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The medieval March of Wales is a growing topic of interest among historians and literary critics of early Britain and its regions. One of the earliest and most authoritative studies, R. R. Davies's *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales 1282-1400* (1978), focused on the Norman Marcher lordships after the Edwardian conquest of independent Wales in 1282 and the constant political negotiation between these aristocratic dynasties and the king. Max Lieberman's influential history of the early March after 1066, *The March of Wales 1067-1300* (2008), showed how the Norman lordships were forcibly carved into territories with distinctive traditions of governance and economics. In terms of literary texts, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's important account of the March as an area of 'hybridity' in *Hybridity, Identity and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain* (2006) illuminates the identity politics of writers such as Gerald of Wales.

In her book, *Writing the Welsh Borderlands in Anglo-Saxon England* Lindy Brady provides an impressive prequel to these earlier studies of the March, taking us back in time to the centuries of Anglo-Saxon rule in parts of Britain, especially the kingdom of Mercia which abutted directly on to territories held by Welsh dynasties. Brady's central concern is the nature of the relationship between Welsh and English along the borderlands, using written evidence, historical and literary, to elucidate the often-expedient interactions between two peoples who shared common enemies and a geographical space. With chapters on Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, the *Lives* of St Guthlac, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and the Exeter Book riddles, the book draws on some familiar texts while reading them in new ways from the perspective of English attitudes towards the Welsh in the borderlands.

The historiography of Anglo-Saxon England and its relations with Wales has moved recently from the assumption that the two peoples were implacably hostile to each other and constantly engaged in territorial wars (as in Frank Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England*, first published in 1943) to a more revisionary position which recognises that this period of intense military competition among numerous contenders resulted in a certain amount of pragmatic cooperation between English and Welsh. Brady's book takes this position one step further by asserting that the March was not so much a military frontier as a shared cultural zone marked by a consistent pattern of political and military collaboration. Writing about the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, for example, Brady disputes its evidence for Welsh-English hostility and argues instead for a longstanding tradition of alliance between Mercia and north Wales, united against other Welsh and Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

There is certainly some truth to this, though Brady underplays other kinds of evidence which tend to show how partial and contingent such alliances were. Her opening example of the *Dunsæte Agreement*, a late tenth- or early eleventh-century Old English legal tract, is taken to signify a harmonious mixed community of Welsh and English operating on both sides of the river Wye between Monmouth and Hereford, but another reading of the document might produce a different conclusion: the
Welsh and English are clearly distinguished from each other as peoples with different languages and customs, they live on opposite sides of the river and are not allowed to travel across to each other’s territory unless specifically invited, the Welsh are described as utlendisc, “outlander” or outsider/stranger, while the English arei lendisc, “inlander” or insider/native. The legal document may well be an attempt to regulate the inevitable contacts between the two peoples in order to keep the peace as far as possible, but it is quite a stretch to conclude from this that “the Dunsæte territory was a community where Anglo-Saxons and Welsh lived together, treated one another as equals, and worked together to sustain peace” (3).

What is badly missing from Brady’s evidence is the Welsh perspective. Brady refers occasionally to ‘Welsh sources’ but does not say what these are or use any of them in her discussion. It is hard to reconcile her claims for a stable and longstanding alliance between Welsh and Anglo-Saxons, especially Mercia, with the agonised protest of Armes Prydein. “The Prophecy of Britain,” an anti-Aethelstan outburst composed in the first half of the tenth century, or with the elegiac laments for Welsh losses in battles against the Anglo-Saxons on the Powys borders in the “Cynddyylan” verses from the Llywarch Hen cycle. There is certainly evidence of occasion-specific Welsh and Anglo-Saxon alliances in the borderlands, but not enough to suggest “stability across time” (114), and in fact the Welsh evidence indicates the physical and emotional toll on a people constantly struggling for survival.

Equally concerning is Brady’s relative lack of engagement with current historians of early Welsh society and its relations with England as seen from the other side of the border. Though Brady has some footnote references to Thomas Charles-Edwards’s magisterial history, Wales and the Britons 350-1064 (2013), she seems not to have taken up his arguments about the ebb and flow of Mercia’s fortunes in the eighth and ninth centuries which affected its relationship with Wales, the impact of the Viking invasions in weakening Mercian authority, and the countervailing alliances among the most powerful Welsh dynasties. Another scholar whom Brady might have consulted is John Koch, whose ground-breaking edition and study of the sixth-century Welsh poem, Y Gododdin, published in 1997, was among the first texts to reconsider the nature of Welsh-English relations in the early years of Anglo-Saxon settlement.

Brady is more persuasive in her argument that the Welsh borderland formed a politically distinctive region in the tenth and eleventh centuries, one that was unlike other areas of Anglo-Saxon England. While she centres this distinctiveness in an ongoing political alliance between Welsh and English, an alliance whose scope and stability I think she overstates, she is right to see the borderlands as a region whose history, geography, and compromised sense of identity set it apart from the rest of England, and indeed from the rest of Wales. Brady’s study of two of the Exeter Book riddles which refer to the “dark Welsh” (riddles 52 and 72) concludes that “borderlands were depicted in vernacular literary tradition as a site of cattle and slave raiding among a mixed Anglo-Welsh warrior elite” (85). Setting aside the problematic term ‘Anglo-Welsh’, her acknowledgement that wealas, “Welsh,” signified a clear cultural difference between the subjugated Welsh and the aristocratic English elites undermines her imagined unity of the borderlands as a culturally assimilated region. Whatever cooperation there was between Welsh and English was based on the shared interests of a warrior ruling class fighting for land and resources (including slaves), not on some notion of being part of a culturally cohesive community.

The book takes an interesting and somewhat unexpected turn towards the end when Brady introduces the argument that a change in perception of the Welsh border region took place in the decades after 1066. Before the coming of the Normans, the borderland was conceptualized as a distinctive Anglo-Welsh space; afterwards, it came to be seen as almost exclusively a Welsh space, and, more specifically, as a wilderness beyond normal society where outlaws typically took refuge. Brady locates the period of transition between these views within two key texts, the Peterborough Chronicle and Orderic Vitalis’s Historia ecclesiastica. In both these texts, wilderness is closely associated with anti-Norman resistance and rebellion throughout England, as in the accounts of Hereward at Ely, but by the end of the eleventh century, “textual linkage of rebellion and wilderness shifted to Wales and the Welsh alone” (148).

Despite some flaws, this is an important book for students of early British history and Old English literature. The scholarship is rigorous and extensive, fitting key primary sources into a carefully worked out historical and chronological arrangement to produce some genuinely new interpretations. It extends existing histories of the Welsh March further back in time and lends considerable weight to current views about relations between the early English and Welsh as being selectively co-operative rather than unremittingly hostile. The book closes with an intriguing paradox: the Welsh borderland, presented throughout as a hybrid “Anglo-Welsh” space, becomes at the moment of the Norman conquest “the last place where... English identity can persist” (167).
Lindy Brady. Oxford University Press. This is the first study of the Anglo-Welsh border region in the period before the Norman arrival in England, f. ISBN10 : 9781784994198 , ISBN13 : 1784994197. Page Number : 202. In Inhabited Spaces, Nicole Guenther Discenza examines a variety of Anglo-Latin and Old English texts to shed. ISBN10 : 9781487500658 , ISBN13 : 1487500653. Page Number : 280. Review of Brady, Lindy, 'Writing the Welsh Borderlands in Anglo-Saxon England' (2017), in Kelten 74 (2017). Bookmark. by Tino Oudesluijs. In this book you will not only find discussion about the history of the dialect – one of the oldest English dialects outside England – but also a range of old historical Gower words split into several thematic chapters. From describing words to words for food and drink to animal and plant terms to names for objects, people, & events, and a list of local idioms and phrases. Anglo-Saxon England settled into a pattern of seven kingdoms. The three largest, Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex eventually came to dominate the country, each at different times. First it was Northumbria (the only time in English history when the centre of power has been in the north). The Anglo-Saxons knew it in Germany. Kings grew from simple tribal chiefs who were leaders successful in war, and therefore conquest of land. As time went by, the king became a grander, more exalted figure, and when England became Christian again in the 7th century reverence for kingship was encouraged by the Church. Although several kings issued written laws, a lot of Anglo-Saxon law was simply custom, passed on by word of mouth from one generation to the next.