Map and the Matter of Britain*, particularly chap. 1 and 76-82.

45 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 3.13, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 369-375; Colapesce started out as part of Mediterranean folklore; see Benedetto Croce, *Storie e leggende napoletane*, ed. Galasso, 265-267. Cf. Giammattei, *Il Pensatore*, 35-36.

sort of Italian matter during the reign of Henry II, despite the knowledge and the long-time exchanges between the two kingdoms of England and Sicily.⁴⁶ Hugh of Rhuddlan, a coeval writer of Walter Map, set his chivalrous and exotic romance the *Ipomedon* in southern Italy.⁴⁷ Yet, the awareness of twelfth-century English authors about the latest event occurring in the kingdom of Sicily connected the Italian island to the Holy Land. Roger of Howden reported the expedition to the Holy Land made by a Sicilian fleet in 1188, and William of Newburgh wrote that the death of the king of Sicily William II postponed the Third Crusade.⁴⁸ Moreover, considering that Walter Map updated his work to include an account of the Crusade expedition led by Richard I, for his later readers Sicily would have been an established stop for a maritime journey to Palestine. I am particularly referring to the well-known arrival of the English fleet at Messina when Richard I almost burnt down the Sicilian city.⁴⁹

Venturing further to the East, the *De Nugis Curialium* reports the story of the Cobbler of Constantinople.⁵⁰ The story centres on a shoemaker who, with supernatural help, becomes an emperor. This assistance originated from the child he had borne from a dead woman, and the fruit of this labour was wretched and unwholesome, as it was a human head *sub interdicto ne uideatur nisi ab hostibus interimendis* (which he was forbidden to show except to an enemy who was to be slain).⁵¹ Indeed, the shoemaker used his son to kill his enemies and in the end was himself killed by his own monstrous weapon. The monstrous head was launched into the sea, which initially rejected the gruesome gift. Later, the site in which the head was thrown became a wild whirlpool.⁵² The story terminates with a little etymological comment: *et, quia nomen erat uirgini Satalia, uorago Satalie nominator, et euitatur ab omnibus, quod uulgo dicitur Gouuffre de Satalie.* (and because the maiden's name was Satalia, it is called the whirlpool of Satalie and is shunned by all. In common speech it is named Gouffre de Satalie.)⁵³

The story itself is not an invention by Map but rather comes from a reinterpretation of the myth of Medusa, and was reported by other Anglo-Norman and English authors and even entered into the Arthurian cycles.⁵⁴ This myth provides an explanation for the strong sea currents in front of the Attic Peninsula, with which the crusaders had experience.⁵⁵ Moreover, Walter Map, and likewise Gerald of Wales, painted the Mediterranean path to the Holy Land as filled with marvels and perils. But once he reached Jerusalem, Walter Map preferred to write about the political intrigues of Templars and Hospitallers, a subject on which he exhibited a deep knowledge.

46 Loud, Kingdom of Sicily.

47 Hugh of Rhuddlan probably composed the *Ipomedon* near Hereford; see Cartlidge, *Masters in the art of lying?*; Hugh of Rhuddlan, *Ipomedon*, ed. Holden.

48 William of Newburgh, *Historia*, 3.28, ed. Howlett, 285-286; Roger of Howden, *Gesta Henrici II Regis*, 2, ed. Stubbs, 54.

49 Gillingham, *Richard I*, 132-137.

50 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 4.12, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 365-369.

51 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 4.12, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 366-367.

52 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 4.12, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 368.

53 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 4.12, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 368.

54 Koble, *Connaissance par les gouffres*, 139-145.

55 Harf-Lancner and Polino, *Le gouffre de Satalie*.

The *First Distinctio* of *De Nugis Curialium* presents most of the tales concerning the Holy Land and the military orders of the Templars and Hospitallers and is a part of the *De Nugis Curialium* that Walter Map extensively revised.⁵⁶ As noted, Walter Map was at court when Patriarch Heraclius asked Henry II for support, and he gave notice of the conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin in chapter I.15 of the *De Nugis Curialium*: »*De capcione ierusalem per Saladinum*« (Of the Taking of Jerusalem by Saladin).⁵⁷ Starting from this chapter, Walter Map began a long-drawn critique of the Templar and Hospitaller Orders that involves six chapters of the *First Distinctio* (I, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23).⁵⁸ Walter Map accused the Order of the Temple of the accumulation of enormous fortunes, which they received as donations for the protection of the Holy Land and used for other purposes.⁵⁹ Also, Walter Map blamed the Templars for violating the dictate of the Gospel which requires Christians to respond with tolerance to violence and to turn the other cheek.⁶⁰ The charges Walter Map made against the monastic orders of the Templars and the Hospitallers, criticised by various exponents of the Anglo-Norman clergy such as John of Salisbury (1120-1180), were levelled with precise references to Walter Map's personal experiences and knowledge, and with a little bit of imagination.⁶¹ The critique of the Templar order begins with a remodelling of the origins: the name of the founder of the order Hugues de Payns becomes »Paganus«. ⁶² In keeping with Walter Map's sense of humour and satirical writing, I think that was a wordplay which was meant to cast a negative light on Hugues de Payns.⁶³ Then, the *De Nugis Curialium* reports that the original motivations of the Templars were excellent but that they were later influenced by concupiscence and a desire for power:

Postmodum autem reges et principes opinati sunt propositum eorum bonum et uitam honestam et interuentu paparum et patriarcharum eos quasi Christianismi defensores honoaurunt, et copiis infinitis onerauerunt. Iam quod placet possunt et quod affectant assequuntur. (Later on, kings and princes came to think that the object of the Order was good and its way of life honourable, and by the help of the popes and patriarchs honoured them as the defenders of Christendom and loaded them with immense wealth.)⁶⁴

56 Smith, *Walter Map and the Matter of Britain*, 49-62.

57 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.15, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 41-51. See, Barillari, *La presa di Gerusalemme*.

58 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.18-23, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 55-73.

59 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.20, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 63.

60 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.15, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 60: *Gladium accipiunt et gladio pereunt*. The reference is to Matthew 26.52.

61 Cf. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 7.21, ed. Webbs, 192. See also Menache, *Rewriting the history of the Templars*.

62 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.18, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 54: *Miles quidam a pago, Burgundie, nomine pagano, paganus ipse dictus, uenit Ierusalem peregrinus*.

63 Levine, *How to read Walter Map*.

64 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.20, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 60-61.

While the Templars expanded their influence, their arrogance increased. Moved by hubris, the Templars started to antagonise the Muslims who wanted to become Christians, also endangering the whole outcome of the Holy War. On this, Walter Map described the case of the son of the sultan of the city of Cairo, killed by his people due to his attempted conversion to Christianity. The Templars, inspired by greed, preferred to sell him to his fellow countrymen rather than welcome him into the Christian community.⁶⁵ The *De Nugis Curialium* also details a story that was very famous in the twelfth century: the Old Man of the Mountain, the legendary leader of the sect of Assassins, who would have converted to Christianity if the Templars had not killed the priests sent by the patriarch of Jerusalem to baptize him. Walter Map explained how the Old Man of the Mountain understood that no king could remedy this injustice due to the protection given by Rome to the Order of the Temple.⁶⁶ Likewise, the Hospitallers' order is described as corrupt despite their original and noble purposes. The Hospitallers are accused of using papal protection to fleece the laity and elude episcopal authority. Walter Map revealed that he had personally attested Hospitallers' influence over the papal court during the Third Lateran Council held in 1179.⁶⁷

Considering the great power of both the Templars and the Hospitallers as a result of their importance in the crusading warfare, Walter Map expresses a suspicion that the true purpose of these orders was not to operate as the last stand for Christianity in the East, but to perpetuate a state of permanent conflict between the Muslims and the Christians. The military order would have disappeared without the war for the Holy Land, and not one person would have provided them with even a cent. Walter Map depicted this panorama of intrigues, recalling it in the mysterious death of the marquis of Monferrato for which the French suspected Richard to be the instigator⁶⁸. This accusation was part of the anti-English propaganda managed by the king of France and could have potentially affected the English kingdom.⁶⁹

The *De Nugis Curialium* is a different work compared to the *Topographia Hibernica*. Its declared intention was to amuse the courtiers and in doing that Walter Map primarily used his personal experiences, his thorough knowledge of the dynamics of the royal court and of the Welsh Marches. He was a courtier of Henry II, royal justice, archdeacon of Oxford, and had declared his goal of becoming bishop of Hereford, which he only partially achieved.⁷⁰ In

65 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.18, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 54.

66 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.22, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 67-68. Hinton notes that the same novel was reported by William of Tiro and Jacques de Vitry: Hinton, Notes on Walter Map's »De Nugis Curialium«, 450. On conversions to Christianity in the Holy Land, see Mallett, *Popular Muslim reactions to the Franks*, 105-120; Kedar, Multidirectional conversion in the Frankish Levant.

67 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.23, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 70.

68 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 5.6, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 484: *Nam antequam uenisset, capta fuit Ierusalem et Acra, et his marcis defensa fuit Sur et residuum terre Ierusalem per manum Bonifacii marchionis de Monteferrato, quem post presentibus Philippo rege Francorum et Ricardo Anglorum duo Hassasisi occiderunt in foro exercitus eorum, quos rex Ricardus statum fecit in frusta coincide. Dicunt Franci quod ipse Ricardus fecit hoc fieri per insidia, et quod procurauit mortem Bonifacii.* This marquis of Monferrato was not Boniface, as Map said, but Conrad.

69 Gillingham, *Richard I*, 5-6.

70 Walter Map reported that his servants used to spend all his money as his election as a bishop was coming soon, Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.10, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 22-23.

1199 the canons of Hereford elected him bishop, but Richard I denied royal confirmation. If the story of the shoemaker of Constantinople was arguably relayed to him by someone who participated in the previous crusade,⁷¹ Walter Map's experience at court led him to witness directly the arrival of Patriarch Heraclius. The account of the misdeeds committed by Templars in the Holy Land ends with a reference to their activities in England: *quid agant Ierosolimis, nescio; nobiscum satis innocenter habitant* (How they behave in Jerusalem I do not know: here with us they live harmlessly enough).⁷² The Templars settled in England in 1128, at which time Hugues de Payns located the general headquarter of the Order in London; in 1144 the Hospitallers settled in Suffolk, where they were granted some lands.⁷³ As far as can be gleaned from studies on the subject, the installation of the Hospitallers in England had similar features to those observable in other European areas and based itself on the acquisition of the property of the lesser nobility, which Walter Map deplored. The activities of the Templars have been studied to a greater extent, and the role they held within the social framework of many rural areas of the English kingdom is well known. This activity was also evident to contemporaries; in 1185, the Exchequer began a survey in order to quantify the territories which the order held either as owners or tenants.⁷⁴ However, in comparison with other European kingdoms, the Templars in England were small in number, had little influence, and were mainly administrators of the lands granted to them.⁷⁵

In looking at the English activities of the two orders, Walter Map appears to be well-informed. Yet, it remains to be seen why Map decided to report all these Eastern misdeeds in a work that largely focuses on the English court and events that occurred within Plantagenet space. To understand this, I will highlight two points inherent to the narration of the stories and the structure of the whole text: the origin of the corruption of the two orders and the position of the chapters in the *De Nugis Curialium*. The narrative makes it explicitly clear that the corruption of the original intentions of Templars and Hospitallers was due to the influence of Rome: it is the greedy Roman hand that is responsible for the malevolent actions of both orders.⁷⁶ The chapters that follow the ones on the Templars and Hospitallers focus on the corruption of Roman influence and in particular on its emissaries in England: the Cistercians.⁷⁷ The divide between Walter Map and the order founded by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) is a subject well known to scholars.⁷⁸ Walter Map bitterly attacked the Order of

71 In 1311, the Templars were accused of the possession and veneration of the monstrous head; see Montesano, *Ai margini del Medioevo*, 146-147.

72 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.22, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 68-69.

73 During the 12th century, the two orders received donations from the English and Scottish kings and nobility, but they were not a particularly privileged order. The aristocracy of the British islands continued to prefer more traditional monastic orders and their own familiar foundations. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders*, 81-84.

74 Lees, *Records of the Templars*.

75 Gervers, *Pro defensione sancte*; Higounet, *Hospitaliers et Templiers*; Morton, *Templar and Hospitaller attitudes*.

76 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.22, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 68-69.

77 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.24, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 73-84. On the Roman Church in Map's work, see Cantarella, *R.O.M.A.*

78 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 1.24-25, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 76-113. Cf., Sinex, *Echoic Irony*.

Cîteaux whose actions he knew well, especially along the border of the Welsh Marches. We have already identified the rigorous attack that *De Nugis Curialium* promoted against the Cistercians which aligned with Walter Map's personal aim of episcopal preferment at Hereford.⁷⁹ Here, we can note that the diocese of Hereford had some problems about enforcing its jurisdiction over the Cistercian abbeys, which boasted privileges of immunity granted to them by Rome.⁸⁰ So, the attacks by Walter Map appear to be an attempt to secure for himself the sympathy of the canons of Hereford, whose support was essential to his election.⁸¹ Considering that the long treatise on the malign Roman influence and the Cistercians starts immediately after the chapters about the monastic orders active in the Holy Land, it is possible to outline some conclusions about the way Walter Map used the accounts on Hospitallers and Templars. The long discussion on the Holy Land occupying chapters I.18 to I.23 served as an introduction to a theme dear to the author: the problems concerning the diocese of Hereford and the presence of the Cistercians. The obscure panorama of the Holy Land flows into the description of the actions of one of the monastic orders closest to Rome that was increasing its importance in the kingdom of England and was also one of the favourite targets of Walter Map's acrimony. Thus, Walter Map used the bad reputation of the events that shook the kingdom of Jerusalem instrumentally to look at Hereford, the place where his interests and ambitions resided.

Conclusions: The Crusades, a Theme for Particular Interests

In conclusion, the aim of this study was to examine the descriptions of the Mediterranean journey to the Holy Land within the context of the cultural production that took place inside the court of Henry II, a king who showed little interest in the Crusades, when he wasn't simply rejecting participation. To understand how much Henry II's reluctance to go on Crusade affected the literal production of his court, even if not explicitly commissioned by the king, I chose to examine two texts which did not have the Holy Land as their principal topic. The second aim was to investigate how the authors used this theme in their works, drawing attention to their personal goals.

This survey confirms the strict relationship between Henry II's politics and the cultural production of his court. By presenting a dangerous vision of the East, both authors discouraged any English involvement in the Crusades and all travel to Jerusalem, an obligation that Henry II had been avoiding since 1172. Gerald of Wales and Walter Map did so by way of their style of writing and the general structure of their works. The *Topographia Hibernica* was presented as a scientific report of Ireland's landscapes and natural wonders. Thus, Gerald of Wales used his naturalistic competencies for a comparison between Ireland and the East. By describing the geographical characteristics of both of the world's ends, he saturated the East with dangerous monsters and mortal perils. Gerald implicitly discouraged the Crusade and proposed a more suitable and profitable adventure — an Irish one. The *De Nugis Curialium*

79 De Falco, *Narrazione pubblica*.

80 Cariboni, *Three privileges*.

81 Walter Map obtained the support of the canons of Hereford, but it was not enough to be consecrated bishop of Hereford; see Adam of Eynsham, *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis*, 5.10, ed. Douie, vol 2,132.

is a combination of personal experiences, satirical attacks and folktales, and Walter Map's chapters on the Mediterranean space contain the full range of these topics. Map's descriptions provide an inhospitable panorama, characterised by dangerous political intrigues. His stories depict well-known crusading myths and lore that he had the opportunity to hear himself. Walter Map cast a lot of shadows over opportunities to enter the political game of the kingdom of Jerusalem and the genuine interests of those involved in the defence of the Holy Sepulchre.⁸² The objection both authors moved against the Crusade was an underlying one. Indeed, implicitness was one of the characteristics of courtly language, but our authors had two more reasons for not penning open critiques.⁸³ The first is that they were part of the clergy and opposition to the reconquest of Jerusalem could have been antithetical to their position. The second was that Henry II took the cross, and so did Richard I. Openly talking about refusing the Crusade would have positioned these authors in conflict with their kings' public vows and wills, even if Henry II had never been an ardent crusader.

Starting from these results, I moved to a discussion of the personal interests expressed by the authors in addressing these themes. The considerations regarding the cultural context of Henry II's court and its authors made it possible to consider courtly literature as part of a pragmatic communicative process.⁸⁴ I maintained this interpretative approach as an argument against the notion that courtly writing in this context was primarily intended to construct or consolidate the image of Henry II and his reign. I argued that literary works were principally instruments employed in the promotion of authors' personal objectives, even though the texts actively participated in the process of construction and legitimation of royal power. Returning to the *curia regis* of Henry II and considering the promotion of the personal interests of the authors as the primary objective of their works, the stylistic and conceptual adherence to the political cultures expressed at the Plantagenet court is, therefore, considered fundamental to the sphere of language and context. Thus, we have on the one hand the common space in which the communicative function of the text operated, shared by the authors and their public; and on the other, the authors' objectives communicated through the text to the readers.

In these case studies, the common themes that appear to both author and readers are those relating to the marvels of the East and the rumours reported by crusaders. Both authors used these themes in a way that was consistent not only with the explicit aims of their works but also with their personal ambitions. Gerald of Wales proposed Ireland as a better alternative to the Crusade because his own family was involved in Irish politics at the time, and he tried to persuade the Plantagenet family to operate actively in favour of his kinship. Walter Map's interest in the Crusade was unusual compared to his usual topics (i.e. English issues), reported the scandalous conduct of the Hospitallers and Templars as a part of a crescendo, the culmination of which was his diatribe against the Cistercian order and his criticism of the power exercised by the Roman Church. In particular, the attacks by Walter Map were part of his dispute with the Cistercians who settled alongside the borders of the Hereford diocese, promotion to the bishopric of the latter being the author's key aim.

82 The corruption of the Crusader kingdoms is a theme used by Walter Map and Ralph Niger; both authors were critical about English involvement in the Crusades; see Aurell, *Des chrétiens contre les Croisades*, 108-109.

83 See Aurell, *Des chrétiens contre les Croisades*.

84 The interpretation has its basis in literary theories; see Mostert, *Communication*; Andorno, *Che cos'è la pragmatica linguistica*; Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*; Clark, *History, Theory, Text*. More specifically, see Chartier, *Culture écrite et Société*, 48-56.

Thus, the descriptions corresponded to the political scene in which the authors were writing and to their ambitions. This correspondence makes it possible to check how authors connected to the Plantagenet court changed their texts according to their objectives and to the goals of their referents. By moving to a slightly different chronology, patrons, and authors, we can find different descriptions of the Near East and its importance to the English kings. At the start of Henry II's reign, the prior of Westminster Abbey, Osbert of Clare, recalled the new king's connections with the kingdom of Jerusalem and foresaw his involvement in Palestine.⁸⁵ During the actual years of the reign of Henry II, authors did not renew exhortations or previsions like these; they continued to hail the king of England but accorded their eulogies with Henry II's reluctance to go on Crusade. By contrast, the age of Richard I saw the English historians writing reports on the crusader adventure as part of the war of propaganda between the English and French kings.⁸⁶ Looking at Henry II's times, it is possible to compare the works of Gerald of Wales and Walter Map with the writings of another ambitious courtier, also often regarded as archetypical of the Plantagenet court: Peter of Blois (c. 1135-c. 1212).⁸⁷ In his letters, Peter of Blois talked about Sicily, and while the Sicilian *mirabilia* disappears in his words, he recounts the dangerous life that one has to face on the island, struggling between natural disasters (volcanic eruptions, earth quakes) and infamous men.⁸⁸ On the other hand, he wrote an enthusiastic life of Reginald de Châtillon (1125-1187), who died in the defeat of the Hattin Corns in 1187.⁸⁹ The motivation for such different descriptions could be sought in Peter of Blois' different profile and objectives and in the fact that he had actually travelled to Sicily and Palestine. The harsh treatment he reserved for Sicily is due to his personal experience: called to be the tutor of the young king William II, he was expelled from the kingdom of Sicily as part of the crushed French faction of the Sicilian court.⁹⁰ The *Passio Reginaldi* was written between 1187 and 1189 and glorifies the defence of the Holy Land. After the death of Henry II in 1189, both Gerald of Wales and Walter Map rapidly departed from the court, but a similar fate did not happen to Peter of Blois. He continued his service at court, following King Richard I to the Holy Land and writing Eleonore of Aquitaine letters during Richard's captivity.⁹¹ Probably, Peter of Blois' passionate view of the Crusade could be read as a part of his involvement in a political faction linked to Richard the Lionheart, who fought his father until 1189 and was an enthusiastic crusader. Different referents and different objectives made Gerald, Walter and Peter describe different Mediterranean spaces.

While these last speculations require further study, this article confirmed that both Gerald of Wales and Walter Map encouraged Henry II's reluctance to travel east, but more importantly for the authors themselves, also promoted and advanced their own specific, insular and personal objectives. In this way, the Mediterranean space became a foil for the »new« Cambro-Norman space in Ireland and a spotlight for the disputes happening in Hereford.

85 Osbert of Clare, Letter, ed. Williamson, 131: *Reges Jerosolymorum /te condecorant decorum / Tui patruus et avus quibus cedit quisque pravus [...] Hique proximi sunt tibi qui sic nunc triumphant ibi. / Tribulantur Sarraceni immenso dolore pleni / Et exultant Christiani cultus casu iam profani.*

86 Gillingham, Royal newsletters.

87 Peter of Blois, *Epistolae*, 10, 46, 90, 93, ed. Migne, 207, cols. 27-30, 133-134, 281-293, 291-293

88 Peter of Blois, *Epistolae*, 116, 131, ed. Migne, 207, cols. 345-346, 224.

89 Peter of Blois, *Passio Reginaldi Principis olim Antiocheni*, ed. Migne.

90 See Cotts, *Clerical Dilemma*, 20-28, 40-43, 138-156.

91 Lees, Letters of Eleanor of Aquitaine.

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Abbreviations

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